

MAHATMA GANDHI

VOLUME V

India Awakened

SUSHILA NAYAR



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
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By

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FOREWORD

Dr. Sushila Nayar has rendered a meritorious service by undertaking to continue the noble work initiated by her brother the late Sri Pyarelal in regard to the narration of Mahatma Gandhi's life story. Sri Pyarelal and Sushilabehn were privileged to be closely associated with the personal and public life and work of Mahatmaji. Sri Pyarelal was Gandhiji's personal secretary along with Mahadev Desai from the second decade of this century and also later as the Editor of Gandhiji's weekly journal *Harijan*. His reputation as a faithful and authoritative chronicler and interpreter of Gandhiji's life and philosophy has been established by his many books and writings. He undertook the task of narrating the story of this historic life, after Gandhiji's martyrdom. Sri Pyarelal begins his narration from the time Gandhiji was released from jail in 1944, until his martyrdom. The book is called *The Last Phase*. He continued this good work by taking up the less-known (in India) part of Gandhiji's mission in South Africa — the birth of Satyagraha and the discovery of Satyagraha. Sri Pyarelal had also collated material to take up the story from the time Gandhiji left South Africa and arrived in India in 1915. Unfortunately Pyarelalji's death snapped the thread of this noble effort. The credit for taking on her brother's unfinished task goes to his sister, Dr. Sushila Nayar. She was also closely associated with Gandhiji as his physician and helper. She was detained with him in the jail at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune from 1942 to 1944.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad has written a perceptive introduction to Sri Pyarelal's book *The Last Phase*. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were both very keenly interested that Pyarelal should undertake a multi-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi. Pyarelal was a true disciple of Gandhiji. He lived and worked in the Gandhian way. He published four volumes about the noble



work Gandhiji undertook in South Africa, comprising over 3,000 pages, and left the manuscript of the third *Birth of Satyagraha* almost ready for publication. These five volumes cover, first, the last years of Gandhiji's life from 1944 to 1948, and also the early years, starting from the beginning and ending with the Indian community's fight against the "Black" racial laws, commencing in 1906. Pyarelalji had intended to write several more volumes to cover the remaining years of Gandhiji's life. But he passed away, leaving his last book, *The Birth of Satyagraha*, almost 80 per cent complete in typescript.

Shri Pyarelal started to write the life story of the Mahatma from the very beginning after completing the two volumes of *The Last Phase*. The *Early Phase* covers the years from Gandhiji's birth in 1869 to 1896. He narrates the story of Gandhiji's childhood and student days in India and in England; his return to India in 1891 and his departure for South Africa in 1893 in search of a career. The *Early Phase* narrates the historical, social and political forces that were operating in India and in South Africa in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The *Discovery of Satyagraha*, the next Volume, deals with the violent reception given to Gandhiji by the whites when he went back to South Africa with his wife and children, which resulted in his almost being lynched. After the Boer War he went back to India and set up practice at Bombay. In the next volume titled *The Birth of Satyagraha: From Petitioning to Passive Resistance*, Volume III, which Pyarelal left 80 per cent complete in typescript, he picks up the story from Gandhiji's return to South Africa at the urgent call of Indians there. The condition of Indians had become still worse. The volume ends with the mass meeting of Indians held on 11th September 1906 pledging themselves to resist the Black Act. Gandhiji was their leader. He had to find out how to fight racial discrimination and oppression and in the process he discovered the mighty weapon of



Satyagraha. For the work of editing the material left by Sri Pyarelal, checking its accuracy and inner coherence and completing the Volume IV, Sushilaji took help from Prof. James D. Hunt of North Carolina University, U.S.A., who had worked with Pyarelalji on this volume.

After getting Volume IV completed and published, Sushila Nayar took up the story from 11 September 1906 to 18 July 1914 in Volume IV and called it Satyagraha in Action. It is the narration of eight momentous years of the evolution of Satyagraha; and the process of momentous changes in Gandhiji's personal life, which made Barrister Gandhi Mahatma Gandhi.

The present volume, India Awakened, records the events from the time Gandhiji left South Africa for England, to meet Sri G. K. Gokhale and his return to India in January 1915. This book deals with satyagraha in Champaran, Kheda, and among the textile workers of Ahmedabad, demonstrating Gandhiji's unique qualities of improvisation and leadership. His steadfast adherence to non-violent satyagraha has been ably presented by Sushila Nayar. The book carries the story to the momentous years when Gandhiji assumed the leadership of the Indian National Congress. The Story of the Khilafat Movement and the national upsurge against the Rowlatt legislation called the Non-Cooperation Movement, are faithfully narrated. It shows the wide-based response that Gandhiji's moral leadership evoked all over this land.

The core of this book deals with Gandhiji's setting India on the path of non-violent non-cooperation. Gandhiji discovered that the constructive programme was an essential national discipline and without it no success could be gained on the path of satyagraha. Khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and prohibition were the major planks of his constructive programme.



The belief that lasting unity among Hindus and Muslims could be secured by Indian people's support to the cause of Khilafat was one of the principal postulates of this phase of Gandhiji's political perspective. However the Khilafat agitation lost its substance when Mustafa Kamal Pasha led a revolution in Turkey and the Khalifa was expelled from Turkey. This was a traumatic happening for the Muslims and it marked a sharp set-back to popular Muslim expectations; and it was followed by a number of sporadic Hindu-Muslim riots all over India. There was a consequent decline in the climate of communal harmony. On the eve of launching Civil Disobedience in Bardoli, Gandhiji suspended the movement because of outbreak of violence by the people at Chauri Chaura. He was arrested and sentenced to six years jail soon after that.

During Gandhiji's incarceration some prominent leaders of the Congress who supported the Non-cooperation movement turned to the revival of constitutional action by entering the legislatures, both at the Centre and in the provinces. Gandhiji showed an uncanny spirit of accommodation and permitted these leaders to enter the legislatures in the name of the Congress, after his premature release on health grounds. It would have been useful if this volume could have narrated the developments in India up to the appointment of the Simon Commission by the British Government.

The noble life story of Mahatma Gandhi is the history of the political emancipation of this land. It concerns the moral regeneration of earnest citizens and their fearless non-violent resistance to misrule and injustice. It marks a historic chapter in the story of Man in the twentieth century. It is, therefore, invested with perennial significance.

12 August 1990

ACHYUT PATWARDHAN



INTRODUCTION

1

Volume IV of Mahatma Gandhi, the multi-volume biography of Gandhiji, which was the first one written by this author, covered the period from 11 September 1906 to 18 July 1914 — the eight years of Satyagraha in South Africa. The Satyagraha was started on 11 September 1906 and ended on 30 June 1914 with the signing of the Gandhi-Smuts settlement which covered the points which had not been included in the Indians' Relief Bill passed by the South African Parliament on June 26th. Gandhiji left South Africa for good on 18 July 1914 to return to India.

The long-drawn-out struggle in South Africa ended in a complete victory for Gandhiji and the satyagraha which he had developed during those eight years. It was a victory of right over might, of love over racial hatred, of gentility over barbarity, of non-violence over violence. This victory, it is true, did not end the colour bar, which was to continue as the basis of state policy in South Africa for many more years. It did not end all the iniquities, injustices and indignities to which Indians and other Asiatic and coloured races were consistently subjected by the successive racist regimes. But it certainly put an end to the more glaring discrimination in the matter of recognition of marriages, legal bar on immigration, residence, abolition of £3 tax on ex-indentured Indians and issuance of certificates on the expiry of their terms of indenture.

Above all it restored to the Indians their self-respect and self-confidence and gave them courage to continue the fight for their just rights. It welded together into one identity the disparate elements that composed the Indian population in South Africa: The Bohra Muslims, the Tamil coolies, Christians, Parsis, Pathans, Jews and Hindus of all castes. It gave them courage and



transformed people of common clay into heroes. The sacrifices of Nagappan, Valliamma, Narayanswamy, Hurbat Singh, A. M. Cachalia and a host of others put them in the class of immortal satyagrahis such as Prahlad and Daniel. They were venerated by the whole community.

The South African Satyagraha also saw the sprouting and fruition of those seminal ideas that have lent to all Gandhiji's work and thought their unique spiritual meaning. Brahmacharya, voluntary poverty, physical toil, austerity, self-control and control over the palate reinforced by fasting from time to time as an act of self-purification and penance, became the directive principles of personal conduct for Gandhiji and his close co-workers. They formed the training disciplines for satyagrahis. Satyagraha was a proclamation of the primacy of spirit over flesh, and of society over self. Striving for the uplift of the community — moral, economic and social — became the means of self-realization.

The Phoenix settlement, which became the prototype of the Ashrams Gandhiji was to set up later, was intended to provide to the inmates a milieu in which they could collectively progress on the path of spiritual advancement through properly regulated life and work. Community prayers in the morning and evening took less than an hour. All work in the service of fellow human beings was worship.

Hind Swaraj, in which Gandhiji has given the outline of the ideal Indian society of his conception, was also written in the light of his South African experience and the currents and cross-currents of ideas and ideologies from East and West that buffeted him as his work there advanced. Gandhiji categorically rejected Western civilization and industrialization, declaring that what were considered its blessings were indeed its banes. He also rejected urbanization. Cities, he said, exploited the villages. He made out a strong case for the revival of



self-sustained, self-perpetuating and self-justifying village life based on self-reliance, dignity of labour and voluntary reduction of wants, leading to simple living and high thinking.

Gandhiji went to South Africa in 1893 for earning a livelihood. By the middle of 1914, when his work there was over, he had already perfected: (1) a model of an ideal way of life, regulated by a set of rules and vows dedicated to selfless toil for the service of society as a whole; (2) a model of the ideal technique of fighting oppression and exploitation, economic, social or political, namely, satyagraha; and (3) the blueprint of an ideal society. It may be mentioned that Gandhiji steadfastly stuck to the views he had propounded in Hind Swaraj, notwithstanding the severe criticism to which they were subjected by critics as well as by well-meaning friends and colleagues. But he was a practical idealist and made many necessary adjustments.

Several influences which went into the shaping of Gandhiji's ideas are mentioned by him. Shri Rajchandra inspired him to lead a life of brahmcharya. Some writings of Tolstoy also had an influence on his thinking. Ruskin's *Unto This Last* helped clarify his picture of societal organization. Works of Edward Carpenter and Henry Maine lent strength to his predilection for village life. Thoreau greatly helped him in developing the theory and technique of civil disobedience and satyagraha, which he held was far superior to passive resistance. It is however necessary to be clear that though some Western thinkers and the Sermon on the Mount had influenced and deeply moved him, the mainsprings of his inspiration lay in Indian scriptures, especially the Bhagavad Gita and the Tulsi Ramayana.



The present volume, which is fifth in the series, is called India Awakened. As its name indicates it describes how Gandhiji introduced Satyagraha in India and in the process brought about mass awakening in India.

It covers a period of roughly 10 years from the middle of 1914 onwards and is divided into four parts. Part I opens with Gandhiji's departure from South Africa on 18 July 1914, when he sailed for London to meet Gokhale there before returning home. He had to stay in London for about five months because of the outbreak of World War I before his ship had reached London and also because of a breakdown in his health.

In London Gandhiji tried to help the British war effort by organizing Indian students into an Ambulance Corps while waiting to meet Gokhale, who was held up in Paris. In the process he had a glimpse of the racial attitude of British officers which showed up the gap between profession and practice on the part of British leaders. He almost thought of offering satyagraha, but the Under-Secretary of State Charles Roberts saved the situation by proposing a compromise which was acceptable to Gandhiji. He left England on 19 December 1914 accompanied by Kasturba. His other companion, Kallenbach, was detained in London as an enemy alien.

On his arrival in India Gandhiji was accorded a hero's welcome, with nearly everyone who was anyone — official or non-official — joining in. For a month and more it was a hectic round of receptions and parties arranged in his honour by one public body or another, with speakers vying with one another in paying unstinted tributes to Gandhiji and Kasturba for their great services in the cause of the Indians in South Africa. In Bombay, in various places in Kathiawar, in



Ahmedabad, Poona and Santiniketan the warmth of the welcome was unrestrained.

Gandhiji had stated that in India he intended to be guided by Gokhale in regard to his future work. Gokhale had extracted from him a promise that for a year he would endeavour to observe and study the situation in India and keep his lips sealed on all political questions. Gandhiji observed silence on the political questions of the day but he let his views be known in categorical terms on such fundamental questions as untouchability, swadeshi, the medium of instruction in schools, besides speaking about matters related to the problems of Indians in the self-governing Colonies of the British Empire.

It was Gokhale's desire that Gandhiji should join the Servants of India Society. He in fact wanted to groom Gandhiji to take his place in course of time, Gandhiji told us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp. But soon after Gandhiji's return to India, on 19 February 1915, Gokhale passed away. The Society now was headed by Srinivasa Sastri. Gandhiji, who had applied for membership, saw that several members of the Society would not be able whole-heartedly to welcome him in their organization. He decided not to force the issue and withdrew his application.

The problem of finding a home for his Phoenix family — a group of about twenty who had preceded him to India —, had to be tackled without delay. They had been put up temporarily first by Mahatma Munshi Ram, (later to be known as Swami Shraddhanand) at Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar, and then by Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan. After a good deal of looking around Gandhiji rented accommodation at Kochrab, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, and moved there on 22 May 1915, about four months after his arrival in India. He wanted the Ashram to become a training ground for workers like Phoenix and Tolstoy farm in South



Africa. For that Kochrab was not suitable. He needed land and funds to build a healthy place where agriculture and small industries could provide work and training for self-help. The result was the Sabarmati Ashram on the banks of river Sabarmati.

Gandhiji had made a name in South Africa. But he was a new-comer in Indian politics. The Indian political leaders had yet to know his ability. After his one year's silence on political questions he made a speech at the inaugural function of the Benares Hindu University in February 1916. It gave a shock to the rulers of Indian States who were represented in the audience in sizeable numbers, for he lambasted them for shedding crocodile tears over India's poverty while they themselves were attired in robes of splendour and bedecked in jewellery, which all came from the toil of India's millions. His speech offended the officials and Moderate political leaders, such as Annie Besant, because while denouncing violence and the cull of the gun, he had at the same time unstintedly praised the anarchists for their patriotism and spirit of self-sacrifice. His remarks on the overtight security arrangements for the Viceroy were also not taken kindly. But he had made his point. He had given notice that Indian politics from now on would not be the same.

3

The year from mid 1917 to mid 1918 saw three different local struggles : the Champaran Satyagraha, the Kheda Satyagraha and the Ahmedabad Mill-hands' Strike. All three were led by Gandhiji and became classics of their kind. Gandhiji demonstrated in these struggles how agrarian and industrial agitations could be transformed into strivings for the assertion of the supremacy of moral principles, and how the poor and dispossessed could stand up for their rights and their self-respect without resort to violence. He endeavoured and was successful in



involving the opposing parties in the disputes — the white planters in Champaran, the revenue officials in Kheda and the mill-owners in Ahmedabad — in finding solutions for the problems. He made the exploiters partners in the search for measures to end exploitation and the sufferings of the exploited workers and peasants and establish cooperation rather than confrontation as the principle governing the relations between classes. These campaigns are covered in Part II of the book.

4

In Part III of the book Gandhiji becomes the real power in Indian politics. The end of the War in 1918 had brought in its wake a host of new political issues. Those which most disturbed the Indian mind were: the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the Rowlatt legislation and the British attitude on the Khilafat question. The Rowlatt legislation, enshrined in two bills, was hurled at the head of the country by its British rulers in early 1919. Ostensibly designed to fight revolutionary crime the Rowlatt bills were most sweeping and oppressive in nature and denied the most elementary freedoms to the people. The Sastris, the Malaviyas and various other luminaries in the Council, inveighed against the bills, bringing against them the full force of their oratory, alas, to no effect.

Gandhiji then launched a nationwide Satyagraha against the Rowlatt legislation. Those who had opposed the bills in the Council opposed the Satyagraha. The opponents of the Satyagraha included nearly all the leading lights of the Congress. To them any sort of mass action was anathema. Gandhiji was nevertheless able to enlist most of the middle-rung Home Rule Leaguers for the movement, which soon grew into a loud nationwide protest.

Gandhiji gave the call for the Satyagraha to be started on 6 April 1919 by fasting, prayer, hartal and peaceful meetings and processions. In Delhi action



actually started on 30 March as a result of a misunderstanding about the date. The Government panicked. Agents provocateurs led the populace in Delhi, Gujarat, the Punjab and Bengal into acts of violence that shocked Gandhiji and impelled him to halt the campaign on 18 April, even though the brutalities unleashed by the Government were far more shocking than popular violence and continued even after the halt of the campaign.

The outrages perpetrated by the rulers in order to suppress the popular upsurge (imposition of martial law, with indiscriminate firings, floggings, crawling orders, summary trials, executions, imprisonments and innumerable humiliations,) shocked India and civilized humanity everywhere. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre on 13 April became the biggest blot on British rule in India.

Champaran, Kheda, Ahmedabad and the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation served to establish the credentials of Gandhiji as a leader par excellence of the Indian people. These struggles also earned for him the esteem and admiration of the ruling class as a man who stood by the principles of truth and non-violence in the battles he waged for his country's freedom and who would never compromise with these principles.

When the Congress assembled for its annual session at Amritsar in December 1919, the most important voice at the session was that of Gandhiji. He set the policy of the organization and he was entrusted by the Congress with the task of revising its constitution so as to make it into an efficient mass organization.

The Congress had expressed itself against Montford Reforms in categorical terms as being inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing. As was to be expected, opinion at the Amritsar session was solidly ranged in the direction of rejecting them outright. Gandhiji did not share this view. He went so far as to say that the Montford Report was a work of art; that in certain respects it was better



than the Congress-League Scheme of 1916. Neither Das nor Tilak could prevail against the arguments advanced by Gandhiji and the Congress ended up by announcing its qualified acceptance of the Reforms and thanking Montagu for his efforts in drafting the report !

The shadow of the Khilafat question was already lengthening over the Congress offer of cooperation in the working of the Reforms. In the peace negotiations that followed the end of the War in the closing months of 1918, it became clear that Turkey, which had fought on the side of Germany and had been vanquished, would be getting an extremely harsh deal. The Sultan of Turkey also being the Caliph of Muslims the world over, action to curb his temporal power was considered as action against Islam. Muslim politicians in India were much worked up and they started a campaign designed to extract juster peace terms for Turkey, especially because the British, when they had wanted Indian Muslims as recruits for the War, had assured them that Turkey would not be punished for having chosen to oppose the Allies in the War.

Gandhiji came to the view that the Hindus and other communities must support the Muslims over the Khilafat demand. He did not see it as a question of encouraging pan-Islamic obscurantism. It was a question of the victorious British Imperialism dictating terms to a prostrate nation and trying to grab more colonies to exploit through a system of mandates and other mechanisms. Besides, he saw that to Indian Muslims Khilafat was a religious question. Hindus therefore, he said, must fight shoulder to shoulder with the Muslims to redeem the latter's religious honour.

Representations having failed to produce any results Gandhiji suggested the withdrawal of cooperation from the Government. Titles and honours were to be surrendered and law-courts, schools and colleges and the Councils were to be



boycotted. Muslim leaders accepted the plan and Gandhiji agreed to lead the struggle. To make the campaign into a wide-ranging mass action, with all communities whole-heartedly participating in it, it was necessary to include other burning issues of the day. The Non-cooperation campaign therefore became a cry for swaraj, for justice to Turkey and for redressing the martial-law wrongs in the Punjab.

On 1 August 1920 the Khilafat movement was duly inaugurated, with Gandhiji returning to the Viceroy his Kaiser-e-Hind and other medals. Gandhiji, from being a staunch imperialist, now became an out-and-out rebel. He declared that British rule was Satanic; that it was Ravana Raj as opposed to Ramaraj; that it could not be mended, it could only be ended. He dedicated himself to the task of destroying the British regime in India.

The Congress, first at the Calcutta special session in September 1920 and then at the Nagpur session in December 1920 approved the programme of Non-cooperation. Gandhiji said if the programme of boycotts was sincerely followed along with the prosecution of the fourfold constructive programme, swaraj would be secured in one year.

The country took up the call most enthusiastically. Hurricane tours undertaken by Gandhiji and other leaders roused the masses. The fourfold constructive programme included (1) promotion of the charkha and khadi to put some money into the pockets of the poor, (2) leaving of Government-run educational institutions, (3) communal harmony, equal respect for all religions and removal of untouchability by the Hindus, (4) prohibition of all intoxicating drinks and drugs and picketing of liquor shops to that end, so that what little money the family could make was not squandered on drinking. The programme achieved considerable success. Students in large numbers came out of



Government institutions and a series of national schools and colleges were opened. Some of these later grew into important centres of learning. Communal differences were entirely forgotten as Hindus and Muslims marched shoulder to shoulder to secure a common goal.

The British, in the initial stages of the movement, showed themselves tolerant of all activity that was not violative of law. This policy was largely aimed at winning over the Moderates, who were opposed to the movement, and other fence-sitters. But as the agitation intensified, the rulers found it more and more difficult not to use the machinery of repression to combat and crush it.

In November 1921 violence broke out in Bombay on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales. The Government thus found the excuse it was looking for. Province after province came out with proclamations banning the national volunteer organizations and started wholesale imprisonment of the leaders of the movement. Thousands were thrust into jails. The Muslim leadership, represented by the Ali Brothers, had already invited punitive action for certain of their utterances.

The rulers saw that no amount of repression could make the Indian masses welcome the Prince of Wales. They were keen that when he visited Calcutta at Christmas time, there should be no hartal. Attempts were therefore made through the good offices of the Moderates, such as Madan Mohan Malaviya, to induce Gandhiji to withdraw the Non-cooperation movement and for convening a round table conference to discuss all issues. Gandhiji rejected the proposal because the Viceroy did not agree to release the Ali Brothers and other Fatwa prisoners and gave no assurance that the demands for which Non-cooperation had been started would be conceded. Repression increased. Press censorship was vigorous. Civil liberties were suppressed.



The Ahmedabad Congress of December 1921 considered a programme of mass civil disobedience in selected areas of Gandhiji's choice under his guidance. It was to counter the assault on civil liberties and restore freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of association, freedoms which were threatened with total suppression, with the Press Act and the Seditious Meetings Act in force in most provinces and banning of volunteer associations. Civil liberties had now become the most urgent issue, the other major demands receding into the background. The Congress appointed Gandhiji as dictator giving him full powers of the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. when these bodies were not in session.

On 1 February 1922 Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy giving notice that he proposed to launch a mass civil disobedience movement starting with Bardoli to counter Government repression unless there was release of all Non-cooperation prisoners and withdrawal of all notifications of a repressive nature. The Viceroy rejected the demand and warned Gandhiji of stern action.

The country now waited for the first mass civil disobedience which Gandhiji was all set to inaugurate. But the gods had decreed otherwise. News reached Gandhiji that at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district in the U.P. a violent mob had on 4 February burnt to death a party of 22 policemen. Gandhiji was stunned. It seemed to him that mobs such as at Chauri Chaura could not be made into instruments of satyagraha. The country had not imbibed to the required degree the message of love, non-violence and truth, he said.

Gandhiji accordingly summoned the Working Committee to Bardoli and informed the members that in view of the insensate and brutal violence at Chauri Chaura he must suspend the civil disobedience movement. The Working Committee was flabbergasted. So was the country as a whole. But Gandhiji had his way. The Working Committee passed the resolution, drafted by Gandhiji,



suspending the civil disobedience movement and advising the cultivators to pay up to the Government their land revenue and other taxes which they might have withheld. Congressmen were advised to avoid all processions and meetings and acts of defiance. The Committee elaborated a detailed programme of constructive work to which non-cooperators were now to address themselves.

This sudden withdrawal of civil disobedience at a moment when the movement was poised for the final assault on the citadel of British Imperialism, came as a great shock to the nation. Leaders freely gave vent to their misgivings, disappointment and despair.

The rulers, who had not so far shown the courage to arrest Gandhiji, now felt free to do so. He was taken into custody on 10 March 1922, tried on 18 March and sentenced the same day to imprisonment for six years. The trial was a dramatic one. Gandhiji pleaded guilty to the charge of sedition. Broomfield, the judge, declared it “impossible to ignore the fact” that Gandhiji was in a different category from any person he had ever tried or was likely to try. He paid tributes to Gandhiji as a person of high ideals and of noble and saintly life who had been constantly preaching against violence. He however had to do his duty under the law. Gandhiji was taken the same night to Yeravda prison at Poona.

5

In Part IV we see how, with Gandhiji in prison and Civil Disobedience no longer a part of the national programme, important sections in the Congress began to voice the advisability of ending the Councils’ boycott. At the Gaya Congress, held in December 1922, matters came to a show-down between the Pro-changers and the No-changers who insisted that the Congress should stick to the constructive programme as enunciated by the Working Committee at Bardoli in February and subsequently approved by the A.I.C.C.. in March. The No-changers were in a



majority at the Congress and therefore had their way. C. R. Das, the President who was the leader of the Pro-changers, thereupon resigned from the presidentship and formed the Swaraj Party, though his resignation was not accepted. The Swaraj Party announced its intention to fight the elections to the Reformed Central Assembly and the Provincial Councils. The Swarajist leaders declared that they intended to enter the Councils as Non-cooperators and that they would follow in the legislatures a policy of “constant, continuous and uniform obstruction” and oppose all measures proposed by the Government.

In the elections that were held in November 1923 the Swarajists went to the electorate in the name of the Congress and Gandhiji. Some sort of truce had been arrived at between them and the No-changers. They swept the polls everywhere. In the C.P. they secured a majority, in Bengal a near majority, while in the other provinces they made an impressive showing. It was the same in the Central Assembly. The Swaraj Party had very disciplined members and, as they had planned, they gave a hard time to the Government, forcing the Viceroy and the Governors to resort more and more to certification of unpopular laws, thus demonstrating the emptiness of the so-called Reforms.

In Part IV, besides political developments, we see developments in constructive work before Gandhiji comes out of jail after two years. He had not kept too well in jail. On 12 January 1924, he had to undergo an operation for appendicitis, which was performed by a British civil surgeon in Poona. Rumours about Gandhiji's ill health gave rise to great apprehension in the country. In any case, it was felt in Government circles, Gandhiji was too weak to be sent back to the rigours of jail life. Demand for his release became more and more insistent. He was therefore formally discharged from prison on 5 February 1924. He chose



to remain at the hospital for another month, as the wound needed dressing, and then went to Juhu to continue his rest and recuperation.

The truth was that Gandhiji was never allowed any rest from the moment of his formal discharge. He was constantly surrounded by people seeking his guidance or intervention in the problems they faced.

There were four major developments on the national scene that Gandhiji had to contend with from the very moment of his release. There was first the Gurdwara movement in the Punjab during which there had been a great deal of violence perpetrated by the entrenched priestly interests who then controlled the gurdwaras. Gandhiji counselled the Akali Sikhs to keep their movement purely non-violent and to strictly define the aims of the movement.

Then there was the movement launched by workers of the Travancore Congress for having the roads leading to the Vykam temple opened to the untouchables. Gandhiji showed great interest in guiding the movement and ultimately the movement succeeded in the opening of not only the road but also the temples to the untouchables. But that was nearly a decade later.

Increasing communal tension resulting in riots on a large scale in various parts of the country greatly distressed Gandhiji. With the overthrowing of the Sultan by the Turkish nationalists, the Khilafat movement, the cement that had bound Hindus and Muslims together for a time, had gone and the questions of cow-slaughter on the one hand and music before mosques on the other again became the stumbling-block in the way of communal harmony.

In September-October 1924 Gandhiji undertook a 21-day fast for communal unity. The fast stirred the conscience of the nation. Leaders of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other faiths congregated in Delhi to devise measures to check the fast-spreading poison of communal hatred and pave the way for peace.



The most important development, which had ramifications for the future of the Congress, was the one regarding the question of Council-entry and the Swarajist programme. Gandhiji in his discussions with the Swarajist leaders made it clear that the programme did not have his approval. He was certain that the way to Swaraj did not lie through the Councils and insisted that the only course open to the Congress was to concentrate on the charkha and the constructive programme. He was however unable to convince the Swarajist leaders.

So firm was Gandhiji in his view that the Congress would be losing its moorings by giving up the constructive programme in favour of the Council-entry programme, that soon after his release he brought forward and got passed a resolution in the A.I.C.C. making it obligatory for members seeking elective posts in the various organs of the Congress to render as subscription 2,000 yards of yarn spun by themselves every month. The majority he secured for the resolution was a narrow one and he declared himself "defeated and humbled". The Swarajists took the yarn franchise as a move to oust them from the Congress.

There was repression everywhere and civil liberties were suppressed. Gandhiji came to the conclusion that there was urgent need for all political forces to come together under a common programme and work for communal accord if the nation was to give a suitable answer to the British Government.

British rulers in October 1924 issued the so-called Bengal Ordinance, ostensibly to suppress anarchical violence but in fact to suppress the Swaraj Party, which had emerged as a major political force to challenge the British rule. To fight this new onslaught on the civil and political liberties of the people Gandhiji considered it necessary to mend the fences with the Swarajists and unite the Congress. He went to Calcutta and signed a pact with C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, under which the Swaraj Party was permitted to carry on the parliamentary



programme in the name of the Congress, albeit with its own funds, while Gandhiji and his faithful No-changers would concentrate on constructive work. He diluted the yarn franchise to suit the Swarajists. It still remained a requirement for elected members of the various organs of the Congress to tender 2,000 yards of yarn as subscription per month, but it was made clear that the yarn might not necessarily be self-spun.

The Belgaum Congress, over which Gandhiji himself presided, put the seal of approval on the Bengal Pact.

The post-Belgaum period, beginning with January 1925 saw Gandhiji leave all political work to the Swarajists, while he and the No-changers, his faithful followers, concentrated on constructive work. In his political utterances Gandhiji more and more echoed the views of the Swarajists, lending them his full support. On the Hindu-Muslim tension, which had become further aggravated, with riots breaking out in sensitive areas, Gandhiji refused to give any advice.

Following the death of C. R. Das in June 1925 Gandhiji summoned a meeting of the A.I.C.C. at Patna in September 1925, and handed over the Congress to the Swaraj Party. From now on, the resolution relating to the subject said, instead of the Swaraj Party carrying on the Council work in the name of the Congress, it would be the Congress which would carry on the Council work. That is to say, the Congress would now be a wholly political organization. Khadi and spinning, in which the No-changers had been engaged, would henceforth be the business of the All-India Spinners' Association, an organization newly set up, which would carry on Khadi work as a commercial activity. Congressmen would still spin, but spinning would not be compulsory. The yarn so spun would be sent to the All-India Spinners' Association.



In handing over the Congress and all political work to the Swarajists, Gandhiji was setting an example of stooping to conquer. The Swarajists were to realize the futility of Council entry for winning swaraj before long when they would once again come under Gandhiji's banner to offer satyagraha.

NEW DELHI

SUSHILA NAYAR

Date: 9-11-90



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New Delhi

SUSHILA NAYAR

9 November 1990



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PART I
A NEW BEGINNING



CHAPTER I: AN INTERLUDE IN LONDON

1

The Gandhi-Smuts agreement in 1914 marked the end of Gandhiji's work in South Africa. He was keen to go back to India. After the appointment of the Solomon Commission and his interviews with Smuts in January 1914 he had hoped for an early settlement of the Indian question. He wrote to Gopal Krishna Gokhale on 27 February 1914 that if the settlement was reached in March he would leave for India in April. He and his party of about 20 persons from Phoenix would like to stay at the Servants of India Society, Poona, in the first place. He wanted to begin his work in India under Gokhale's guidance, for he knew that he would be practically a stranger in India on his return.

He wrote to Gokhale :

I want to learn at your feet and gain the necessary experience. No matter whether I am staying somewhere under your guidance or not I shall scrupulously observe the compact of silence for one year after my arrival in India.... My present ambition... is to be at your side as your nurse and attendant. [The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, (C.W.M.G.), Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, Vol.XII, pp.360-61]

Gokhale was in London and asked Gandhiji to go there before returning to India. Gandhiji was reluctant. Kasturba was ill with severe anaemia and he was afraid she might die. He wrote to Gokhale to that effect on 1 April 1914. [*Ibid*, p.401]. By early May she was better and he wrote to Gokhale on 6 May that he would come to London and bring her with him. [*Ibid*, p.414]



On 5 June Gandhiji wrote again saying that Kasturba was still weak but he would come to London with her. Kallenbach was accompanying him to India and would also come to London. It would enable Kallenbach to meet his people and say good-bye to them. He would also be of help to Gandhiji and Kasturba. He repeated that he was impatient to go to India and added: " If you will not allow me to be with you as your nurse, I would like to go away to India immediately after our consultation." [*Ibid*, p.422]

On 1 July Gandhiji wrote his last letter to Gokhale informing him that he would start on 18 July or 25 July. He said: "My one desire is now to meet you and see you, take my orders from you and leave at once for India." [*Ibid*, p.440]

On 18 July 1914, accompanied by Kasturba and Kallenbach, Gandhiji set sail from Cape Town by s.s. Kinfauns Castle on his voyage to England. It was his final good-bye to South Africa, the land where he had discovered the mighty weapon of satyagraha and learnt the use of soul-force in human affairs.

Gandhiji was returning home after two decades. The India that he had left had undergone many changes. He knew that he would be a stranger in his own land. He was returning after the victory of satyagraha in South Africa. His countrymen would be expecting great things from him. He had no idea what he was going to do when he reached India.

Gandhiji had promised Gokhale that he would observe things and study India for one year before he opened his lips on any subject except South Africa. Gandhiji had wanted to leave England without delay if he could not be by Gokhale's side. But circumstances so developed that he had to stay in London much longer. Gokhale left for India before him.



The party for the most part kept to themselves on board the ship. Gandhiji had had a regular daily schedule even in prison, and so it was on board the ship.

On 28 July Gandhiji wrote to Chhaganlal Gandhi from on board the ship :

For one hour I teach Gujarati to Kallenbach [James D. Hunt records that Gandhiji's notes of the Gujarati and Hindi lessons he prepared for Kallenbach were auctioned by Kallenbach's successors after his death. See James D. Hunt, *Gandhi in London*, Promila & Co., Delhi, 1978, p.177] and for one hour at 7 in the evening. I explain the Gita to Ba and read the Ramayana to her. She attends to both with great interest. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, p.520]

During the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa Gandhiji had started travelling third class and the passage on the ship for the party was also booked by third class. Even the third class fare was beyond his means. He had no money of his own and he felt he could not pay his and his party's passage out of public funds. Gokhale had promised to find the funds for the purpose, and sent the money for the passage. [*Ibid*, p.361]

The crew of the Kinfauns Castle extended all courtesy and consideration to the illustrious passenger and his party. A toilet was reserved for them. The captain issued instructions to provide them with fruit and nuts as they were fruitarians although normally third class passengers did not get fruit. They were quite comfortable and Gandhiji had time to relax and talk as well as to reflect.

Kallenbach was very fond of binoculars and carried one or two costly pairs with him. Gandhiji felt these possessions were not consistent with the ideals of



simple life and poverty that they aspired to lead. There were discussions on the subject almost every day. One day as they stood by the porthole of the cabin, the discussions came to a head. Gandhiji said to Kallenbach: "Why not throw the pair of binoculars into the sea rather than let it become a bone of contention between us?" "Certainly throw the wretched thing away," replied Kallenbach. "I mean it," said Gandhiji. "So do I," came the quick reply. And Gandhiji forthwith threw the pair of binoculars into the sea. The cost was £7, but apart from the cost, Kallenbach was very attached to his binoculars. He, however, never regretted the loss. [M. K. Gandhi, Autobiography, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1956, p.345]

Gandhiji has recorded in his autobiography how every day they had something new to learn, for they were both trying to tread the path of Truth. "In the march towards Truth, anger, selfishness, hatred, etc., naturally give way, for otherwise Truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passions may have good enough intentions, may be truthful in words, but he will never find the Truth," he wrote. A successful search for Truth, held Gandhiji, required complete deliverance from the dual throng, the pair of opposites such as of love and hate, happiness and misery. [*Ibid*, p.345]

3

Gandhiji had undergone a week's fast in 1913 to be followed by one meal a day for four months and a half as a penance for the moral lapse of two of his wards at Phoenix. If there was a repetition the period of the fast and of one meal a day was to be doubled. He had been able to stand one week's fast quite well and had continued all his daily activities during the week.

Gandhiji, however, had to undertake another fast of 14 days in the same context later in the first half of May 1914. This did not go too well with him, partly



because, as he told Kallenbach in a letter on 7 May, he had been put to "severe strain".

Explaining further the strain in another letter of 10 May, Gandhiji said :

I have told you that lately I have gone through mental shocks and agonies I have never gone through before. I do not want to write anything. I don't want to talk to anybody. I want to live in solitude.

On 17 May he again wrote to Kallenbach :

This fast has been a very rich but very bitter and harmful experience. I have suffered tortures and am still suffering. It has left me utterly exhausted.

And on 18 May:

This fast has brought me as near death's door as possible. I can still hardly crawl, can eat very little, restless nights, mouth bad.... The fast was a necessity. I was so grossly deceived. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

One of the reasons why this particular fast went so badly with Gandhiji was perhaps because he had not till then perfected the technique of fasting. He did not realize the importance of drinking enough water during a fast. He drank very little water because it was unpleasant and caused nausea. He did not know then that breaking the fast in the right manner was important, and that one must go slow in increasing intake of nourishment and should not try to regain lost strength too fast by increasing the intake of food as quickly as possible. In the earlier week-long fast, moreover, he had been taking Kuhne's hip-baths every day. In the fast of two weeks' duration he had given up doing so after two or three days. The result was that his throat became parched, he became weak and during the last few days of the fast, he could hardly speak except in a very low voice. He was, however, able to carry on his work and give dictation. He gave directions and



provided guidance wherever necessary, but had not regained his normal strength when he left South Africa on 18 July.

On board the ship Gandhiji tried to have walks on the deck in order to improve his appetite and digest what he ate. He wanted to regain his strength by exercising his muscles, but the effect was the opposite. He developed severe pain in his calf muscles and was much worse on arrival in London. The diet of fruits and nuts that he had been taking as one meal a day for several weeks was deficient in vitamin B which his body badly needed.

4

At Madeira they had learnt that war might break out at any time. By the time they entered the English Channel on 4 August, it had broken out. Their boat was stopped for some time. When they were allowed to proceed, it took a long time for the boat to be safely towed through the submarine mines which had been laid all through the Channel. They reached Southampton after two days on 6 August. In London Gandhiji met Jivraj Mehta, who was there for his medical studies. He advised Gandhiji to take complete rest for a few days if he did not wish to lose the use of his legs altogether. [Autobiography, pp.345-46]

In London Gandhiji stayed at first in the "ageing morning house of his student days," at 60 Talbot Road, Bayswater, just two blocks from his 1891 residence with Dr. Oldfield. There he took rooms with Deepchand Zaveri, a Gujarati diamond merchant. Later, in early October, he moved to the hostel of M. M. Gandevia, at 16 Trebovir Road, West Kensington, close to where he had stayed as a student in 1888 on coming to London for the first time.

Gokhale, not himself being present in London, had arranged that a reception be given to Gandhiji on his arrival in London. Sarojini Naidu, the young poetess who came to be known later as the Nightingale of India, had been in



London for two years and was directed by Gokhale to look after Gandhiji and take him to the reception.

She thus tells the story of her first meeting with Gandhiji :

I had not been able to meet his ship on his arrival, but the next afternoon I went wandering around in search of his lodgings in an obscure part of Kensington and climbed the steep stairs of an old, unfashionable house, to find an open door framing a living picture of a little man with a shaven head, seated on the floor on a black prison blanket and eating a messy meal of squashed tomatoes and olive oil out of a wooden prison bowl. Around him were ranged some battered tins of parched groundnuts and tasteless biscuits of dried plantain flour. I burst instinctively into happy laughter at this amusing and unexpected vision of a famous leader whose name had already become a household word in our country. He lifted his eyes and laughed back at me saying: 'Ah, you must be Mrs. Naidu! Who else dare be so irreverent? Come in,' he said, 'and share my meal.'

'No thanks' I replied, sniffing. 'What an abominable mess it is !'
[James D. Hunt, Gandhi in London, pp.178-79. Mrs. Naidu, who wrote this account in 1949 – almost 34 years after the event – appears to be mistaken about the place where Gandhiji was staying, for Gandhiji moved to the Kensington address only in October]

Sarojini Naidu took Gandhiji to the reception at the Hotel Cecil which was held on Saturday 8 August from 3 to 6 p.m. All the leading Indians in London and many English friends had been invited. Those who attended included Mrs. Wybergh and Albert Cartwright. Sir William Wedderburn and Lord Ampthill sent regrets. A reception committee of 56 members had been set up with



Hon. Bhupendranath Basu of Calcutta who was then leading an Indian National Congress deputation to India Office and was soon to become president of the Congress, as chairman, and M. M. Gandevia as secretary. Other prominent persons present at the reception included Sachchidanand Sinha, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Coomaraswamy, Ameer Ali, Mrs. Naidu, and J. M. Parikh.

Gandhiji in his speech at the reception talked about events in South Africa and recalled the sacrifices of those who had laid down their lives for the victory of Satyagraha in that country. But before that he talked of the 'crisis', the war and the sufferings of the families of young men who had gone to the front. He said:

Since we reached England and heard the news, I have been reading and thinking about it. I think of husbands and sons who have gone to fight; of mothers, wives and sisters left weeping behind. I ask: 'What is my duty?' I am an exile of 21 years from my motherland, so I cannot speak as the representative of ... India. ... If I were in South Africa, I should certainly speak as the representative of my people [in that country]. I have not yet come to any conclusion, but trust we can do something in concrete shape [C.W.M.G., Vol.X, p.523]

There was great enthusiasm and patriotism, with demonstrations and recruiting parades and vast mobilization of the community for the war effort in London at that time. After more than ten years Gandhiji recalled :

London in those days was a sight worth seeing. There was no panic, but all were busy helping to the best of their ability. Able-bodied adults began training as combatants, but what were the old, the infirm and the women to do? There was enough work for them, if they wanted. So they employed themselves in cutting and making clothes and dressings for the wounded. [Autobiography, p.348]



Mrs. Sarojini Naidu also took part in these activities.

6

In London Gandhiji learnt that Gokhale had been stranded in Paris. He had gone to Vichy for spa treatment and was on his way back when the war was declared. There was no knowing when he would be able to come. Gandhiji did not wish to leave without meeting Gokhale. He had to wait till Gokhale came. Gandhiji had been very busy in South Africa. Here in London he had nothing to do. It was a strange feeling.

Sorabji Adajania, a Parsi who had been a co-satyagrahi with Gandhiji in South Africa and had been to jail several times, was studying for the bar in London at that time. Gandhiji had sent him there in preference to one of his sons. Dr. Pranjivan Mehta had offered to finance one of his sons' studies in London. Gandhiji had accepted the offer provided he could nominate anyone he considered fit. He at first chose Chhaganlal, his nephew, and when he fell ill and came back, he selected Sorabji. He wanted Sorabji to become a barrister and take his place in South Africa.

Through Sorabji Gandhiji met Jivraj Mehta and also some other Indian students in London. A meeting of Indian students in England and Ireland was called within a week of Gandhiji's arrival in London. Gandhiji suggested to them that they should help England in her hour of need. He felt that the Indian students should help the war effort.

Most of the students were embittered and could not accept his advice. The Indians were slaves, they said, and Englishmen were their masters. How could a slave cooperate with the master in the hour of the master's need? Was it not the duty of the slave to seek freedom and make the master's difficulty his opportunity? This argument did not appeal to Gandhiji. Gandhiji was aware of the



difference of status between Indians and Englishmen, but he did not believe that Indians had been quite reduced to slavery. He felt it was more the fault of the British officials than of the British system and individuals could be converted through love. "If we would improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need," he said. [*Ibid*, p.397]

The opponents held that this was the best opportunity to make a bold declaration of Indian demands. But Gandhiji stuck to his point of view and insisted that England's difficulty should not be treated as India's opportunity. It would be more becoming, he said, to offer unconditional cooperation to the British Government, help them win the war and then press their demands. He knew how the English Government in South Africa had treated the Indians there after the Boer War. And yet as a satyagrahi he persisted in advising Indians to stand by Britain in her hour of need. [*Ibid*, pp.279-80]

Gandhiji invited Indians to volunteer themselves "unconditionally" for war service. The response was good. More than 50 offered their services. Almost all the provinces of India were represented in the list of those who volunteered. Gandhiji wrote to Lord Crewe on 14 August and offered the unconditional services of Indians for the war effort. The offer was accepted after some hesitation.

Charles Roberts, Under-Secretary of State, replied thanking Gandhiji on behalf of Lord Crewe and expressed warm recognition of his loyal services. He added :

His Lordship desires to accept the offer in the spirit in which it had been made, and he has given his earnest consideration to the manner in



which the services of the Indian community can be utilized to the best interest of the Empire.

He was disposed to think, Roberts continued, that it would not be advisable for Indian students to volunteer for military duties. If they enlisted in the force "which Lord Kitchener is now raising, they may not be able to leave it for three years' time." His Lordship was very averse to encouraging them, without the sanction of their parents, to take a step which would so seriously interrupt the purpose for which they had come to England, and which might prejudice their whole future. "Neither is it possible to advise them to join the Territorial Force, as the establishment is now complete, and a long waiting list is already in existence, so that at the present it is impossible to secure enrolment in that force."

There was, however, Roberts added, another sphere of public duty, not less important, "for which in this country we are in the habit of depending very largely upon voluntary assistance, and this consists in rendering aid to the sick and wounded." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, pp.642-43]

This letter would suggest that the British at that stage had some reservations about letting Indians join the army which might bring about situations in which Indian officers would be in command of English troops. Subtle race prejudice and colour consciousness probably underlay Lord Crewe's concern for the studies of Indian students. The Colonial Secretary might also have been afraid of Indians trained in warfare later lending a helping hand to the Indian leaders asking for home rule.

On 26 August the first batch of volunteers met at the Regent Street Polytechnic Institute for six weeks' instruction in first aid, sanitation and hygiene



under Dr. James Cantlie who had trained many similar units for the British Red Cross. Dr. Cantlie had served in China for many years and was a friend of Sun Yat-sen. He got on well with the Indian students. They were 59 in the first class and according to Gandhiji's report their number rose to 70 the following week. At the end of the first week there was a test. Questions were asked as to what treatment to give for opium poisoning, how to treat a fracture of the collar bone, how to stop bleeding from a wound in the palm. Gandhiji had always been interested in treating the sick and had even thought of taking training as a doctor at one stage. He was fascinated by the curriculum.

For further training Col. Baker was the Indian volunteers' head as the Commanding Officer of the Indian Ambulance Corps.

A working committee of 13 was nominated by Gandhiji including Sarojini Naidu, Jivraj Mehta, J. M. Parikh and Sorabji. Gandhiji was not a member of the Corps, but all recruiting was done from his residence at 60 Talbot Road, Bayswater, in the name of the Indian Volunteers Committee which was headed by him. Indians thought that though for technical training the Corps was under Col. Baker, for their internal discipline they were under Gandhiji. Gandhiji, therefore, expected that as, during the Boer War, Col. Galloway used to consult him about everything, Col. Baker would do the same. But Col. Baker had no intention of doing so.

October 2 was Gandhiji's 45th birthday. The London papers reported the arrival of Indian troops at Marseilles, heading for the front in northern France. On 3 and 4 October, the Indian Field Ambulance Training Corps under Col. Baker had its first weekend camp at Eastcote, a village just beyond the Western suburbs of London, about 11 miles from Gandhiji's residence by the Metropolitan line. The



sports field and some buildings on an adjoining estate had been lent for the Camp.

Gandhiji attended the Camp and served fruit and nuts for meals to the Corps. On 7 October Sorabji wrote to Chhaganlal at Phoenix : "Col. Baker is a good man, we have no hard work at present. Games and things like that. It will be a good experience." [S.N. 6054, quoted in Hunt, Gandhi in London, p.183]. He soon had to change his opinion.

Gandhiji had been going for drills, walking the two miles distance though he was still weak. He developed pleurisy with pain in the chest. Though he attended the first camp, he could not stay over the weekend and had to come away early. Col. Baker appointed some Oxford students as section leaders without consulting Gandhiji or anyone else. There had been, moreover, some invidious distinctions between Indians and Englishmen. All this led to resentment among Indians.

Sorabji, who was considered to be a shrewd man by Gandhiji, came to him complaining of the high-handedness of Col. Baker in appointing Oxford students as section leaders. "Beware of this man," said Sorabji. "He seems inclined to lord it over us. We will have none of his orders. We are prepared to look upon him as our instructor. But the youngsters he has appointed to instruct us also feel as though they had come as our masters." Col. Baker, it may be noted, had served in the Indian army and had probably been affected by the arrogance of British officers in India.

Gandhiji tried to pacify Sorabji, though he too had noticed Col. Baker's high-handedness. Sorabji was not convinced. He smiled and told Gandhiji: "You are too trusting. These people will deceive you with wretched words, and when



at last you see through them, you will ask us to resort to satyagraha, and so come to grief, and bring us all to grief along with you." [Autobiography, p.351]

Gandhiji laughed and told him, "What else but grief can you hope to come to after having cast in your lot with me? A satyagrahi is born to be deceived. ... Have I not told you times without number that ultimately a deceiver only deceives himself?" [*Ibid*, p.352]

The talk however set him thinking.

Gandhiji was not able to go to the camp held on 10 and 11 October. There was a shortage of blankets, the rations were unsatisfactory and there was discrimination between Indians and Englishmen. The Commanding Officer began to exercise his authority freely. He wanted the Indians to realize that he was their head in all matters – military and non-military.

Sorabji came to Gandhiji again and told him that they must have it out with the Commanding Officer. The Indian students and others had joined the Corps for a cause which they had taken up in the interest of their self-respect. It was unthinkable for them to put up with loss of self-respect.

Gandhiji wrote to Col. Baker, drawing his attention to the complaints of the Indians and asked him to come to see him as he himself was too ill to go to see him. The officer did not like the letter and the suggestions. He wrote back to Gandhiji to say that the complaints should be set out in writing and Gandhiji should impress upon the complainants that the proper thing would be for them to send their complaints to him through their section officers "who will inform me through their instructors".

Gandhiji had not expected such a curt reply. He wrote back to say that he did not care to exercise any authority and agreed that in the military sense he



was no more than any other private. But he had believed that as chairman of the Volunteer Corps, he should be allowed to act unofficially as the representative of the Indian Corps. He also attributed the grievance and the serious dissatisfaction caused to the appointment of section officers without reference to the feelings of the Corps and suggested that those officers should be recalled and the Corps asked to elect their own section leaders subject to the Commander's approval.

The Commander did not agree to this. He said that election of section leaders was repugnant to military discipline and that recall of section leaders already appointed would undermine all discipline.

The Indians could not accept this position. They held a meeting and decided to withdraw from the drill and face the possible consequences of satyagraha which Gandhiji told them could be serious. A very large majority voted for the following resolution, irrespective of consequences :

This meeting of the Indian Volunteers of the Indian Field Ambulance Training Corps hereby places on record its deep sense of regret in connection with the appointment of Corporals without further reference to the wishes of the members of the Corps and expresses further regret that the Commanding Officer has not seen his way to comply with the reasonable request of the Chairman of the Corps suggesting that the appointments already made may be recalled and that members may be given an opportunity of electing, during the training period, corporals and other officers subject to confirmation by the Commanding Officer, and respectfully resolves that, unless the appointments above mentioned are recalled and some means adopted of ascertaining definitely the wishes of the members of the Corps in making fresh appointments, the members will be reluctantly obliged to abstain from further drilling and camping.



Gandhiji wrote to the Commanding Officer again telling him what a severe disappointment his letter rejecting Gandhiji's suggestions had been to the volunteers and enclosed a copy of the resolution passed. He again assured Col. Baker that he was not fond of exercising authority; he merely wanted to serve. He brought to his notice his earlier experience of working with the South African Ambulance Corps at the time of the Boer War. There was never any problem between the Corps and the Commanding Officer, Col. Galloway, he said. The Colonel never took a step without a reference to Gandhiji with a view to ascertaining the wishes of the Corps.

This annoyed Col. Baker still more. He regarded the meeting and the resolution as a serious breach of discipline.

Gandhiji now addressed a letter to the Under-Secretary of State on 16 October and acquainted him with the facts. He also sent him a copy of the resolution. He held that as they were still under training, the military discipline as such did not apply to them. He wrote:

I submit that Col. Baker has grievously misunderstood his position and that of the Corps. I venture to think:

1. That up to the present we are only probationers undergoing training in ambulance work.
2. That we have yet to sign contracts which would bind us in the military sense.
3. That the internal administration of the Corps should rest in the hands of the Volunteers' Committee.
4. That our services have been accepted only as a voluntary aid detachment and that, therefore, the full military code can never apply to us.



Gandhiji added that he did not know the military code. But if a grave and punishable breach of discipline had been committed in the calling of the meeting alluded to by the Indians or in any other manner, he alone must be held responsible and he would cheerfully bear the penalty. "But if the Corps is to be held together, I cannot help feeling that the appointments of the Corporals should be recalled, the status of the Corps exactly defined and the position of Col. Baker and my Committee determined. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, pp.540-41]

Roberts must have felt embarrassed. He had tried to reason with Col. Baker and had failed. He replied saying that conditions in South Africa were different and pointed out that under the rules the section leaders were appointed by the Commanding Officer, but assured him that in future the Commanding Officer would consider Gandhiji's recommendations while making appointments. Gandhiji again wrote to Roberts on 22 October:

Before I advise the Committee, I would like an assurance that the principle of consultation which Col. Baker will recognize is not to be merely personal to me but that it would apply to my Committee and that its status and existence will be recognized by Col. Baker and that the principle of consultation is to be applied to all matters affecting the internal administration of the Corps. I presume, too, that the circulars which have been issued, presumably by Col. Baker, inviting Indians individually to offer their services, will no longer be issued if my Committee resumes cooperation with him.

Baker had issued circulars inviting recruits, to which Gandhiji objected in the letter quoted above. Again on 25 October he wrote to Roberts:

... The issue of the circular which was drafted by Mr. Mallet and myself, and of which I enclose a copy herewith, was simultaneous with the



appointment of Col. Baker as the Commanding Officer. That circular expressly contemplates exclusive recruiting by my Committee.... It is, therefore, hardly fair to suggest that I am now even challenging Col. Baker's right to recruit - a right which never belonged to him. Indeed, if I may say so, we have a right to complain that, whilst we were trying our best to heal the breach, circulars inviting recruits were issued by Col. Baker and even the Students' Department intervened and more or less formally wrote to those who were likely to respond to Col. Baker's efforts. These attempts suggest that there is no intention on his part to retain my Committee's cooperation. It would certainly have been more becoming if he had waited for the result of the negotiations carded on by me for a settlement. If, therefore, in spite of resumption of duties by the Corps, Col. Baker were to continue recruiting, the Corps would lose its national and voluntary character and his action would be contrary to the circular referred to by me and the practice based upon it. It would moreover be contrary to the spirit of your letter of the 18th August wherein the signatories to the offer were invited to form a Committee. The least that is, in my opinion, due to the Committee is, in the event of a settlement, to be allowed to retain its exclusive right to recruit.

Gandhiji continued :

Your letter further suggests that it would be impracticable for Col. Baker to accept the principle of consultation with my Committee in matters affecting the internal administration of the Corps.... He has not... found it impracticable to seek and value the cooperation and advice of the Committee rendered through me as to the method of managing the Commissariat, the way of dealing with the difficult question of different



sections wanting different foods as also of dealing with the equally difficult question of uniforms. It is not suggested by me that upon matters of rendering service and doing work, my Committee might be consulted. I am well aware of the fact that, in the forms of contract voluntarily signed by us, we have undertaken to obey all lawful commands of our Commanding Officer. But we have not undertaken to subscribe to the exercise by that officer of functions that we have all along understood do not belong to him. [*Ibid.* pp.543-44]

Under-Secretary Roberts came to see Gandhiji to explain the situation and to persuade him to withdraw the boycott. There was reason for it. They badly needed the help of the Indian volunteers.

There had been many casualties among the Indian army on the front and help was badly needed in looking after them. The Commanding Officer had succeeded in creating a split among the Indian volunteers. Some of those who had voted for the resolution mentioned above, yielded to the Commanding Officer's threats and persuasions and went back on their promise of boycott unless their conditions regarding the recall of section leaders were accepted. A large number, however, remained steadfast and did not go for drill and training.

Considering the unexpectedly large number of wounded soldiers who arrived at the Netley Hospital, the number of those members of the Indian Ambulance Corps whom the Commanding Officer could persuade to go to Netley was not enough. Roberts, the Under-Secretary, paid many visits to Gandhiji who was ill. His wife, Lady Cecilia, too, often came with him and took great interest in Gandhiji's health. They became good friends of Gandhiji. Roberts tried to persuade Gandhiji to send the rest of the Indian volunteers to Netley. He had tried to persuade Col. Baker to see the Indians' points of view, he said, but had



failed. He suggested a via media to Gandhiji and said that the non-cooperating members should form a separate corps and report to Netley where they would be responsible only to the Commanding Officer there. In this way there would be no loss of self-respect for the Indian Volunteers. The Government would be placated and the wounded would be able to get the much-needed services of the trained Indian Ambulance Corps. [Autobiography, pp.354-55]

By paying repeated visits to Gandhiji in his sick room and making telephone calls to Col. Baker at Netley, Charles Roberts was able to get the matter settled on 31 October. The suggestion of the Under-Secretary appealed to Gandhiji and the other members of the Corps. The miniature Satyagraha thus came to an end. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, p.670]. Gandhiji wrote to Chhaganlal on 31 October "The Satyagraha is over. We got what we wanted." [*Ibid*, p.547]

The two points settled were that Gandhiji was to oversee the recruiting and Col. Baker was to consult him informally in non-military matters. [Roberts to Baker; Pyarelal Papers]. On 9 December the number of volunteers had risen to 150. There were 60 at Netley, 58 at Brighton, 20 at Brockenhurst and 6 aboard hospital ships. There had been a tacit understanding on the part of the British authorities that Gandhiji would not be allowed to go anywhere near Netley or any other hospital where the Corps would be serving. Gandhiji was not unaware of it. [Gandhi in London, p.187]. He was ill and the ostensible reason for his being advised not to go to any of the hospitals was concern for his health.

The Indian and European friends of Gandhiji were surprised and puzzled by Gandhiji's decision to help the British war effort. As a believer in non-violence, how could he, they asked, help in any war? He had been thoroughly disillusioned after working in the Ambulance Corps during the Zulu rebellion and had said that



he would not do it again. Why had he changed his decision? A letter he wrote to Pragji Desai explains Gandhiji's thinking:

... I can well understand that you have doubts.... I shall try to answer them. A satyagrahi cannot support war directly or indirectly. There are no two opinions about that. I am not such a perfect satyagrahi. I am trying to be one.... Soon after I landed here, the war started. I spent some days thinking out my duty. It seemed to me that to go on living in England, keeping my thoughts to myself, also amounted to taking part in the war. It was obvious to me that, if this island were not protected by the Navy, the people would starve and they would all fall into the hands of Germans. I am being protected, therefore, by that Navy, which means that I was indirectly supporting the war. As a satyagrahi, it was my duty to go away to a spot where I would not need such protection and could do without the food so procured.... I am not, however, ready for this manner of living. I could not summon the necessary courage. It is for cultivating such courage that I am going to India, where the circumstances are favourable....

... What is my next duty, then? Brothers, husbands and sons have gone, rightly or wrongly, to get themselves killed, leaving behind weeping sisters, wives and mothers. Thousands have already been killed. And am I, doing nothing, to continue enjoying myself, eating my food? The Gita says that he who eats without performing yajna (sacrifice) is a thief. In the present situation here sacrifice meant, and means, self-sacrifice. I saw, therefore, that I too must perform yajna. I myself could not shoot, but could nurse the wounded. I might even get Germans to nurse. I could nurse them without any partisan spirit. There would be no violation of the spirit of compassion then. And so I decided to offer my services....



The main point, however, is whether I could even undertake to nurse the wounded. I have explained it, therefore, at greater length.... It is after much deliberation that I have taken this step. Whenever I was questioned there, I used to reply that I could not even join in ambulance work now. You have seen that my position is still the same. It is on a level with the idea that I must not kill a snake. But so long as, in my cowardice, I fear a snake, I would certainly remove it to a distance, if not kill it outright. This also is a form of violence....

... So long as I have not developed absolute fearlessness, I cannot be a perfect satyagrahi. I am striving incessantly to achieve it, and will continue to do so. Till I have succeeded, do all of you save me and put up with my cowardice. You should all keep struggling to make yourselves fearless [*Ibid*, p. 182; C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, p.531].

Before that, on 18 September, Gandhiji had written to Maganlal:

All of you may want to know why I have undertaken even the nursing of the wounded. Recently I used to say, in South Africa, that, as satyagrahis we cannot help in this way either, for such help also amounted to supporting a war. One who would not help a slaughter-house should not help in cleaning the butcher's house either. But I found that, living in England, I was in a way participating in the war. London owes the food it gets in war time to the protection of the Navy. Thus to take this food was also a wrong thing. There was only one right course left, which was to go away to live in some mountain or cave in England itself and subsist there on whatever food or shelter Nature might provide, without seeking assistance from any human being. I do not yet possess the spiritual strength necessary for this. It seemed to me a base thing, therefore, to accept food tainted by war without working for it. When thousands have come



forward to lay down their lives only because they thought it their duty to do so, how could I sit still'? A rifle this hand will never fire. And so there only remained nursing the wounded and I took it up. This is how I communed to myself. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XII, pp.531-32]

An added reason for his participation in the war effort was, it seems, his high regard for military training and respect for military discipline. Gandhiji had accepted military service in the Boer War of 1900 and the Zulu rebellion of 1906. Six months before the Zulu rebellion he had been arguing strenuously in the columns of *Indian Opinion* that the Indians of Natal should be allowed to raise, not a medical unit, but an Infantry Corps. [*Indian Opinion*, 18 November and 2 December, 1905]. He believed then that military service was evidence of accepting the responsibilities of citizenship. There were many other advantages of military training and experience, such as discipline, hard work, learning team work in a cooperative spirit and developing qualities of leadership. Moreover, the companionship of a shared task broke down barriers between men and made them comrades and brothers-in-arms. He used military metaphors for satyagraha, speaking of a non-violent army, and of the virtues of courage and sacrifice, which illustrate his respect for military service.

Gokhale had come back to London on 16 August in connection with his work for the Royal Commission on the Public Services in India. He lived mostly in a cottage in Twickenham as a guest of Sir Ratan Tata. Gokhale's poor health featured in the columns of the Times. He was in London till 24 October, when he left for India, as he could not stand the fog and the cold weather. From 22 September to 6 October he was on the coast in Eastbourne. He spent eight weeks in London while Gandhiji was there. During this period they met almost every



day. It was the last and the longest time they were together, as Gokhale died on 19 February 1915, a month and ten days after Gandhiji's return to India on 9 January 1915.

Gandhiji and Kallenbach used to go to see him in London at the National Liberal Club. [Gandhi in London, p.188]. There is no record of their conversations. But Gandhiji writes in his autobiography that they mostly talked about the war. Kallenbach as a German knew the geography of Germany well and he had travelled all over Europe. So he used to point out on the map the places in connection with the war. Gandhiji's health and his dietetic experiments were also the topic of their conversations.

Gandhiji was being treated by Jivraj Mehta who insisted that he should take milk and cereals. Gokhale advised him to take what the doctor prescribed in the interest of his health. Gandhiji found it difficult to yield to Gokhale's pressure. But Gokhale would not take a refusal. So Gandhiji asked him to give him 24 hours to think about the matter and come to a decision. This was agreed to.

Gokhale did not think much of Gandhiji's fruitarian diet, but Kallenbach had been sharing the experiment with him and had liked it. On the way back from the Club where they met Gokhale, Gandhiji discussed with Kallenbach what he was to do. What was his duty? Kallenbach was in favour of his giving up the restrictions on food and begin taking milk and cereals as advised by the doctor. Gandhiji, therefore, had to decide the matter for himself.

Gandhiji spent a sleepless night thinking over the whole matter. By the morning he had come to a decision. He had given up milk on learning of the wicked procedure adopted by govalas (cowherds) to extract the last drop of milk from the cows' and buffalos' udders. Religious consideration had been predominant in giving up milk. So he could not compromise on that. He went and



informed Gokhale that he would not take milk or milk products or meat even if it should mean death. Gokhale understood his position and told Jivraj Mehta not to insist on his taking milk but prescribe anything within the limits that Gandhiji had set for himself. The doctor protested, but he was helpless. He advised Gandhiji to take cereals and moong (a lentil) soup with a dash of asafoetida in it. Gandhiji agreed and took it for a day or two, but his pain increased. So he went back to his fruit diet. [Autobiography, pp.356-57]

The persistence of his pleurisy was causing anxiety. Gandhiji sent for Dr. Allinson, a well-known adherent of vegetarianism, who treated diseases by changes in diet. Gandhiji had met him in 1890 in his student days. Allinson advised him to give up all fats for a few days and live on brown bread and raw vegetables such as radishes, beets, onions and other tubers and fresh fruit, mainly oranges. If he had difficulty in chewing raw vegetables, he said, he could have them grated fine. But the vegetables were not to be cooked. Gandhiji tried this diet for two or three days. "My body was not in a condition to enable me to do full justice to the experiment. I was nervous about taking raw vegetables", he recorded in his autobiography. [*Ibid*, p.357]

Dr. Allinson had also advised him to keep all the windows of his room open all the twenty-four hours so that he had plenty of fresh air. The room had French windows. If these were kept open, rain would come in. Gandhiji had the fanlight glass broken to let in fresh air and kept the windows as much open as he could without letting in rain. Dr. Allinson also wanted him to bathe in tepid water, have an oil massage, especially over painful parts and walk for 15 to 20 minutes every day. Gandhiji liked all these suggestions and followed them. His health improved, but he was not completely cured. [*Ibid*, p.358]



Lady Cecilia Roberts searched for a milk substitute. Someone suggested to her condensed milk as a substitute, and she happily brought a tin to Gandhiji. He opened it, poured the contents in water and began to sip it. It tasted just like milk. He then read the label and discovered that it was milk and not a milk substitute. Lady Cecilia was very sorry. She had not intentionally deceived him.

Dr. Allinson called again. He withdrew his restriction on nuts and fats and allowed Gandhiji to take cooked vegetables with rice. Gandhiji added these articles to his moong soup and started taking them along with olive oil and nuts and fruit. He felt better. There was greater nourishment in the new diet. [*Ibid*, p.358]

10

As November came, Kasturba was not feeling well. In December the cold and fog were too much for her, Roberts came to see Gandhiji and advised him to go back to India in the interest of his own and his wife's health. "If, on your recovery, you should find the war still going on, you will have many opportunities there of rendering help," he said. And Gandhiji decided to take his advice and go home. [*Ibid*, p.359]

There was a farewell reception for Gandhiji and Kasturba at Westminster Hotel on 18 December which was attended by many English and Indian friends. Sir Henry Cotton, Charles Roberts and Olive Schreiner of South Africa among others made speeches. Gandhiji thanked all his friends and hoped that relations between India and England would be strengthened by each giving its best to the other. On 19 December they were seen off by some of their friends at Liverpool Street Station. The train took them to the Docks at Tilbury where he had disembarked in 1888 as a young student.

Writes James Hunt:



It had been a difficult time; Gandhi was a leader and a man of action, and he was really between tasks. Having completed his South African mission, he anticipated a brief interlude before undertaking the as-yet undefined Indian mission. The war had changed all that, and illness had complicated the situation. He acted as a leader in the crisis, establishing the Volunteer Corps, only to find his position unrecognized and considered an interference. A desperate and ingenious struggle restored his position, but it was a victory in name only, for events continued to render him ineffectual. Then followed long weeks of illness and near-idleness. No wonder his departure from the city seemed to come as a liberation....
[Gandhi in London, p.190]

Gandhiji left behind in South Africa and in England many who had been deeply and profoundly affected by this frail man with a mighty strength of the soul. Prof. Gilbert Murray in an essay "The Soul As It Is, and How To Deal With It" wrote:

When I met him [Gandhiji] in England in 1914, he ate, I believe, only rice and drank only water, and slept on the floor; and his wife who seemed to be his companion in everything, lived in the same way. His conversation was that of a cultivated and well-read man with a certain indefinable suggestion of saintliness.

Murray then went on to describe the struggle in South Africa which he called "a battle of the unaided human soul against overwhelming material force" and ended with a warning: "Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his



body which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase on his soul." [The Hibbert Journal, Vol. XVI (2 January 1918), 191-205, p.199 quoted in Hunt, Gandhi in London, p.191]

This essay, says Hunt, made John Haynes Holmes, Minister of the Community Church of New York, in 1921, a foremost admirer of Gandhiji.

On his return voyage home Gandhiji wrote to West:

I have been so often prevented from reaching India that it seems hardly real that I am sitting in a ship bound for India. And having reached there what shall I do with myself? However, 'Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom lead Thou me on. [C.W.M.G., Vol. XII, p.566]

The same day he wrote to Chhaganlal:

Wonderful is the sport of God: I have been able to leave London unexpectedly early, and in an unexpected manner. [*Ibid*, p. 566]

London was behind him. His thoughts were of India. Indians, especially the younger generation, awaited his arrival with high hopes.



CHAPTER II: BACK HOME AT LAST

1

Gandhiji was excited when he got a glimpse of the shore of India as his ship *s. s. Arabia* approached Bombay. His health had greatly improved and Kasturba also had kept well on board the ship.

The Bombay Chronicle reported on 9 January that Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi were expected in Bombay by the incoming mail and would alight at Apollo Bunder on the 9th morning. A committee had been formed for giving him a reception on Tuesday, the 12th of January, at Mount Petit, Peddar Road. It consisted of Sir Pheroza Shah Mehta as Chairman, G. K. Gokhale as Vice-Chairman, Jehangir Bomanjee Petit as Hon. Secretary and Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Sir Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy, Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim, Sir Bhalechandra Krishna, Manmohandas Ramjee, H. A. Wadia, M. A. Jinnah, K. Natarajan, Hazee Esmail, Bomanjee Dinshaw Petit, Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh, C. H. Setalvad, D. E. Wacha, Narottam Morarjee, Gokuldas, B. G. Horniman, Kaikobad Dinshaw and Adenwallah as members. [The Bombay Chronicle, 9 January 1915]

Even before the steamer reached the harbour, a launch brought a deputation comprising Bhalechandra, N. M. Gokuldas, C. Dinshaw Adenwallah, Aminuddin Tyebji, Hormusji Wadia, N. M. Samarth, J. B. Petit, B. G. Horniman, D. N. Bahadurjee, D. B. Bam, V. P. Vaidya, D. G. Dalvi and Purushottamdas Thakurdas to welcome Gandhiji and Kasturba on board the ship. They greeted the hero of South African satyagraha, chatted with him for a while and went back by the same launch to welcome the Gandhis at Apollo Bunder. [The Bombay Chronicle, 9 January 1915]



By that time a large crowd had gathered there and as the launch approached Apollo Bunder it was greeted with cheers. "When Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi stepped ashore, they were cheered again and again. The press of the people was so great that it was with great difficulty that they could reach their motor-car. By that time they were almost hidden under the garlands which had been pressed on them by their admirers."

The car started eventually. The crowd pursued it for some distance. On the way a halt was made at Hornby Road where the members of the Modh Bania caste (Gandhiji's community) garlanded Gandhiji and Kasturba. Another halt was made in Sheikh Memon street where Kasturba and Gandhiji spent about a quarter of an hour in the shop of Revashankar Jhaveri, elder brother of Gandhiji's friend Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta, at whose bungalow at Santa Cruz they were to stay. "All along the route to Peddar Road, large crowds had gathered and there was much cheering as the car proceeded. At Gokuldas's bungalow, Mr. Gandhi was greeted by his friend the Hon. Mr. G. K. Gokhale and by Mr. Parekh." [The Bombay Chronicle, 11 January 1915]

A Parsi journalist had been waiting to interview Gandhiji. He began to ask questions in English. For an educated Indian in those days to speak in English was the hallmark of culture. It conferred a far higher prestige than any other accomplishment.

Gandhiji did not reply in English. He said to the journalist: "Friend, you are an Indian and I too am an Indian. Your mother tongue is Gujarati and so is mine. Why then do you ask your questions in English? Do you imagine that I have forgotten my native tongue because I have lived in South Africa? Or do you consider it more dignified to talk in English because I am a barrister?"



The press representative was so taken aback that he gave this remark of Bapu the most prominent place in his account of the interview, records Kakasaheb Kalelkar in his reminiscences. [Kaka Kalelkar, Stray Glimpses of Bapu, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950, pp.3-4]

A Correspondent of The Bombay Chronicle interviewed Gandhiji on the day of his arrival. Gandhiji told him that he had been away for almost a quarter of a century and continuously for the preceding thirteen years. He was very happy to see the motherland again and both he and his wife were overwhelmed by the kind and hearty reception the public had given them. He hoped that their future conduct would prove them worthy of it. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.1-2]

The Bombay Chronicle and The Times of India representatives asked Gandhiji about South Africa. He said that in South Africa they had won on all the points for which Satyagraha had been offered. The biggest gain was that the Government of South Africa had recognized that Indians had to be consulted on all legislative matters concerning them. All the problems had not been solved, but with better understanding that had been established, they should not have any fears about the future of Indians in that country. [*Ibid*, pp.1-2]

2

A reception for Gandhiji and Kasturba was held on Monday, 11 January, at Ghatkopar, a suburb of Bombay. Gandhiji was presented with an address enclosed in a silver casket, with fetters made of gold. Rao Bahadur Vassanji Khimji presided.

Gandhiji in acknowledging the gift, described the silver casket and the fetters as somewhat unsuitable for a person who had neither a roof over his head nor locked doors to his house. Fetters, whether of gold or iron, were the same to him, "as they were fetters after all". Functions like the one they had held, he said,



were most uncongenial to him, whose only thought was to serve his motherland irrespective of praise or blame. He expected no reward whatsoever.

The only idea behind his work was duty, said Gandhiji. He had done merely a small fraction of it so far, he said, and he had returned home after many years to do what he could for the motherland in the years left to him. [*Ibid*, p.3]

Jamnadas Dwarkadas records in his memoirs that Gandhiji auctioned the gifts there and then. [Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Political Memoirs, p.10]. Auctioning of gifts at public meetings was more and more to become a practice with him.

The 12 January reception for the Gandhi couple at Mount Petit at Peddar Road was a spectacular affair. The Bombay Chronicle reported that every single sect and community was represented. The Legislative Council was represented by all the members of the Executive Council and many other official and non-official members came. High Court judges and advocates, members of the University Senate, the Corporation and every other public body in the city were present, besides the members of the Reception Committee. Over 600 people had accepted the invitation of the Reception Committee. Many more came who had not sent in a formal acceptance so that full attendance was probably over 800.

Gandhiji on arrival was introduced to the guests, including Sir Richard Lamb and Mr. Claude Hill with both of whom he chatted for some time. Then there were speeches on the lawns.

Jamnadas Dwarkadas, a young activist in those days and a close disciple of Annie Besant, was deeply influenced by Lokmanya Tilak and Gandhiji. He records in his memoirs :

When he [Gandhiji] came to India in 1915, the halo of a great and saintly patriot was round him. Clad in simple hand-spun, hand-woven



Kathiawari garb, he looked so different from the rest of the leaders in India who were generally seen dressed in the best type of garments fashioned in foreign style. There was something extraordinary, simple and unique in Gandhiji's mode of dressing, which made a very deep impression on me and a vast number of young people in this country. The superb position which his heroism in South Africa had given him, had failed to fill him with the pride or arrogance which comes to lesser minds through a sense of self-consciousness. Gandhiji was too self-conscious, or, to put it explicitly, too much aware of the presence of the Self in him to be pettily self-conscious. Hence came his simplicity, his humility and his transparent sincerity and honesty...

Referring to the Mount Petit reception, Jamnadas Dwarkadas records:

At a party given soon after his arrival by the Imperial Citizenship Association of India in the late Mr. Jehangir Petit's palatial gardens in Bombay, he saluted the tall figure of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta on his arrival at the party by prostrating in the traditional or ancient fashion. [*Ibid*, p.3]

The Hon. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, chairman of the Reception Committee, while proposing the toast to "their honoured guests Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi," said that he did not think it was at all necessary for him to tell them anything about the life and career of Mr. Gandhi. For the last few years the whole country had resounded with the tale of his great deeds, his courage and great moral qualities, his labours and his sufferings in the cause of Indians in South Africa to enable them to assert and maintain their self-respect and their honour. It was not necessary to recount the tale which they had heard from the public platforms; read in the press, and discussed in their social life. It was enough to say that they all regarded Mr. Gandhi as a hero in the cause of Indians in South Africa, and he



might add that he (Mr. Gandhi) had narrowly escaped being made its martyr. They were, therefore, all proud of Mr. Gandhi, and, he would take leave to say, prouder still of Mrs. Gandhi. (Applause.) The most touching thing in the whole campaign that Mr. Gandhi waged in South Africa was the incident of Mrs. Gandhi insisting upon standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him in the fight and in the sufferings and privations he was prepared to undergo. "Ladies and gentlemen, so long as we have Indians like Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi, we need not despair of our country." This was greeted with loud applause. Sir Pherozeshah went on to say that they had shown that "they are possessed of the highest qualities of courage, heroism and capacity for endurance and suffering." Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi's arrival had given them an opportunity of telling them face to face how they honoured, respected and admitted them.

Sir Pherozeshah said that they bade them a cordial welcome back in their own country. Mr. Gandhi had already told them that he meant to devote the rest of his life to work and serve in India. "Let us wish him the same success here that he achieved in South Africa." He was perfectly certain that "Mr. Gandhi would be the means of doing enormous good and promoting in every way the welfare and prosperity of this country" which he cherished like themselves....

Mr. J. B. Petit, Hon. Secretary, then read a letter from Dadabhai Naoroji regretting that he could not be present. Dadabhai was glad that a gathering was being held for Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi. They deserved all the honour India could show them. [The Bombay Chronicle. 13 January 1915]

Replying to the toast, Gandhiji said that he did not know whether the right word would come to him to express the feelings that had stirred within him that afternoon. He had thought that he would be more at home in his own motherland than he was in South Africa among his countrymen there. But during the three



days that they had passed in Bombay, he and his wife felt that they were much more at home among the indentured labourers in South Africa who were the truest heroes of India. They felt that they were indeed in strange company in Bombay.

He had done nothing beyond his duty, Gandhiji continued. It remained to be seen how far he had succeeded in it. These were his sincere feelings. All that his elders had done for him, all that his political leaders had done for him, all that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had done for him, and he could recall many an incident when Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had cheered him up in his disappointments while he was a young briefless barrister, he was grateful for. He had the honour of receiving instruction, guidance, and advice also from many other distinguished countrymen of his. He had paid his respects to the Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji, that morning. Dadabhai's life was an inspiration to him. He dare not leave out one name, the name of his guide, his political leader, the Hon. Mr. Gokhale. Mr. Gokhale's life was more than an inspiration to him. Mr. Gokhale had been to him more than a brother. (Cheers.)

He must not omit to mention the deep debt that he owed to all his countrymen, Gandhiji added, let alone the memory of his revered parents who taught him to respect them and the whole country. The real heroes, he repeated, were the indentured labourers in South Africa. He wished to remind them of the old indentured Indian the late Mr. Harbat Singh, who staggered him in jail. All honour was due to the memory of Harbat Singh, who died in jail.

They had also honoured Mrs. Gandhi as the wife of the 'great Gandhi'. He had no knowledge, said Gandhiji, of the 'great Gandhi', but he could say that she could tell them more about the sufferings of women who rushed to jail with babies in their arms.



Gandhiji appealed to them to accept the services that he and his wife had come to render. They had not come to receive big entertainments. They did not think they were worthy of such expressions, which would only spoil them if ever the thought crossed their minds that they had done something to deserve such a big tamasha in their honour. He thanked them on behalf of his wife and himself most sincerely for the great honour done to them that afternoon. They hoped to receive the blessings of the whole country in their endeavour to serve their motherland. Hitherto, he said, they had known nothing of their failures. They would now see them in the naked light and would also see their faults. He asked them to be generous and overlook their faults, and thanked them again most sincerely for the very great honour done to himself and his wife. [C .W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.5-7]

3

The Bombay National Union convened a meeting at Hirabaug, Bombay on 13 January "to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi". Tilak was present, though no formal invitation was sent to him. The meeting was attended by about 250 persons. Tilak, addressing the gathering, said that "they were only doing their duty in honouring Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi, as they had fought for the honour of India in a distant land." India ought to produce more men and women with the self-sacrificing spirit of the honoured guests. This was "the lesson they had to learn from the career of Mr. Gandhi," he said.

Gandhiji expressed the gratefulness of the Indians in South Africa to the mother country for lavishly contributing to the passive resistance fund for their relief during the South African struggle. It was a pleasure for him to meet Mr. Tilak in Bombay. He intended to pay his respects to him when he visited Poona. [*Ibid*, p .7]



Joseph Baptista, referring to Gandhiji's remark that Gokhale was his guru, said that it did not matter whom Mr. Gandhi selected as his guru so long as he always held before him the ideals of honour and self-respect, as he had done throughout his life. Both he and Mr. Ali Muhammad Bhimji referred to the gallant conduct of the Indian troops in support of the cause of right in the present war. [*Ibid*, p .7]

The Servants of India Society's home in Bombay was tastefully decorated for the reception to be given to Gandhiji and Kasturba on the evening of 14 January by the members of the Bombay branch of the Society and by some of those who were associated with it as helpers, supporters and co-workers. Among those present were Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, Sir Jagmohandas, Sheth Dani, Sheth Hansraj Pragji, Mrs. Ramabai Ranade, Lady Jagmohandas, Mrs. Sonabai Jayakar, Mrs. Bahadurjee and others. On the arrival of Kasturba and Gandhiji G. K. Devadhar welcomed them on behalf of the assembled.

Gandhiji, in the course of a brief speech, said that he was proud to have seen so many men and women who helped the Servants of India Society, which would soon be the sphere of his work. He had accepted Mr. Gokhale as his political leader and guide and he considered those people fortunate who had the privilege of being associated with Mr. Gokhale. He thanked all the ladies and gentlemen on behalf of Kasturba and himself for the honour.

Sir Bhalchandra garlanded Gandhiji and Mrs. Ramabhai garlanded Mrs. Gandhi. After the distribution of flowers, etc., the whole assembly had refreshments. [*Indian Opinion*, 10 March 1915; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.8]



Over a thousand ladies of all communities assembled at a public meeting in Madhav Baug, Bombay, in the afternoon of 14 January to present Mrs. Gandhi with an address of welcome. Lady Aimai P. Mehta was in the chair.

The proceedings, in Gujarati, opened with a song of welcome. The President then said she deemed it a very great honour indeed to be called upon to chair so crowded a meeting. She felt proud to fill the chair on a unique occasion like the one that day. They had assembled to welcome a lady, who by her heroic deeds had shed lustre and glory on the womanhood of their motherland. She did not want to weary the meeting by recounting the innumerable qualities of Mrs. Gandhi, but she did desire to say that the name of Mrs. Gandhi would be written in letters of gold in the history of this ancient country along with that of her patriotic husband. In the great battle that Mr. Gandhi had fought, and fought successfully, in South Africa, Mrs. Gandhi took a leading part and shared all the sufferings, trials and privations that Mr. Gandhi underwent. And while she was speaking of Mrs. Gandhi she did not forget the other Indian ladies of South Africa, who had served the cause of the motherland with the same spirit of patriotism. In honouring Mrs. Gandhi, they were honouring those ladies also. The deeds of those ladies who went to jail with their children for the cause of their country or were thrown helpless and destitute on the open streets, had evoked feelings of admiration and praise. They deserved all the honour from their countrymen and countrywomen. In the name of the great meeting, she welcomed Mrs. Gandhi.

Lady Cowasji Jehangir, Mrs. Ramabai Ranade and Mrs. Mohsin B. Tyebji then briefly addressed the meeting expressing sentiments of admiration for the honoured guest.

Mrs. Jamnabai Sakkai read the address of welcome. In it were recounted the heroic deeds of Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi in South Africa. It was stated that the



acts of Mrs. Gandhi had not only reminded them of the ancient Rajput satis, but had raised the reputation of Indian womanhood in the eyes of the whole world. It referred to the self-denying spirit of Mrs. Gandhi and fully endorsed the following memorable words uttered by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta at the great Town Hall meeting the preceding year : "History records the deeds of many heroines, and I feel sure that Mrs. Gandhi will stand as one of the foremost heroines in the whole of the world."

Mrs. J. B. Petit then read a letter received from Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. In the course of the letter, the poetess said that though it might be the special privilege of the ladies of Bombay to accord Mrs. Gandhi a personal ovation, all Indian women must desire to associate themselves with them in spirit to do honour to one who, by her rare qualities of courage, devotion and self-sacrifice, had so signally justified and fulfilled the high traditions of Indian womanhood.... It was the ready capacity of Mrs. Gandhi for self-abnegation that made her recognize anew that the true standard of a country's greatness lay not so much in its intellectual achievement and material prosperity as in the undying spiritual ideals of love and service and sacrifice that inspired and sustained the mothers of the race.

The address was then put in a beautiful casket of silver and gold and presented to Mrs. Gandhi in the name of the "Women of Bombay".

Mrs. Gandhi on rising to reply received a tremendous ovation. She said that they had so overwhelmed her with words of kindness and praise that words failed to adequately express her gratitude for the great honour they had done her. She assured them that she had done nothing more than her duty, and that she was not at all worthy of this great honour. All honour was due to the brave women of South Africa, some of whom had died for the cause. She once again thanked them



most heartily for the very great honour done by the women of this great historic city.

The proceedings were brought to a close with a cordial vote of thanks to Lady Mehta for presiding on the occasion. [The Bombay Chronicle, 16 January 1915]

4

On the same day, 14 January, the Gurjar Sabha held a function to honour Gandhiji and Kasturba. The Bombay Chronicle reported:

Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi were entertained at a garden party yesterday evening in the spacious gardens of Mangaldas House by the members of the Gurjar Sabha. There was a very large and representative gathering and those present included Mr. Prabhashankar Pattani.

Mr. K. M. Munshi in his opening remarks said that the movement was started first by a single body as a public expression of the feelings of reverence to and admiration for the greatest son of modern Gujarat, but it was gratifying to see that it was whole-heartedly supported by the whole of the Gujarati-speaking community.

M. A. Jinnah, chairman of the meeting, welcoming the guests on behalf of the Sabha, said that he considered it a great privilege and certainly a very great honour that he should have the opportunity of welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi back to their motherland after their most strenuous and hard labour in South Africa in the cause of the Indians residing there as well as in the cause of Indians in general. Mr. Gandhi had come back to India after a quarter of a century. From the very start he had devoted himself to the cause of the Indian community in South Africa and the question of immigration in South Africa. This question had a



long history, but recently, as they were all aware, it had become an issue which threatened to destroy the very existence of Indians in South Africa. It was then that Mr. Gandhi led the South African Indian community, so to say, in a constitutional war and they all knew what trials, what troubles, what sufferings and what sacrifices he had to go through. They all knew that eventually the immediate issues which threatened the very existence of the Indian community in South Africa, had been settled in a compromise which seemed to all parties satisfactory. As one who had taken some interest in the question, he believed he was voicing the feelings of every Indian that the questions settled did not end the problem. Other issues of a graver and more important character remained "which would have to be settled as soon as possible".

Continuing, Mr. Jinnah said that he was sure that they were all very glad to see Mr. Gandhi back among them but while he (the speaker) was thinking, after reading in the press that Mr. Gandhi would now devote himself to the service of India, it struck him that it was a pity that there was nobody in South Africa who could take his place. It seemed to him that what was their gain was a terrible loss of South Africa so far as the Indians there were concerned.

He felt sure that he was expressing the sentiments of everyone when he said that Mr. Gandhi deserved not only the welcome of the Gurjar Sabha, not only of Gujarat but of the whole of India. He must not forget Mrs. Gandhi who had set an example not only for the women of India, but he might say for the women of the whole world. For a woman to stand by her husband, share his trials and sufferings and sacrifices and even to go to jail was a model of womanhood of which any country would be proud. He did not think he was exaggerating when he said that such a son of India and such a daughter of India had not only raised the reputation of India but had vindicated the honour of this great and ancient



land. They had drawn the attention of the whole world and “the whole world admired the trials, the troubles and sacrifices Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi had undergone for the cause of their country and their countrymen”.

Mr. Jinnah went on to say that he had only one more word to add. After the great war that was going on to decide the issue between might and right - and he had no doubt that right would succeed- questions affecting India would have to be considered and solved and the one word that he might say to Mr. Gandhi was, that throughout the whole country the two sister communities - Hindu and Muslim- showed themselves unanimous, absolutely one on the South African question. That was the first question and the first occasion on which the two sister communities stood together in absolute union. It had its moral and political effect on the settlement of the question. The whole of India had again stood by the Empire unitedly as one of its members. It was that same frame of mind, that same state, that same condition which they had to bring about between the two communities and most of their problems, he had no doubt, would be easily solved. "That is one problem of all the problems of India, namely, how to bring about unanimity and co-operation between the two communities so that the demands of India will be made absolutely unanimously."

He again welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi in the name of the Gurjar Sabha, and said that they took the greatest pride in receiving them that evening. [The Bombay Chronicle, 15 January 1915]

Gandhiji replying in Gujarati thanked Mr. Jinnah for presiding over the function. He said that in South Africa when anything was said about Gujaratis, it was understood to have a reference to the Hindu community only. Parsis and Mohammedans were not included. He was, therefore, glad to find a



Mohammedan member of the Gurjar Sabha who was the chairman of the function.

With regard to their words of praise and welcome, Gandhiji was at a loss to say anything. As he had said so often before, he and his wife had done nothing beyond their duty. He considered their good feelings and kind words as their blessings and he prayed to God that these might enable him and his wife to faithfully serve the country. They first intended to study all the Indian questions. He had looked upon the Hon. Mr. Gokhale as his guide and leader and he had full confidence in him. He was sure that Mr. Gokhale would not put him on the wrong track. He had visited his Excellency the Governor that morning and while thanking him for the honour, he had also mentioned to him that he was absolutely confident that under the guiding spirit of the Hon. Mr. Gokhale he would be adopting the right course.

Continuing, Gandhiji said he had a good deal to say on the South African question and he would explain it to the whole of India. The compromise was satisfactory. He trusted that "what still remained to be gained, will be gained." The South Africans had now learnt that they could not utterly disregard the Indians or treat with disrespect their feelings.

With regard to the Hindu-Muslim question, Gandhiji said he had much to learn. But he would always keep before his eyes his twenty-one years' experience in South Africa. He still remembered "that one sentence uttered by Sir Syed Ahmed, namely, that the Hindus and Mohammedans were the two eyes of Mother India and if one looked at one end and the other at the other, neither would be able to see anything and that if one eye was gone, the other would be able to see less to that extent." Both the communities had to bear this in mind in the future.



In conclusion, he thanked them again for the honour done to him and his wife. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.9-10]

5

It is interesting to note how the Westernized sophisticated Bombay women found him when they saw Gandhiji first . K. M. Munshi has written in his autobiography about the meeting, saying that there was a crowd of highly respected leaders and citizens of Bombay and a large number of beautifully dressed women in expensive saris. A Parsi lady standing next to Munshi was very impatient to see Gandhiji. When he appeared in his Kathiawari peasant's dress with bare feet, this lady put her hand on her mouth to suppress her laughter and whispered "He is [like] my Dhanna darji [tailor]." They were surprised to hear him speak in Gujarati. [K. M. Munshi, Seedhi Chadhan (Hindi), Part II, p. 258]

The authors of India Afire have a point when they say: "Probably that committee in Bombay was too Western to understand that Gandhi was speaking the language of the people." [Clare and Harris Wofford Jr., India A fire, pp.62-63]. For all his ideas and ideals which might appear Western, Gandhiji had found an echo in the Indian scriptures and in the writings of India's sages. He was to present them to his people as Indian ideals. The fact that he dressed like the common man and spoke his language was to enable him to reach the masses, which Indian leaders before him had not been able to do.

The impressions of Srinivasa Sastri after his first meeting with Gandhiji as narrated in a letter to his brother are also of interest. He wrote :

I saw the Gandhis at Narottam's They gave us an hour of their time yesterday. Mr. Gandhi, in some ways ... reminds me strongly of Mr. A. Krishnaswami Aiyer [a very great friend of Sastri).... He has one front tooth missing on the left side. Mrs. Gandhi looks at least ten years older, owing,



I hear, to the jail hardships. She doesn't know English! Mr. Gandhi, after a few family matters are settled, will tour India for the space of one year, observing and studying but not speaking or writing. If he drops his 'anarch' views and takes ours, he joins the Servants of India Society. If not, he eschews politics and becomes an exclusively social worker.

Queer food he eats; only fruits and nuts. No salt. Milk, ghee, etc., being animal products, he avoids religiously. No fire should be necessary in the making of food, fire being unnatural.... The odd thing is he was dressed quite like a bania: no one would mark the slightest difference. He had a big sandal mark on his forehead and a kumkum dot besides. He did not stop with Mrs. Bahadurji because his caste people didn't like his being a Parsi's guest. His caste has two factions - one of which will support him and the other not. [P. Kodanda Rao, The Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, A Political Biography, pp.15-17]

6

Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, on hearing that Gandhiji was on his way to India, was curious to meet this strange Indian, who was so different from the Indians that he knew.

Gandhiji was an interesting stranger. The Government were aware of his activities in South Africa. He was a person who had to be watched. Lord Willingdon was curious to see for himself what sort of an Indian this man was, who had given such a tough time to the white man in South Africa and questioned the undoubted might of the British Empire. He sent word through Gokhale that he wished to see Gandhiji and Gandhiji went to see Governor Willingdon at Government House, Bombay, on 14 January.



After the usual enquiries, Lord Willingdon told Gandhiji that he must come and see him whenever he proposed taking any action that concerned the Government. Gandhiji readily promised to do so. "It is my rule as a satyagrahi," he said, "to understand the viewpoint of the party I propose to deal with, and to try to agree with him as far as may be possible. I strictly observed this rule in South Africa and I mean to do the same here."

Willingdon said, "You may come to me whenever you like, and you will see that my Government do not wilfully do anything wrong."

Gandhiji replied: "It is that faith which sustains me." [Autobiography, p.375]

Gandhiji left Bombay for Rajkot and Porbunder on the 15th to meet his brothers' widows, his widowed sister and other relatives. In South Africa he had changed his dress to kurta and lungi to feel closer to indentured labourers. He had used the same dress in London when indoors. When he landed in Bombay he was dressed in Kathiawari dress, a dhoti, a shirt, a cloak and white scarf and turban of Indian mill cloth. He was travelling to Rajkot by third class and therefore decided to shed his cloak and scarf and turban and instead put on an eight anna Kashmiri cap. Dressed in this way, he felt, he would easily pass for a poor man.

There was an outbreak of plague in Kathiawar at that time. Third class passengers were, therefore, being medically inspected. As Gandhiji had a slight fever, the inspector told him to report to the medical officer at Rajkot and noted down his name. This was resented by some, but the inspector was doing his duty and Gandhiji did not mind his advice in the least. He did report to the medical officer in Rajkot who felt embarrassed and was angry with the inspector, which Gandhiji thought was not justified. [*Ibid*, pp.377 -78]



Everywhere in Kathiawar, as in Bombay, Gandhiji received magnificent welcome. On the 17th the citizens of Rajkot held a meeting in his honour and presented him an address. Bejonji Damri, Dewan of Rajkot, presided. On 20 January the Modh Bania community of Rajkot gave him a reception.

On the 22nd Gandhiji went to Porbunder, where he was born and had spent his early childhood. The Modh Bania community held a reception in his honour. A public meeting was held the same day by the citizens of Porbunder.

Rajkot and Porbunder brought back to Gandhiji memories of his childhood and school days. He made brief speeches to express his and Kasturba's thanks for the warm welcome given to them. He said he had not done much. The real sacrifices were made by martyrs like Valliamma, Harbat Singh and others. "Hills they say look pleasing from a distance," he said. They had heard only of his success so far. If on seeing him at close quarters, they "feel disappointed," he hoped they would be generous enough to forgive him. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.11]. He wanted to serve them. He was studying things for the present as advised by his guru Gokhale.

Gandhiji wrote a letter to Major Hancock, the Administrator of Porbunder during the Rana's (ruler's) minority, on 26 January, regretting his inability to call on him. He hoped to do so on another occasion and thanked him for the courtesy and kindness extended to him and Kasturba by the officials and citizens of Porbunder.

Prabhudas Bhagwandas, chief of the business community of Bhavnagar, had invited Gandhiji to Bhavnagar. Gandhiji wrote to him on 26 January regretting his inability to go there during that trip. Gandhiji had received Prabhudas Bhagwandas's telegram at Gondal, where he had visited the Gondal Rasashala. Jivaram Kalidas Shastri, the eminent Vaidya in Gondal presented him an address



on behalf of the Rasashala. Gandhiji in his speech said he was flattered by the compliments of the learned Vaidraj. The literature published by the pharmacy he used to read in South Africa. It was very useful to the people. He thought highly of Ayurveda, an ancient science of India which "ensures the health of the millions in thousands of villages". He advised every citizen to live in accordance with the principles of Ayurveda. He blessed the pharmacy, the dispensary and the Vaidraj, and hoped "they may be enabled to render the best possible service to Ayurveda." [*Ibid*, p.15]

At Gondal also Gandhiji addressed a citizens' meeting. In this speech he referred to the obligation which His Highness the Thakore Saheb had laid him under; to his struggle over the years and to the struggle he wished to carry on and said that he was unworthy of the high praise they had showered on him.

Keshavji Sheth, a businessman, offered Rs. 100 for Gandhiji's blanket. Giving the blanket to him Gandhiji asked him to spend money in the service of the country. Gandhiji said at the meeting that the essential qualities of a servant of the country were simplicity of life, truthfulness and brahmacharya. It was his ambition to settle somewhere near Kathiawar in an institution where the rising generation of the country could be trained in these ideals. [*Ibid*, pp.15-16; The Bombay Chronicle, 1 February 1915]

There is no record of what passed between him and the members of his family he met at Rajkot and Porbunder. His eldest son Harilal was with him from the moment he stepped on the soil of India on 9 January. Some more young members of the family joined him. They all went with him to Ahmedabad en route to Bombay and Poona.

On 2 February the citizens of Ahmedabad gave Gandhiji a reception. He said he had a special regard for Ahmedabad as one of his colleagues in South



Africa, Surendrarai Medh, came from Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad had, therefore, made an important contribution to the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa. He considered his visit a pilgrimage. He and his wife had done nothing more than their duty, he said. He had come to India to learn. He was keeping his ears open and his mouth shut as advised by his guru Gokhale. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.16]

7

At Wadhwan Railway Station, Motilal, a tailor who was essentially a public worker and worked as a tailor only for an hour or so to earn a meagre livelihood, had come to see Gandhiji who was on his way to Rajkot. He told him of the Viramgam Customs Cordon, which was a source of considerable hardship to the people.

Customs duty was levied on all goods being taken from Kathiawar into British Indian territory and the Customs Cordon at Viramgam was there to collect the tax. At times the policemen were rude or they were corrupt and harassed the business community. The Customs Cordon was the cause of much hardship to railway passengers at Viramgam.

Gandhiji had fever and did not wish to enter into a long discussion with Motilal. He asked Motilal, "Are you prepared to go to jail?" Motilal replied without hesitation that he and his companions would certainly be ready to go to jail, if Gandhiji would lead them. His companions told Gandhiji about Motilal and how he was devoting all his time to public work. Gandhiji came to know him better later when he set up his ashram at Ahmedabad where Motilal often came. He gave lessons to some of the inmates and also did some tailoring work for the Ashram. He died early. His untimely death was a big loss to Wadhwan.

At Rajkot and other places in Kathiawar Gandhiji had learnt more about the Customs Cordon problem of Viramgam and the hardships it caused to citizens.



He called on Lord Willingdon's Secretary when he reached Bombay to talk about this matter.

In one of his speeches in Kathiawar Gandhiji had mentioned the possibility of satyagraha. This was not liked by the officials. The Governor's Secretary expressed his disapproval of Gandhiji's reference to satyagraha and asked if he thought that a powerful Government could be made to do anything by threats. Gandhiji replied that it was not a threat. It was his duty to explain to the people all the legitimate remedies for their grievances. "A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means of freedom." Usually these included violence as the last remedy. Satyagraha was, however, wholly non-violent. He considered it his duty to explain to the people the practice and limits of satyagraha. He had no doubt that the Government of India was powerful, "but I have also no doubt that satyagraha is a sovereign remedy." The Secretary was sceptical. He just shook his head and said: "We shall see." [Autobiography, pp.377-80]

Gandhiji also met the Governor. Willingdon heard him and said Delhi was responsible. He advised Gandhiji to see the Viceroy.

Correspondence with the Government of India brought no immediate result. It was to take Gandhiji nearly two years of further effort, including a meeting with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, before he could secure the abolition of the levy towards the end of 1916.

On 7 February 1915 Gandhiji visited the Mission School for untouchables at Bombay without a formal invitation and was very pleased to have done so. It gave him more pleasure than the grand receptions he had had, and he promised to keep in touch with them.



The same day Gandhiji wrote to C. F. Andrews that he was leaving for Poona that night and hoped to start for Bolpur on the 18th or earlier.

To his sister's son, Mathuradas Trikumji, who later became the Mayor of Bombay, Gandhiji wrote: "Truthfulness, brahmacharya. non-violence, non-stealing and non-hoarding, these five rules of life are obligatory on all aspirants." Everyone should be an aspirant. "Though a businessman, one must never utter or practise untruth; though married, one must remain celibate; though keeping oneself alive, one can practise non-violence." It was difficult to be of the world and yet to practise absolute non-stealing (keeping and using nothing more than what met one's bare needs). Nevertheless for Gandhiji this was the ideal. Everyone who kept these vows, he said, would be able to "find a way out of all perplexities". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.17-18]

8

Gandhiji left Bombay for Poona on 7 February and reached there on the 8th morning. He was given a warm welcome. He and Kasturba were garlanded at several places as they drove to the headquarters of the Servants of India Society.

The Society, formed by Gokhale some ten years before in 1905, had as members a group of men who considered themselves, as did Gandhiji, "practical idealists". They were a modern type of Indian Sanyasis who wore the garb of ordinary men, mingled with them as one of themselves and yet inwardly were the renouncers. They were life workers, who took what they needed to meet their minimum needs and gave their all to the service of India and mankind.

Gokhale of course wished Gandhiji to become a member of the Society. Gandhiji on his part was willing provided other members also welcomed him without reservations. But the members of the Servants of India Society had silent service as their code. They were uncertain whether they ought to agree to



Gandhiji's membership who was so much in the public eye and whose methods were different from their own. Gokhale saw at once that Gandhiji's estrangement from other members of the Society might have unhappy results. If his methods were in conflict with those the Servants of Society pursued, it might create an awkward situation. He considered it essential for the members of the Society to win the friendship of Gandhi 'the Satyagrahi'. Before the one-year embargo on political activity he had placed on Gandhiji elapsed, Gokhale had planned to do all in his power to iron out any differences between Gandhiji and the members of the Servants of India Society and hoped to succeed in his efforts.

Gokhale knew Gandhiji better than the other members. He was appreciative of the fact that in spite of Gandhiji's insistence on his own principles, he was equally ready and able to make adjustments and let others follow theirs. He told Gandhiji that members of the Servants of India Society "have not yet understood your readiness for compromise. They are tenacious of their principles and quite independent." He hoped that they would accept him, but if they did not, he must not think that they were lacking in respect or love for him. They were hesitating to take any risk lest their high regard for him should be jeopardized. "But whether you are formally admitted as a member or not" said Gokhale, "I am going to look upon you as one." [Autobiography, p.375]

Gandhiji said that whether or not he was admitted as a member, he wanted to have an ashram of his own, preferably in Gujarat, where he could settle down with his Phoenix family. As a Gujarati, he felt he would be able to serve India best by serving Gujarat. Gokhale liked the idea and offered to finance the project.



Gokhale summoned Dr. H. S. Dev and told him to open an account for Gandhiji in the Society's books and give him whatever he needed for the ashram and for public expenses. [*Ibid*, p.376]

The Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona entertained Gandhiji and Kasturba at a friendly party the following day. He was asked several questions about South Africa and his plans in India. To see the living embodiment of simple living and hear him and share his noble thoughts was education in itself, reported The Mahratta. He was asked how Indian s in South Africa, coming from different provinces of India, communicated with one another. He proudly replied: "In Hindi." As for social customs he said there was inter-dining, but no inter-marriage. Asked whether Indians there would be absorbed by the population of that country, his reply was emphatic. He said, "No, thanks to the Indian civilization." He obviously did not think very highly of "Western civilization," reported The Mahratta, and was "proud of Hindu civilization." [The Mahratta, 14 February 1915; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.21-22]

Gandhiji wrote to Maganlal on 10 February that he hoped to leave for Bolpur on Monday the 15th and that he would be accompanied by Kasturba, Harilal, Jamnadas, Kaku Ranchhod and Chhotelal, Chhabildas's son. "There might be one or two more." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.19]

On Saturday the 13th Gandhiji visited the Anath Balikashram of Professor D. K. Karve, the well-known social reformer, Fergusson College and Anand Ashram. Everywhere he received a warm welcome. In the evening there was a public meeting in Kirloskar Hall. R. G. Bhandarkar, the noted Sanskrit scholar, orientalist and author, Mr. Wadia and Sirdar Nowroji Padamji, who presided, spoke. Gandhiji thanked them for the honour and said that Poona, a place of learning and culture, was noted for the spirit of sacrifice among its citizens.



Whether he made it his home or not, it would always be a "place of pilgrimage" for him and his wife. [*Ibid*, p.22]

Before Gandhiji's departure from Poona, Gokhale arranged a reception for him in the Society's premises. Refreshments of his choice, nuts, dates and fresh fruits of the season, were served. It was well attended and was held not far from Gokhale's room. He insisted on coming though he was too weak to do so. He fainted and had to be carried back to his room. He soon came round and sent word that the party must go on. It was held in the open space in front of the Society's guest house. There were no speeches. Friends enjoyed light refreshments and had heart-to-heart talks. Gokhale's fainting fit, however, cast its shadow over Gandhiji's spirit. [Autobiography, pp.375-77]

Gandhiji left Poona for Bombay soon after that to catch the train to Calcutta to go to Santiniketan. On the 14th he addressed students at a prize distribution in Bombay. He advised them to read the prize books carefully, reflect over their real import, keeping in mind the profound truths set out in them, and follow the path enjoined by religion. It was their duty to assimilate whatever they learnt. They should have religious and moral instruction. "If you cling to truth, success is yours." he said. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.23]

Gandhiji and Kasturba also visited the Kapol Hostel at Bombay on 15 February. He said he had visited the Hostel because Jivraj Mehta had lived there and he was keen to see it. He was indebted to the Kapol community because of Jagmohandas Shamaldas, who had given him a substantial loan when he went to study in England to become a barrister. He asked the students to speak in their mother tongue, and urged everyone to work for success, cultivate character and serve both his family and country. [*Ibid*, p.24]



Gandhiji had sent the Phoenix party, that was to go back with him, direct to India, while he and Kasturba and Herman Kallenbach had gone to London first to meet Gokhale and then proceed to India. He had planned to reach India before the Phoenix party so that he would be able to make arrangements for their stay. He desired that they should all stay together and continue to lead the life they had been leading at Phoenix. He was, however, unexpectedly delayed in London because of the war. He, therefore, cabled to Maganlal to see C. F. Andrews.

C. F. Andrews's trinity in India was Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Munshiram, who later became a sanyasi and was known as Swami Shraddhanand, and Sushil Kumar Rudra who became principal of St. Stephen's College, Delhi. Gandhiji has recorded that among his sweetest memories was Andrews's deep love for and praise of his three friends, about whom he often talked when he was with him in South Africa towards the closing period of the Satyagraha and the final settlement.

The Phoenix family, on arrival in India, was first housed at Gurukul Kangri where Mahatma Munshiram treated them as his own children. Later they were put up at Tagore's Santiniketan where the Poet and his people showered the same affection on them. The experience gained at both the places was most valuable to them and also to himself, records Gandhiji. Sushil Rudra did not have an ashram, but he threw open his house to members of the Phoenix family. [Autobiography, p .373]

It was on reaching Bombay that Gandhiji learnt that Maganlal and the rest of the Phoenix party were at Santiniketan. He was eager to meet them, but there were other things to attend to. He wrote to Maganlal on 11 January:



I am still beside myself with joy. I do not like Bombay though.... I see here all the shortcomings of London but find none of its amenities.... I feel suffocated by all this public honouring. I have not known a moment's peace. There is an endless stream of visitors. Neither they nor I gain anything.

He added that his health was good and so was that of Kasturba. His heart was divided in three places - Rajkot, Porbunder and Bolpur (Santiniketan). "It will take more than a month before I am there [Bolpur]." He asked Maganlal and party to patiently await him.

Maganlal must have wanted to go to see his father. Gandhiji wrote to him, "A farmer should not go about from place to place. A farmer's son would be violating his dharma if he were to neglect sowing in order to go to see his father." He added, "You have spread your fragrance there.... Mr. Andrews writes much in praise of you." He advised that they all should learn, and teach the children to read and write Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and Bengali. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.4]

Tagore wrote a very touching letter to Gandhiji saying:

That you could think of my school as the right and likely place where your Phoenix boys could take shelter when they are in India has given me real pleasure and that pleasure has been greatly enhanced when I saw those clean boys in that place. We all feel that their influence will be of great value to our boys and hope that they on their side will gain something which will make their stay in Santiniketan fruitful. I write this letter to thank you for allowing your boys to become our boys as well and thus forge a living link in the sadhana of both our lives. [Copy displayed at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi]



Kasturba and Gandhiji arrived at Santiniketan on 17 February but Gurudev had left for Calcutta a few days earlier. They were received and greeted by Dwijendranath, the Poet's eldest brother. W. W. Pearson, writing to Kallenbach the following day, thus described the reception accorded to Gandhiji at Santiniketan:

Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi were received in truly Eastern style in accordance with the ceremonies which were used in receiving heroes into the Ashrams of olden days. The ceremony was very beautiful. First of all they were received by Rabindranath's eldest brother, the philosopher, who is 75 years of age. Then they were received by all the boys and teachers of the Ashram with the chanting of some Sanskrit slokas and blowing of conch shells. Then their feet were washed and they sat and had some songs, Sanskrit slokas, etc. Of course Mr. Gandhi slept outside his first night as also Mrs. Gandhi. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

In his speech at the Santiniketan reception Gandhiji said, "The delight I feel today I have never experienced before. Though Rabindranath, the Gurudev, is not present here, yet we feel his presence in our hearts." He was happy that they had arranged the reception in Indian style. He and Kasturba were received with much pomp in Bombay, but there was nothing in it to make them happy, he said. For there, Western ways were imitated. "We shall proceed to our goal in our own Eastern ways and not by imitating the West, for we are of the East. We shall grow up in the beautiful manners and customs of India, and true to her spirit, make friends with nations having different ideals. Indeed, through her oriental culture, India will establish friendly relations with the Eastern and Western worlds." He



felt a close kinship with the Ashram in Bengal. He liked the distant land in Africa too because Indians there had not given up their Indian habits and customs.

Gandhiji thanked them for their warm welcome. [Tattvabodhini Patrika, 1 February 1915; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.24]

The Phoenix family had been put up in a separate building. They did all their work themselves, from cooking to cleaning and scavenging. Hugh Tinker writes:

...The Phoenix boys had been drilled in austerity, and they made a not entirely welcome impact upon the dreamy hedonistic ashram. The predominantly Bengali students had accepted the traditional caste practices in the kitchen and dining hall and expected to have the menial work to be done by servants. The Phoenix boys served themselves. When these matters were reported to Tagore in his Himalayan retreat, he observed that the new comers, 'have discipline where they should have ideals.' When Tagore read in the Modern Review that under the Phoenix influence the Ashram students were giving up sugar and ghee in order to contribute to a war relief fund, he was not pleased : 'Fasting [in this way] is doing evil in order to do good . But doing hard work ... will be real test of their sincerity, he said. Tagore and Gandhi had not yet come together. Here was a sign that the Poet would not always find Gandhian ideas acceptable. [Hugh Tinker, The Ordeal of Love. pp.99-100]

But their love and respect for each other were to overcome all differences.

Ramdas Gandhi, who was then in Santiniketan, writes in his reminiscences that when Gandhiji left Santiniketan Gurudev Tagore, saying good-bye to him, stated, "What I could not get done by the students after years of effort, Gandhiji



was able to make the students accept readily within a few days of his stay here.”
[Ramdas Gandhi, Sansmaran (Hindi), Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1970, p.74]

Kakasaheb Kalelkar had come to Santiniketan to study the institution and its atmosphere at close quarters. He had taken up a teaching job for a few months to do so.

Kakasaheb has recorded in his Stray Glimpses of Bapu that from the moment he set foot in Santiniketan, he became more or less a part of the Phoenix group that had preceded Gandhiji. He joined them in morning and evening prayers and had his evening meals with them. He also joined them in their one hour of physical labour before breakfast. There was a pond near the Santiniketan huts which had to be filled up. There was a mound not too far away which was dug up and earth was dumped into the pond. The shramdan was done with zeal and clock-work regularity every morning.

They talked with Bapu till late in the evening when he came to Santiniketan. The next morning they went for shramdan after the morning prayers as usual. There was a surprise awaiting them on their return. Their breakfast of fruit was ready. Fruit had been neatly cut and served on their metal plates. Kakasaheb asked Bapu, "Who on earth has done all this?" Gandhiji replied, "I did it." Kakasaheb felt embarrassed and said: "Why did you do it?" It did not seem right to him that Gandhiji should have taken so much trouble for them. With Gandhiji it was natural. "But why not?" he asked, "What does it matter?" Kakasaheb said, "We must deserve to be served by people like you." Gandhiji's reply to Kakasaheb's remark took him by surprise. "That is a fact," he laughed and added that they had all gone off to work and after breakfast they would again go back to work. "I had some time to spare. So I saved yours. You have acquired sufficient merit by your morning's hard work to deserve a breakfast like this. Have



you not?" Kakasaheb just stared at him bewildered. [Kaka Kalelkar, Stray Glimpses of Bapu, pp.5-6]

11

Gandhiji had intended to stay at Santiniketan for some time and meet Gurudev, but then a telegram about Gokhale's sudden passing away came on the 19th. A memorial meeting was held at Santiniketan on 20 February, which was addressed by Gandhiji. In his speech Gandhiji said: "My one desire tonight is that my heart may reach your hearts." The most stirring part about Tulsidas's Ramayana, he said, was emphasis on the companionship of the good. One should seek the company of those who had suffered and served. One such person was Professor Gokhale. "He is dead, but his work is not dead, for his spirit lives." The masses knew of Gokhale's efficiency in work. All knew Gokhale's life of action. But few knew of his religious life. Truth had been the spring of all his actions, all his works, even his politics. He had founded the Servants of India Society to spiritualize the political as well as the social life of the nation. Gandhiji continued:

Fearlessness ruled his life. He was also thorough. One of his favourite shlokas from the shastras says: 'Real wisdom is not to begin a thing but to see the thing (begun) through to the end.'* He once had to speak to a large audience and he spent three days in order to prepare a short speech.... He asked me to write out a speech for him. I wrote out a speech. He took it and smiled his heavenly smile, discussed it with me and said, 'Give me something better, rewrite it.' For three days he worried over it. When the speech was given, it thrilled the whole audience.

Gokhale, Gandhiji said, delivered his speeches without notes, but he did so, because he was so thorough, "one might say he wrote his speeches with his own blood." As he was thorough and fearless, so was he gentle. "He was human



from top to toe in all his dealings. He was sometimes impatient, but he would ask forgiveness, coming forward with his smile, whether to a servant or a great man, saying, 'I know you will forgive me, won't you?'"

Gandhiji added that Gokhale had gone through a great struggle during the later days of his life. He had to decide whether he should continue to work at the expense of his health. His conscience ruled every action of his. He did not wear it on his sleeve, he wore it in his heart. He decided he must continue to work. . . . His last words to those members of the Servants of India Society who were with him were: "I do not want any memorial or any statue. I want only that men should love their country and serve it with their lives." This was a message for the whole of India. It was through service that he learnt to know his own nature and to know his country. His love for India was sincere and, therefore, he wanted nothing for India which he did not want also for humanity. It was not blind love, for his eyes were open to her faults and failings.

Gandhiji added:

If we can love India in the same way that he did, we have done well in coming to Santiniketan to learn how to live our lives for India's sake. Copy the zeal which he showed in all he took up, the love that was the law of his life, the truthfulness which guided his every action and the thoroughness which was characteristic of all his work.... Remember that our shastras teach us that these simple virtues are the stepping-stones to the higher state of life, without which all our worship and works are useless....

I was in quest of a really truthful hero in India and I found him in Gokhale. His love and reverence for India were truly genuine. For serving his country, he completely eschewed all happiness and self-interest. Even



while lying on his sick-bed, his mind was occupied in thinking about the welfare of India. A few days ago, when at night he was in the grip of a painful ailment, he called for some of us and began talking about the bright future of India as envisaged by him. Doctors repeatedly advised him to retire from work but he would not listen to them. He said, "None but death can separate me from work," and death at last has brought peaceful rest to him. May God bless his soul. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.26-28]

* विधौ : पुनः पुनरपि प्रतिहन्यमाना

प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजंति | Bhartrihari, Niti Shataka

12

Gandhiji went with Kasturba and Maganlal to Poona to represent the South African Indians and his Phoenix family at the funeral. Mr. Andrews accompanied him as far as Burdwan. "Do you think," asked Andrews, "that a time will come for satyagraha in India?" Gandhiji was obviously not the only man who was thinking of satyagraha in India. It was well that Gokhale had enjoined a year's silence on him.

At Burdwan, Gandhiji, Kasturba and Maganlal experienced the hardships of third-class passengers. Even to get a ticket was not easy. Third class tickets were issued only when the booking window opened. Gandhiji went to buy the ticket as soon as the window opened. But there was so much pushing that he was almost the last one to get the ticket. Getting into the train was another problem. They ran up and down the platform. Everywhere they were told there was no room. He approached the guard for help and was told to get in where he could or take the next train. At last he told Maganlal to get in wherever he could. He himself got into an inter-class compartment with Kasturba. At Asansol the guard



came to charge him the excess fare. He tried to argue that it was the guard's duty to find them accommodation but it was of no use. He was told to pay or get out. He paid under protest as he had to reach Poona as soon as he could.

Next morning at Mogulsarai Maganlal came and told him he had managed to get a seat in the third-class compartment. Gandhiji and Kastarba shifted there. He asked the ticket examiner to give him a certificate so that he could claim the refund. He refused to do so. On 23 February Gandhiji wrote to the Traffic Manager of East Indian Railways and claimed a refund. He received a reply on 27 March that though normally refunds were not granted without a certificate, the Traffic Manager would accept his statement and send him the difference of fare from Mogulsarai onwards. [Autobiography, pp.383-84]

At a crowded meeting of the citizens of Poona held at Kirloskar Theatre on 3 March 1915 under the presidentship of the Governor of Bombay to condole the death of Gokhale, Gandhiji moved the following resolution:

That the citizen of Poona in public meeting assembled place on record the great loss the whole country and especially Poona has sustained in the untimely death of the Hon. Mr. G. K. Gokhale who was the leader of the whole country and who by his devotion and self-sacrifice has left a great example to his countrymen of selfless public work. That this meeting deeply sympathizes with Mr. Gokhale's daughters and other relatives in their grief and requests the President to communicate this resolution to them.

Gandhiji added that it would look a presumption on his part if he were to add to the glowing tribute which H. E. Lord Willingdon had paid to the memory of the deceased patriot. One thing that he would like to mention was the deep-seated religious feelings of the man from which sprang a thoroughness which was



one of his chief characteristics. He also possessed a conscience. Shortly before his death he was called upon to decide whether he should attend a certain conference. After much deliberation, he decided to do so in the interests of his country, though at grave risk to his life. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.32-33]

Gokhale, his Guru and guide, was gone. Henceforth he had to chalk his own course, take his own decision.



CHAPTER III: REDISCOVERING INDIA

1

Soon after Gokhale's funeral the Servants of India Society chose V. S. Srinivasa Sastri to be their President. The question of Gandhiji joining the Society again came up. In his Autobiography Gandhiji writes:

This question of membership proved a very delicate matter for me to handle. Whilst Gokhale was there I did not have to seek admission as a member. I had simply to obey his wish, a position I loved to be in.

Launching on the stormy sea of Indian public life, I was in need of a sure pilot. I had found one in Gokhale and had felt secure in his keeping.

Now that the pilot was gone Gandhiji was thrown on his own resources, and he felt that it was his duty to seek admission. It would please Gokhale's spirit. So, without hesitation and with firmness, he "began the wooing".

Most of the members of the Society were in Poona at this juncture. Gandhiji set about pleading with them and tried to dispel their fears about him. But he saw that they were divided. One section favoured his admission, the other was strongly against it. Neither group yielded to the other in their affection for him, "but possibly their loyalty to the Society was greater, at any rate not less, than their love for me."

Discussions were free of bitterness, and strictly confined to matters of principle. The section that was opposed to Gandhiji held that he and they were as poles asunder in various vital matters, and they felt that his membership was likely to imperil the very objects for which the Society was founded. This naturally was more than they could bear. They dispersed after prolonged discussions, the final decision being postponed to a later date.



Gandhiji writes:

I was considerably agitated as I returned home. Was it right for me to be admitted by a majority vote? Would it be consonant with my loyalty to Gokhale? I saw clearly that, when there was such a sharp division amongst the members of the Society over admitting me, by far the best course for me was to withdraw my application for admission and save those opposed to me from a delicate situation. Therein I thought lay my loyalty to the Society and Gokhale. The decision came to me in a flash.

Immediately Gandhiji wrote to Sastri not to have the adjourned meeting at all. Those who had opposed his application fully appreciated the decision. It saved them from an awkward position and "bound us in closer bonds of friendship. The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society."

He added:

Experience now tells me that it was well that I did not formally become a member, and that the opposition of those who had been against me was justified. Experience has shown too that our views on matters of principle were widely divergent.

But the recognition of the differences had "meant no estrangement or bitterness between us". They remained as brothers, and the Society's Poona home "has always been for me a place of pilgrimage".

"It is true that I did not officially become a member of the Society," Gandhiji writes, but he was "a member in spirit". Spiritual relationship, he held, was far more precious than Physical. "Physical relationship divorced from spiritual is body without soul." [Autobiography, pp.385-87]

On March 2, Gandhiji informed Kallenbach :



I have not joined the Society yet. I pleaded for admission but there were differences which could not be bridged. So I am to travel about and see things for myself and study. This I shall do. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

In a speech later Sastri referred to the episode of Gandhiji wishing to join the Servants of India Society in language which is in sharp contrast to his conclusion in the last sentence wherein he admits that Gandhiji and the Society were very close when motives and spirit were taken into consideration . He said:

True, that event [Gokhale's death] deprived us of the shelter afforded by a great name, and even the seniormost of the survivors was without an established position. But his guidance had been clear and his example full of illumination. Our first trial, however, was not long in coming. Mr. Gandhi, having completed the year of travel prescribed by Gokhale, knocked at our door for admission. Anxious were our consultations at the time. We saw deep differences between him and us. Still our hearts trembled as well as grieved when we told him that it was best for both of us to remain apart and pursue our several courses. The event has vindicated our decision. We have indeed had many occasions to take the field against him. Looking back over the unhappy period, let us confess that, while we recall nothing but infinite compassion and tenderness from him, we have, like naughty children, indulged occasionally in merriment and strong criticism. Still, so curious and contradictory is human relationship that, sharply contrasted as Mr. Gandhi and the Society are in outward action, they would be found near of kin where motives were weighed and the spirit was taken into account. [P. Kodanda Rao, Right Honourable Srinivasa Sastri, A Political Biography, p.17]



From Poona, Gandhiji went back to Santiniketan on 5 March. Gurudev was there to extend a warm welcome to him. This was their first meeting and the beginning of their age-long friendship based on deep mutual respect and love.

Kaka Kalelkar thus records the moment of the first meeting between Gandhiji and the Poet:

All the teachers, including me, were consumed with a desire to see how these two great sons of India would conduct themselves at their first meeting. How could Mr. Andrews have known our feelings? It was as though he had taken a monopoly of his Gurudev and his Mohan ! He simply would not let us enter the room where they were to meet Kshiti Babu explained that the first meeting of these great men was a very sacred occasion for us all. We had no desire to listen to their private conversation.... And so at last the mind of Mohan's Charlie was set at rest, and he gave in.

We went into the drawing-room with Bapu. Rabi Babu rose from the sofa on which he had been sitting. His tall, stately figure, his silver hair, his long beard, his impressive choga (gown) - all this went to make a magnificent picture. And there, in almost comical contrast, stood Gandhiji, in this skimpy dhoti, his simple kurta and his Kashmiri cap (dupalli). It was like a lion confronting a mouse!

... Rabi Babu made a gesture inviting Gandhiji to sit beside him on the sofa. But as long as there was a carpet on the floor to sit on, Gandhiji was not going to sit on any couch! He settled himself on the floor. Rabi Babu had to follow suit. The rest of us sat around for a while, listening to



their first words of greeting and formal courtesy. Then we went away.

[Kaka Kalelkar, Stray Glimpses of Bapu, pp.14-15]

Though the periods of Gandhiji's stay at Santiniketan in February and March were brief, they were not uneventful. Following certain rules of life in South Africa Gandhiji had dispensed with servants. At Santiniketan he cleaned his room, made his bed and washed his dishes and clothes like everyone else. This created a profound impression on the students of Santiniketan and most of them were anxious to follow Gandhiji's example.

Kakasaheb had been at Santiniketan for some time. He did not like rice and preferred *chapatis*. They prepared *chapatis* for him but he did not like them. He called them "Morocco leather". It led him to preach diet reform, advocating more *chapatis* and less rice. He won over some of the Bengali teachers and students and started a separate kitchen, from which he banished spices and cooks. He prepared *chapatis* which became very popular. Gandhiji was very pleased when he saw this. He suggested that the pattern should be followed in the common kitchen for all. Kakasaheb felt that they should go slow. Instead of one common kitchen for 200, there should be a number of clubs with 25 to 30 persons in each on the pattern of his own experiment. But Bapu did not agree. "It won't work," he said. "It would be difficult to find culinary experts for eight clubs. They must proceed along ordinary lines and learn to work together and eat together. "We must tackle the common kitchen as it stands."

Kakasaheb saw his point, but he still resisted. He said that the institution belonged to Gurudev. "I do wish you would let things be," he pleaded.

Bapu sent for Jagadanand Babu and Sarod Babu, who had administrative responsibilities, and asked, "How many servants have you, including the cooks?" "About thirty-five in all," he was told. "What need is there for so many?" he said.



"They must be relieved of their services." The poor manager gaped at him, dumbfounded! He should have said frankly, there and then, that the thing could not be done like that at a moment's notice. But he perceived that Messrs. Andrews and Pearson were greatly taken up with the idea, and so was Gurudev's son-in-law, Nagendranath Ganguli. As for the students, "they had all the wild enthusiasm of monkeys for anything new and exciting. Bapu had set things humming as usual!"

Kakasaheb noted that Andrews was less concerned with the principle of self-help than with the dismissal of those high-caste Brahmin cooks. The institution believed in the principle of one world family. Whereas its Brahmin cooks stuck to rigid orthodoxy and allowed no one to set foot in their sacrosanct kitchens! "We, however, were not out for immediate social or religious reforms. All we wanted was to reform our own lives," Kakasaheb records.

It was decided that Bapu should get all the students together and find out what they thought about the proposed changes which concerned them. They would have to do all the work in the absence of servants. Andrews came to Bapu and said, "Mohan, be prepared to use all your eloquence now! Make such a rousing and irresistible appeal to these students that they will be bewitched into doing this thing. Everything depends upon you."

The students gathered together. "We all sat tense and eager, with our hearts in our ears, so to speak, waiting for that zealous and eloquent appeal," writes Kakasaheb. It never came. What they heard was just the cool, quiet, everyday voice, telling them just simple, practical things. No eloquence, no flaming zeal, no appeal to sentiment, no high philosophy.



But it did the trick. All the students, even those who were fond of good things and comfort, were roused to enthusiasm and voted in favour of the proposed experiment.

The Managers now had only one rather feeble argument left. If the servants were to be dismissed at a moment's notice, they must be paid off. And the treasurer did not have enough cash. Neither had Gandhiji, or he would have settled the matter there and then. His ashram inmates were in the same boat. Mr. Andrews's pockets were equally empty. Kakasaheb Kalelkar was a 'wandering sadhu'. He records, "I still cannot understand what led Gandhiji to ask me, 'Have you anything?' 'Yes,' I said, and handed over the two hundred rupees that were in my possession." And that was that. The servants were paid off, and departed in a daze of amazement. Gandhiji in his "Diary for 1915" records this transaction under March 11, the day he left for Calcutta. The entry reads: "Gave Rs. 200/- to Andrews on account of the boys. Took the money from Dattatreya." [*Ibid*, pp.7-11; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.161]. It may be noted that Kakasaheb wrote his reminiscences from memory many years later during his imprisonment following the Quit India movement.

The question now arose - who was to take charge of the kitchen? Gandhiji offered it to Kaka Kalelkar. He refused to take it up, not because he lacked self-confidence; his little food reform league was already in existence and functioning well. He was not in favour of plunging hastily into such a huge and all-pervasive reform. Bapu was not impressed." It was always his good luck," writes Kakasaheb, "never to lack helpers in anything he undertook." Kakasaheb's friend Rajangam, alias Harihar Sharma, was working in Santiniketan at the time. He agreed to take charge. Kakasaheb offered to assist him. Gandhiji advised him to merge his little experiment "into this greater one, and devote your energies to the latter".



This was done. "I plunged like a demon into my new work," writes Kakasaheb. It must have been about 12 noon when the decision was made. "At 3 p.m. we took over charge. In the evening we fed the boys. Gandhiji came himself and lent us a hand: he cleaned and cut up the vegetables. I made the *chapatis* two hundred of them. By this time my *chapatis* had become universally popular. I had become quite clever at the job, roasting eight *chapatis* at a time." Chintamani Shastri kneaded the dough. Some students rolled and flattened the dough into *chapatis*.

Breakfast in the morning consisted of milk and bananas. A group of young boys came forward to scrub the utensils, and Kakasaheb became their leader. To lighten their drudgery someone read aloud to them from an interesting novel, or played the sitar for them. This way of lightening labour became quite popular at Santiniketan. [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, p.11]

It was on 10 March that this experiment was started under the supervision of Gandhiji in training the students in self-reliance, by dispensing with the help of all "cooks, servants and sweepers". "Rabibabu returned from Calcutta," Kakasaheb writes,

saw the experiment and gave it his blessings, and expressed his conviction that it would prove of great benefit to the institution and to the Bengalis alike. Gradually its novelty wore off. The students started getting a bit bored. Mr. Pearson came to the conclusion that although it was a very good thing, it took up too much of the students' energy. We kept it up gallantly for forty days. Then came the holidays. I resumed my peregrinations. And after the holidays no more mention of such experiments! [*Ibid*, pp.11-12]



The 10th of March is, however, being observed to this day at Santiniketan as 'Gandhi Day', when the staff and students do all the work and the entire menial staff enjoys a day off. [R. K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelkar, *Truth Called Them Differently*, pp.3-5]

3

J. B. Kripalani was at the time teaching at a college at Muzaffarpur in Bihar and was keen to meet Gandhiji. Kaka Kalelkar informed him of Gandhiji's presence at Santiniketan and Kripalani went there to see Gandhiji. He arrived early in the evening, while Gandhiji was at his meal, for it was his practice to have the last meal of the day before nightfall. Writes Kripalani :

He was sitting on a small raised platform, his unshod feet dangling on the ground. He was dressed in a thick shirt and a plain dhoti. The shirt was unbuttoned at the neck. I was introduced. I greeted him in the old traditional Indian style with folded hands. He returned the courtesy with a broad welcoming smile.

Gandhiji invited Kripalani to sit with him and straight away entered into conversation. The talk on both sides was personal. There was no mention of politics at this first meeting. "But from his occasional gaze at me, I thought he was trying to know me and measure me," writes Kripalani and adds:

I too on my side was doing the same. Today it may appear presumptuous for a young man to talk in terms of taking measure of Gandhiji. But it must be remembered that in those days Gandhiji was not the Mahatma that he became afterwards.

It appeared that he was eating with appetite and apparent satisfaction, for he was masticating his food well and taking a considerable



time over it. He insisted upon my being his guest instead of the Poet's, as I had on that occasion come especially to see him. I readily consented. Having lived in several provinces I had completely shed all provincial prejudices about food. The plain, unspiced and unseasoned food of Gandhiji's establishment did not, therefore, frighten me.

Following this first meeting, Kripalani says he met him every day for about a week till Gandhiji left for Calcutta. Kripalani writes :

But what a week! If it had been merely a week of political talks, it might not have meant much to me. But in this week I was privileged to see his reforming zeal and organizing capacity at work. He seemed to have taken the land of the lotus-eaters, as Santiniketan has often been called, by storm.

Gandhiji, writes Kripalani, tried to reform the Poet's establishment. He particularly paid attention to the quality of food prepared in the kitchen and the way it was cooked and served. He was also unfavourably impressed by the general hygiene of the place. He had talks with teachers and senior students about reform. He suggested that the best way to improve the conditions was for the students and teachers to do the work of the establishment co-operatively.

He soon created great enthusiasm for the reforms he had suggested. Though the cooks were not dismissed the teachers and the pupils worked in the kitchen and looked after the cleanliness of the ashram. The Poet was silently witnessing the innovations, but with a smile. It appeared to me that he was doubtful if the reforming zeal in Santiniketan would last long. He knew the character of his people better than Gandhiji. Inside a month the experiment of self-help was abandoned.

Kripalani further writes :



One evening Gandhiji and I, after finishing our evening meal, went to meet the Poet. After some time his food was brought in. The main dish consisted of 'luchis' [fried bread made of white flour]. When Gandhiji saw this he remarked, 'White flour is poison.' The Poet quietly replied, 'Mr. Gandhi, it must be a slow poison.' This is how the Poet humorously disposed of Gandhiji's effort to improve his dietary. [J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1970, pp.52-54]

There appears to be some discrepancy between this account by Kripalani of his first meeting with Gandhiji and what Gandhiji has himself recorded in his Autobiography. In the chapters dealing with the Champaran Satyagraha, Gandhiji at one place says : "Principal Kripalani was then in Muzaffarpur. I had known of him ever since my visit to Hyderabad." [*Autobiography*, p.406]. This visit was on 26 February 1916. Rajendra Prasad, in his book *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi* referring to Gandhiji's visit to Muzaffarpur says: "He [Kripalani] had not met Gandhiji, though he had had correspondence with him for some time. That is how Gandhiji knew him." [Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, Hind Kitab Ltd., Bombay, 1955, p.5] All the three wrote their memoirs many years after the event. It is difficult to determine which version is more nearly correct.

4

From Santiniketan Gandhiji decided to go to Rangoon to visit his old friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. He came to Calcutta, where he was the guest of the late Babu Bhupendranath Basu. "Bengali hospitality reached its climax here," writes Gandhiji, in his *Autobiography*. He was a strict fruitarian in those days and the ladies of the house kept awake the whole night skinning various nuts and taking all possible care to dress the fruit in Indian style. Numerous delicacies were



prepared for the other members of the party which included his son Ramdas. Their labour embarrassed him but he saw no way out at that time.

At Calcutta a reception was arranged for him by the Modh Bania community on 12 March. In his speech Gandhiji said that in Gokhale's untimely death, he had lost a friend, philosopher and guide in whose foot-steps he had followed in serving the motherland. From his death-bed Gokhale had exhorted his friends "that we Indians should render sincere service to the motherland." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.35]

On 13 March a big reception was held for him on the grounds of the palace of the Maharajah of Cassimbazar. Babu Motilal Ghosh was in the chair. While thanking them for their hearty welcome, Gandhiji hoped that he would deserve the chairman's blessings and have the power and willingness to do what they all expected of him. He paid a glowing tribute to Gokhale and to the real heroes of South African struggle like Harbat Singh and Valliamma.

Surendranath Banerjea in his tribute at the meeting had said: "Mr. Gandhi's name would find its place in the enduring pages of history. Mr. Gandhi would not break laws, he would submit to Jaws but triumph over laws. There was a lesson to the Bengal anarchists which they well might lay to heart, which they might follow. Mr. Gandhi triumphed over the law by moral force." Gandhiji corrected him and said that he broke the law which his conscience could not accept and invited the penalty under the law. The triumph over oppressive laws came through self-suffering. Thus Gandhiji presented the concept of satyagraha to his Indian audience at Calcutta, soon after his return to India. [*Ibid*, pp.35-36]

On 14 March Gandhiji left for Rangoon along with Kasturba and Ramdas, travelling as deck passenger, by *s. s. Lanka*.



Lack of attention even to the elementary comforts of deck passengers was unbearable. The deck was overcrowded. What was an apology for a bathroom was unbearably dirty. The latrines were stinking. To use a latrine one had to wade through urine and excreta or jump over them. Gandhiji approached the chief officer, but to no avail. The thoughtless habits of passengers of spitting and dirtying the deck with leavings of food added to their misery. There was much noise and everyone tried to monopolise as much space as possible, their luggage taking more space than they. Gandhiji wrote to Kallenbach on 16 March:

It was a time of trial. You would almost have died in the latrine. We had three nights of it and three days. Yet I am returning as a deck passenger. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

Harilal had been with him from the time of his arrival at Bombay. But at Calcutta they had a quarrel. Harilal felt he could not bear his father's 'authoritarian ways' and parted company with him. On 14 March Gandhiji wrote to Narandas, brother of Chhaganlal, that there had been a misunderstanding between him and Harilal. "He has parted from me completely. He will receive no monetary help from me. [I] gave him Rs. 45 and we parted at Calcutta. There was no bitterness. Let him take any books or clothes of mine he may want. Hand over the keys to him. He may take out anything he likes and then return the key." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.36-37]

On 16 March he wrote to Kallenbach from Rangoon:

Harilal came to me for a time. He has again left. He has no faith in me and my co-workers except you. He thinks that I have used my sons for my own benefit and sacrificed them to my ambition. He did not put it quite so bluntly, but the purport was unmistakable.... Harilal is now not to



receive any pecuniary help from me. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence, Pyarelal Papers]

From Rangoon he wrote to the agents of British India Steam Navigation Company complaining of the abominable conditions on the deck of *s. s. Lanka* and the lack of amenities. He wrote that he had some experience of being a deck passenger and the conditions on the deck of *s. s. Lanka* were the worst he had come across. He mentioned the utter lack of even ordinary sanitary arrangements and abuse of whatever was available by the passengers. He requested them to forward the letter to the proper quarters for attention. He was sure a great shipping company would not like deck passengers to be so badly treated and hoped that his return journey in a week's time would see better conditions. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p .41]

As a result of this letter and the efforts of Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, conditions were somewhat better on the return journey.

Jehangir Bomanjee Petit in his letter of 16 March 1915, forwarded a draft copy of the rules and regulations of the Imperial Citizenship Association for Gandhiji's perusal and suggestions. 'Objects' 1 to 4 were as follows :

1. To protect and safeguard the civic interest of Indians in general in any part of the world outside India, including the self-governing British Colonies;
2. To work for, and insist upon and obtain for Indians in all British foreign possessions in particular, absolutely equal treatment in all respects with all other British citizens;
3. To establish and maintain by all possible constitutional means the right of Indians to emigrate into and settle in any part of the British Empire, including self-governing Colonies, on the same terms as other members of the Empire;



4. To maintain by all legitimate and constitutional means the inherent rights and privileges of Indians within the Empire as British citizens.

Gandhiji wrote back suggesting the following clauses in place of 1 to 4 given above :

To ascertain the condition of Indian settlers not excluding indentured labourers outside India and to agitate for the removal of their disabilities and grievances;

To secure for such settlers equal status with all the other settlers in the respective part of the world.

To investigate the conditions of transport under which immigrants travel to their destination and secure an amelioration of such conditions where they may be found to be defective.

To secure with all the other British subjects equality of treatment alike as to terms of admission and as to residence for all British Indian emigrants to any part of the world including British self-governing Colonies;

To maintain a bureau of information for the benefit of emigrants.

To establish and maintain a library containing colonial and foreign laws and journals and all other special books of interest to emigrants.”
[*Ibid*, p .40]

The correspondence reveals Gandhiji's continued interest in the problems of immigrants and at the same time a realistic attitude in the light of his experience in South Africa.

At Rangoon too, Gandhiji's fruit diet gave additional trouble to the hosts. Gandhiji records that there was no limit to the items he was served and no set



time for the meals. He liked to have his last meal before sunset, but actually he had it often at 8 or 9 p.m. This worried him.

A correspondent wanted an interview. Gandhiji was most reluctant to talk to him. He was studying things and he could not be expected to speak on Indian affairs with any semblance of authority, he said. The Correspondent assured him that he had no intention of asking him to express opinions on topical matters. He represented a Tamil paper, and was himself a member of the Tamil community with whom Gandhiji must have come in contact in South Africa.

On hearing this Gandhiji seemed greatly relieved and without the slightest pause, like a man who had already formed his final opinion on the subject, he delivered a glowing eulogy on the Tamil people. All the Indian communities were of very great help to him in South Africa, he said, but the Tamil community played an outstanding role. It was considered a shame among them for a man not to have gone to jail at least once for the common cause. When he first met them, he learnt to admire them. Ever afterwards he had found them better and better." I consider I have more in common with the Tamil community than with any other," he added. [*Ibid*, p.42]

5

Gandhiji left Rangoon on Friday, 26 March. Popatbhai came with him. He reached Calcutta on the 28th evening where he stayed with Das. On 29 March the Hindu Sabha presented him an address. He also had a meeting with Mr. Holland. There was a party at Das's place on 30 March. He met teachers of National College and had discussions with members of the Indian Association. He also had a meeting with Mrs. Roy, H. Bose and Kumar Babu. ["Diary for 1915", C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.163] He was trying to know India by meeting as many people as possible and understanding their points of view.



On Wednesday evening, 31 March, under the presidency of P. C. Lyons and before a large gathering at the Students' Hall, College Square, Gandhiji delivered an address embodying advice as to the duties of young men in view of the anarchical crimes committed by some misguided youths in the country. It was published under the caption 'Mr. Gandhi's Advice to Young Bengal' and reprinted by Natesan under the caption 'On Anarchical Crimes'.

Gandhiji said that though it was the command of his guru, the late Mr. Gokhale, that he should keep his ears open but his mouth shut, he could not resist the temptation of addressing them. It was his opinion as well as that of his departed guru that politics should not be a sealed book to the student community. He saw no reason why students should not study and take part in politics. Politics should not be divorced from religion. They and their teachers and the worthy chairman would agree with him that literary education was of no value if it was not able to build up sound character. Were the students or the public men in this country entirely fearless? This question had engaged his attention when he was away from his country. He understood what political dacoity or political assassination was. He had given the subject his most prayerful and careful attention and he had come to the conclusion that some of the students were fired no doubt with zeal in their minds and with love for their Motherland, but they did not know how they should love her best. Some of them resorted to nefarious means because they did not work in the fear of God but out of fear of man. He was there to tell them that if he was for sedition, he must speak out sedition, think loudly and take the consequences. That would clear the atmosphere of any taint of hypocrisy. If the students, who were the hope of India, nay, perhaps of the Empire, did not live in fear of God, but in fear of man, in fear of the authorities - the Government, whether it was represented by the British or



an indigenous body - the results would prove disastrous to the country. They should always keep their minds open regardless of consequences.

The youths who resorted to political dacoities and assassinations were misguided youths with whom they should have absolutely no connection. They should consider these persons as enemies to themselves and to their country. He did not suggest that they should hate them. He was not a believer in government; he believed that that government was the best that governed the least. But whatever his personal views were, he must say that misguided zeal that resorted to dacoities and assassinations was absolutely a foreign growth in India. It could not take root here and could not be a permanent institution in India. History proved that assassinations had done no good. The religion of this country, the Hindu religion, taught abstention from *himsa* that was to say, not taking animal or human life. That was the guiding principle of all religions, he believed. The Hindu religion said that even the evil-doer should not be hated. Nobody had any right to kill even the evil-doer. These assassinations were a Western institution and he warned them against these Western methods and Western evils. If the youths imitated the West and believed that they could do the slightest good to India, they were totally mistaken. He would not discuss what government was best for India, whether the British Government or the Government that existed before, though he believed that there was a great deal of room for improvement in the British Government.

But he would advise his young friends to be fearless, sincere and be guided by the principles of religion. If they had a programme for the country, let them place it openly before the public. He concluded with an appeal to the young men present to be guided by a spirit of religion and morality. If they were prepared to die for the country, he was prepared to die with them. He would be ready to



accept their guidance. But if they wanted to terrorize the country, he would rise against them.

The President, in the course of an eloquent speech, eulogized Gandhiji's address and suggested that young men should band themselves for the purpose of uprooting the "anarchical evil" from this country. He offered a vote of thanks to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji invited the students to write to him and promised he would promptly reply to their letters. [*Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, 1 April 1915; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.44-46]

After that he left for Bolpur. Marwari friends in Calcutta had given him Rs. 300 to cover the expenses. He reached Santiniketan at night along with Pranalal. He had talks with Andrews, Gurudev and the teachers. Andrews was having some problem. ["Diary for 1915"; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.163]. Gandhiji always had time for the workers' and colleagues' problems and would help them in finding solutions and he helped Andrews.

6

It was the year of the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar which is held every 12 years. Gandhiji was not very anxious to attend the Kumbh fair but he was very keen to visit Mahatma Munshiram and his Gurukul Kangri ashram at Hardwar, where, through C. F. Andrews the Phoenix party had found a warm welcome and shelter on their arrival in India.

The Servants of India Society had sent a contingent to Hardwar under the leadership of Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru, a respected member of the Society and later a leading member of Parliament, to serve the Kumbh pilgrims. Dr. H. S. Dev was in charge of medical facilities. Gandhiji had been invited to send the Phoenix



group to assist them. A telegram came from Kunzru. Gandhiji decided to join him. On 3 April he had a last talk with the boys with Gurudev as chairman. He left Maganlal and Ramdas at Bolpur to help with the new experiment in the kitchen and left with the rest for Hardwar.

The journey was very trying. From Saharanpur they were all crowded in open wagons for cattle or goods. The burning sun above and scorching iron floor below almost roasted them. The passengers were terribly thirsty, Gandhiji noticed, and yet would not drink water unless it was 'Hindu pani' - water served by a Hindu. [*Autobiography*, p.388]

At Hardwar the party was put up in tents in a dharmashala at Sarvannath gardens. Gandhiji met Bawa Ramnath Kalikamlwala, and formed a good impression of him.

Dr. Dev had dug some pits to serve as latrines. He had hired scavengers for looking after the latrines. Gandhiji offered to take over the work of keeping the excreta covered with dry earth and their final disposal. The offer was gratefully accepted. The implementation was left to his companions. "My business was mostly to keep sitting in the tent giving *darshan* and holding religious and other discussions with numerous pilgrims who called on me," records Gandhiji in his Autobiography. He was followed by the *darshan* seekers even when he went for a bath to the bathing ghat; nor was he left alone when he took his meals. The experience at Hardwar made him realize what a deep impression "my humble services in South Africa had made throughout the whole of India". [*Ibid*, p.389]

It was not an enviable position to be in. When Gandhiji was not recognized, he suffered, as in third-class travel. When he was recognized he could have no peace. He wondered which was worse and recorded that while the blind love of



the visitors at times made him feel angry and more often sore at heart, the travelling, however trying, was uplifting and never roused anger in him.

Gandhiji was strong enough to roam about in Hardwar. He was not so well known then as to be recognized and so had a good look all round. He was sad to observe in the pilgrims absent-mindedness, hypocrisy and slovenliness rather than piety. He was astonished to see a cow with five feet. Someone who knew the inner story told him that a calf's foot had been removed and grafted in the cow's shoulder. The double cruelty in order to fleece the innocent believers who lavished their charity on the miraculous cow shocked him and made him miserable.

Seventeen lakhs of people had come to Hardwar for the Kumbh. They were not all hypocrites. Countless among them had come there in faith to earn some merit and self-purification. Gandhiji spent a sleepless night thinking about it. It was difficult if not impossible for him to say to what extent this kind of faith uplifted the soul. There were pious souls in the midst of hypocrisy which they did not see. He wrote to Kallenbach on 16 April:

F or me there is no doubt that India has a great hold on me. Even amidst the most trying of circumstances I am able to perceive the inner life. It may be all a delusion. But it is there.

In the same letter Gandhiji added:

At Hardwar, one of the holiest places in India, I felt the need to take a further step and this is what I have done. In India I am not to take for my sustenance more than five things during 24 hours, and not anything after sunset.... Thus if I have taken today bananas, dates, ground-nuts, oranges and lemons, I may not take cloves or tamarind. I still take two meals, and I have to make my choice of fruit of five things for the day. Both the terms



are fairly stiff. But they had to be taken. The spirit was there. The flesh will have to yield. The vows were taken on the 10th instant.

Gandhiji knew it could cause serious difficulties if in case of illness a medicine too was to be counted in the five articles, but he decided not to make any exception. "My life is based on disciplinary resolutions," he records in his *Autobiography*. "They [these two vows] have subjected me to severe test at times. But they have also served as my shield... they have added a few years to my life and saved me from many an illness." [*Ibid*, pp.388-91] The vow became operative from 10 April 1915.

Gandhiji had arrived at Hardwar on 5 April and after seeing the Kumbh Mela he visited Gurukul Kangri on the 6th morning along with a volunteer and Jamnadas Gandhi. After meeting Mahatma Munshiram he came back to Hardwar in his van. Jamnadas stayed on in Gurukul. The boys with him left for Rishikesh.

On 7 April Gandhiji went to Rishikesh. He walked to Lakshman Jhula and also saw Swargashram. The thoughtless ways of pilgrims dirtying the river bank made him very sad, but the natural beauty of the place charmed him. "I ... bowed my head in reverence to our ancestors for the sense of the beautiful in Nature and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of Nature with a religious significance," he recorded. [*Ibid*, p. 394]

He was tremendously impressed by the scenic beauty of the place. He wrote to Kallenbach :

I wished you could have been with me as I was wandering. I have not seen anything grander anywhere else. ... The Ganges you see flowing in all her grandeur. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]



On 8 April Professor Mahesh Charan Sinha with his band of *brahmacharis* went to receive him and brought him to the Gurukul. The *brahmacharis* presented him an address of welcome which was read by Buddhadevji.

Mahatma Munshiram, while welcoming him said that he was glad to hear that he would live in India and would not go abroad like others to serve India from outside. He hoped that Gandhiji would be the beacon light of India. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.46-47]

Gandhiji in his reply said that he felt indebted to Mahatmaji for his love. "I came to Hardwar only to pay my respects to Mahatma Munshiram". Mr. Andrews had spoken of him to Gandhiji as one of the three great men whom he ought to see in India, he said.

Gandhiji thanked the *brahmacharis* for the help they sent to their Indian brothers in Africa and felt specially grateful to them and Mahatma Munshiram for the love and affection they had extended towards his Phoenix boys while they were at the Gurukul. He felt that his pilgrimage to the Gurukul was satisfactory, and added, "I am proud that Mahatmaji has called me his brother in a letter. Please pray that I may deserve his fraternity." He had come after 28 years to his country, he said. He could give no advice. He had come to seek guidance and was ready to bow down to anyone who was devoted to the service of the Motherland and he was ready to lay down his life in the service of his country. "I shall no more go abroad," he told the audience. "One of my brothers [Gokhale] is gone. I want guidance. I hope the Mahatmaji will take his place and be a brother to me now."

To the *brahmacharis*, Gandhiji said: "Whatever your aim is, is the aim of all of us. May God fulfil our mission." [*Ibid*, pp.46-47]

With Acharya Ramdev he discussed the need for industrial training in the Gurukul.



The clean Gurukul surroundings provided a welcome relief from the dirt and filth of Hardwar.

On 10 and 11 April Gandhiji visited various institutions including Mohini Ashram and Ramkrishna Mission where he held discussions with the members.

Gandhiji was meeting people, receiving money from some and offers of joining him from others. He was making a careful evaluation of such persons and making a note thereof in his diary. The entry of 10 April states: "Dharsimal, whom I met on way to Rishikesh, seems to be gradually drawing closer." ["Diary for 1915"; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.164]

7

On 12 April Gandhiji arrived at Delhi along with Kasturba, Raojibhai, Kotwal, Deodhar and others. He parted company with all except Deodhar. He visited the Qutub Minar which led to many thoughts. His guide, who was a scholar, told him that the monument was made of material collected by destroying Hindu temples. Bapu told us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp how the sight had made him feel sick at heart. Gandhiji symbolized in his person equal respect for all religions. Memories of religious fanaticism responsible for the destruction of Hindu temples caused him deep pain.

The 13 April entry in his Diary notes a function of college students in the morning. It refers to St. Stephen's College. Presumably he stayed with Principal Rudra, though there is no mention of this. He went to meet Sultan Singh, who along with his wife, became his admirer. He saw Mr. and Mrs. Hailey and visited the Red Fort which again made him think. A born democrat, the relics of autocratic ways of Mogul emperors and their torture chambers had upset him, he told us.



There was a public meeting in the evening and a speech by Maulana Mohammed Ali. He was to become Gandhiji's close colleague in the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements later.

On 14 April Gandhiji left for Vrindavan, reached there at noon, visited Prem Mahavidyalaya, Rishikul, Gurukul and Ramakrishna Mission. The dirt and filth of the town made a deep and painful impression. He went back to Mathura in the evening and at night took the train to Madras.

8

Gandhiji arrived in Madras on 17 April. He found a huge crowd of people gathered at the station to welcome him. The crowd was so large that a dozen policemen posted there could do nothing to manage it. According to newspaper reports the students among the crowd "unyoked the horse and dragged the carriage to the premises of Messrs Natesan & Co. Mr. Gandhi being cheered all along the way." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.47]

At Madras Gandhiji met Mrs. Annie Besant soon after arrival and learnt something of her work and views which led her a little later to start the Home Rule League. Annie Besant was an Irishwoman. She became president of the Theosophical Society in 1907 and was founder of the Central Hindu College at Benaras, which developed later into Benaras Hindu University. She was President of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

Gandhiji met many people and addressed several meetings, always avoiding expression of any views on current political matters.

On 27 April Gandhiji addressed the Madras students at the Y.M.C.A. Srinivasa Sastri was in the chair. The proceedings opened with singing of *Bande Mataram* for which every one stood up. Gandhiji asked in his speech whether the



education the students were receiving would fit them for realizing the dream of Bankim Babu and making the vision of India as he, Bankim Babu, had pictured it into a reality. He was a determined opponent of modern civilization, he said. Europe was groaning under the burden of modern civilization. "Youyou're your elders will have to think twice before you can emulate that civilization in our Motherland.... " He believed it was possible for India, if she would but live up to the tradition of the sages, of whom they had heard from "our worthy President, to transmit a message through this great race, a message not of physical might, but a message of love. And then it will be your privilege to conquer the conquerors, not by shedding blood, but by sheer force of spiritual predominance." Political assassinations and political dacoities, he felt, were foreign importations which could not take root in India. The students would have to beware "lest mentally or morally you give one thought of approval to this kind of terrorism".

Gandhiji continued:

Our religion is based on *ahimsa* which in its active form is nothing but love, love not only to your neighbours, not only to your friends but love to those who may be your enemies.... Also practise fearlessness.... If our rulers are doing what in your opinion is wrong.... I urge you to speak sedition but at your peril. You must be prepared to suffer the consequences.

Gandhiji said he allied himself with the British Government because he felt it was possible for him to claim equal partnership with every subject of the British Empire. But it was not something for the British Governors to give to them, it was for them to take it.



"Our religion consists of four letters 'd-u-t-y' and not of five letters 'r-i-g-h-t'." They must always think of their duty. Fighting thus, they would have no fear of any man. They would fear only God. The message of Gokhale was "to spiritualize the political life and the political institutions of the country...." Politics divorced from religion "becomes debasing.. Gandhiji eulogized the illiterate indentured labourers, "your countrymen," who had the strength of the *rishis* of old.... "May that be your privilege, and may that be my privilege." [*Ibid*, pp. 64-67]

Commenting on this speech *The Mahratta* of Tilak in its issue of 9 May 1915, described Gandhiji's exhortation to the students as "a gospel of patient suffering", investing the sufferer "with a spiritual energy and moral conviction against which physical force and even torture would be of no avail." The journal went on to remark that Indian agitation lacked that sustained strength which an invincible faith in the noble destiny of India alone could impart and Mr. Gandhi had come as a great teacher who from his personal experience could testify to the message of *ahimsa*. In exhorting the students to cultivate fearlessness, Mr. Gandhi had accurately placed his finger on the weak spot in the character of modern Indians. The irresoluteness and indecision, which on occasion Indians showed was due to no other cause than scepticism as to the ultimate triumph of justice. Mr. Gandhi was a living example that justice might be delayed but could not be denied to him who without injuring others suffered for his cause.

As for Gandhiji's critique of the Western civilization, the journal found itself unable to go with him all the way. It said:

We are not blind admirers of Western culture, but to prevent any misapprehension, Mr. Gandhi might have done well to distinguish and determine the causes which have perverted its nature and polluted its



sanctity.... If by civilization he would symbolize all the class hatred and colour prejudice, all would acquiesce in his denunciation. We cannot however persuade ourselves to believe that by condemning Western culture he meant to disapprove of the tremendous advances made by these countries in physical sciences. [*Mahratta*, 9 May 1915]

On the 29th Gandhiji addressed the Lakshmi Memorial Arya Pathshala and also a meeting of the Gujaratis who held a reception for him and presented him a purse. On the 30th he went to Tranquebar, a suburb of Madras where 200 people representing different classes, and ex-indentured labourers, particularly passive resisters, had assembled. A reception was also held by the Depressed Classes Society of Tranquebar. Addressing them Gandhiji recommended greater attention to patriotic earnest work "until the existing shameful differences" disappeared, and the so-called depressed classes got equal privileges.

On 1 May a welcome address was presented to Gandhiji by the Municipal Chairman at Mayavaram in the Victoria Town Hall. Rao Bahadur V. K. Ramanujachariar was in the chair. Gandhiji strongly condemned the practice of untouchability and highlighted some of the difficulties under which untouchables had to live. It was difficult for them to fight for justice in the courts. He quoted a *Bhagvad Gita* verse: "The true Brahmin is he who is equiminded towards a pundit and a pariah." He also pleaded for the use of mother tongue in preference to English as a part of the Swadeshi movement.

The 50 handlooms in Mayavaram, Gandhiji was told, were weaving saris for women. He asked, was swadeshi only for women? Someone had said that there were a thousand looms. They could all dress themselves in swadishi, he said without any extra cost if they would give up foreign goods. If, however, 1000 looms were all needed to meet the needs of women, "double this supply [of



looms] and you will have all your wants supplied by your own weavers and there will be no poverty in the land. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.69-71]

On 5 May Gandhiji went to Nellore where the 21st Madras Provincial Conference met and Gandhiji and Kasturba were paid glowing tributes. Natesan moved the resolution which expressed grateful appreciation of the enormous sacrifices of Gandhiji and Kasturba.

Mrs. Annie Besant said:

In the successful issue of the struggle in South Africa is a presage of the successful termination of the struggle for liberty on the Indian soil. We thank him [Gandhiji] not only for what he did, but also in that what he did will strengthen the Indian nation in the future. Mr. Gandhi's great help to us is that of inspiration - an inspiration to self-sacrifice, an inspiration to the following of a great ideal, the recognition of the fact that there is no dishonour in anything that is endured for the sake of right and justice, and that a prison is no dishonour when the soul within it is free, and when prison is accepted as the price of that liberty. [*Ibid*, p.74fn]

Gandhiji gave a short reply.

Gandhiji also addressed a students' meeting at Nellore and exhorted them not to be content with merely making speeches but set a practical example to popularize the cloth made by their weavers by using it themselves. [*Ibid*, p.75]

On 7 May he made a statement at the Indian South African League meeting at Madras, thanking them for their help and their moral and material support during the struggle in South Africa. He expressed the gratitude of deportees from South Africa in 1909 to G. A. Natesan for the devotion with which he had looked after their interests. There were about 30 passive resisters with their families in



India who needed their help including the widows and children of two men who were shot dead during the struggle. He advised them to use the small balance left with the League to help them. He said he had sent two detailed statements of income and expenditure of the help he had received - the first to Gokhale and the second to Ratan Tata. The third was ready and would be published after consulting the secretary of the Committee as was desired by Gokhale. [*Ibid*, p.77]

9

From Madras Gandhiji went to Bangalore, at the instance of the Social Service League, to unveil the portrait of G. K. Gokhale on 8 May in the Government High School. Addressing the gathering he said that Gokhale had taught him that the dream of every Indian who claimed to love his country, should be to act in the political field... to spiritualize the political life of the country. "He inspired my life, and is still inspiring it; in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualize myself." What was the meaning of spiritualizing the political life of the country, he asked. It could mean different things to different people. "...I think political life must be an echo of private life and that there cannot be any divorce between the two." He was, he said, by the side of that saintly politician towards the end of his life. There was no ego in him.... He developed every particular faculty in him, not in order to win the praise of the world for himself, but in order that his country might gain. He did not seek public applause. Applause and honours were thrust upon him. That same inspiration and sincerity should be the end of their lives. [*Ibid*, pp.78-79]

Some citizens of Bangalore came to talk with Gandhiji at his temporary residence on Seshadri Road. Questioned as to the poverty of India Gandhiji said that India was becoming poorer and poorer because handloom industry was disappearing owing to violent competition and export of raw materials. He said



Indians had lost much self-respect because of being Europeanized. Indians thought and spoke in English which impoverished Indian languages, and estranged the feelings of the masses. Knowledge of English was not necessary to serve the motherland. He added: "Modern civilization is a curse in Europe as also in India. War is the direct result of modern civilization." Every power was making preparations for war. Passive resistance was a great moral force. It was meant for the weak and also for the strong. Modern civilization was brute force. Virtue as understood in India was not understood in foreign lands, he said.

Gandhiji knew it was one thing to know the ideals and another to practise them. If ideals were practised there would be less room for mischievous activities. There were 1.5 million *sadhus* [recluses]. If every *sadhu* did his duty, India could gain much. He did not think Shankaracharya deserved the appellation "Jagadguru" [world teacher].

Asked about the Theosophical Society, Gandhiji said, there was much good in the Theosophical Society. "It has stimulated ideals and thoughts." [*Ibid*, pp.80-81]

Gandhiji was given a civic reception at Bangalore. He exhorted the audience not to spoil public men by dragging them in carriages. "Let public men feel that they will be stoned, they will be neglected and let them still love the country, for service is its own reward." They must act on the political platform from a spiritual side. They could then conquer the conquerors. A day would dawn when Englishmen would be considered as fellow citizens. "A new civilization is coming shortly which will be a nobler one.... Mysore is a great Native State.... Establish Ram Rajya in Mysore and have as your minister a Vasishta [preceptor of Rama] who will command obedience... then you can dictate terms to the conqueror." [*Ibid*, pp.81 -82]



Arriving in Bombay on his way back to Ahmedabad on 10 May he wrote to Natesan, thanking him for the hospitality. "Madras still remains my favourite," he wrote. He asked Natesan to send him Tamil books and informed him he was leaving for Ahmedabad the same night. [*ibid*, p.83] On 11 May he was back in Ahmedabad.

Thus, in the very first four months of his return home from South Africa, Gandhiji travelled the length and breadth of India, meeting many people and listening to what they had to say. Following Gokhale's advice he made no statements on current affairs and initiated no new projects. But there was one which was most urgent - he must find a home for the boys of the Phoenix school, he must start his own ashram.



CHAPTER IV: THE ASHRAM

1

Gandhiji sought to enable everyone who came in contact with him to reach his or her maximum potential for all-round development. All a long he sought to develop the divinity within each human being.

On 28 March 1915, in a letter to Jamnadas, a nephew, he wrote that there was no need to be unhappy if because of the Satyagraha Phoenix should turn desolate and go to waste.

In settled conditions, we should take to agriculture. When conditions are unsettled, we may beg or labour or starve. We should have unshakable faith that nothing that is done is ever done in vain. This is a law which has no exception. If circumstances arise again, we may resume agriculture. If not, we need not worry. Agriculture is not the end but only a means. The end is, from the lower point of view, service of the people and, from the higher point of view, *moksha*. One of the means for achieving both is agriculture. When it hinders us from attaining the end, we should abandon it.

Gandhiji was very particular that children should not copy elders in what he considered their undesirable traits. Therefore he saw to it that as far as possible they should not live with elders who led a soft life. In the last years of his life he often told us: "I am no longer fit to have you youngsters living with me." He could no longer lead the hard life which he considered necessary for young people and he never asked anyone to do what he did not do himself. To Jamnadas, who was at Santiniketan, he wrote in the letter quoted above:



The freedom that the Poet takes is wrong. We should, however, bear with a man like him, in the hope that one day he will give up indulgence of the senses. For him, our company is all to the good. We should make things as easy for him as we can.... We need not have the same rule for all in such matters. Even the Poet may not cross the bounds, however. ... [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.43-44]

On 14 March 1915 Gandhiji wrote a long letter to Maganlal Gandhi, in which he said that the essentials of non-violence were *daya* (compassion) and *akrodha* (absence of anger). Satyagraha was based on non-violence. He had come to the conclusion "that we must observe all the *yamas* (disciplines) and that, if we do so by way of vows, we perceive the inner significance of non-violence. In my talks with hundreds of men here, I place the various *yamas* above everything else.... I am absolutely clear in my mind that India's deliverance and ours will be achieved through the observance of these vows." In observing the vow of non-hoarding, he explained the main thing to be borne in mind was not to store up anything which was not required. For agriculture, they might keep bullocks and the equipment required. Where there was a recurring danger of famine, no doubt food grains would have to be stored.

"But we shall always ask ourselves whether bullocks and food grains are in fact needed. We are to observe all the *yamas* in thought as well, so that we shall grow more secure in them from day to day and come to think of fresh things to renounce. Renunciation has no limit to it. The more we renounce, the more shall we grow in the knowledge of the *atman*. If the mind continues to move towards renunciation of the desire for hoarding and if in practice we give up hoarding as far as it is physically possible to do, we shall have kept the vow of non-hoarding."



The same was true of non-stealing. "Non-hoarding refers to stocking of things not needed. Non-stealing refers to the use of such things." If one needed only one shirt but used two, one was guilty of stealing one. If five bananas were enough to keep one going, eating a sixth one was a form of theft. "Suppose we have a stock of 50 times, thinking that among us all we would need them. I need only two, but take three because there are so many. This is theft."

Such unnecessary consumption was also a violation of the vow of non-violence, Gandhiji said. If, with the ideal of non-stealing in view, they reduced consumption of things, they would grow more generous and more compassionate.

"The principle underlying all these vows is truth. By deceiving oneself, one may refuse to recognize an act of stealing or hoarding as such. Hence, by taking careful thought we can ensure at every step that truth prevails." Whenever one was in doubt whether a particular thing should be stored or not, the simple rule should be not to store it. "There is no violation of truth in renunciation. When in doubt about the wisdom of speaking, it is the duty of a man who has taken the vow of truth not to speak." Gandhiji went on: "I want all of you to take only such vows as each one feels inclined to, of his own free will. I always feel that vows are necessary. But anyone may take them only when he himself feels the need and take only such as he wants to." [*Ibid*, pp.37-39]

Gandhiji again wrote to Maganlal Gandhi on 4 June: "I see that you are rather upset. The fault, I am sure, is mine. In attempting to ride too many horses at a time, I am in danger of falling off all of them." He had not done so, because his enthusiasm proceeded from an eager desire for service. "Be patient. I intend to send you all, on suitable occasions, to different places, so that you may see things for yourselves." Everything would depend on what help they got and how



many they could have with them. He was "perfectly confident," that he would "satisfy the aspirations of you all; meanwhile, I do feel that the life you have all led so far has not been in vain, that, on the contrary you have learnt much."

He was not unaware, Gandhiji wrote, that Maganlal had not attained to a state of perfect non-attachment, for he had not attained it himself "and I know that you are yet to reach even my level. If we stop making noise about the vows, we shall not find ourselves in unhappy situations as we occasionally do." Maganlal wanted him to explain what he meant by not having attained to a state of perfect non-attachment. Gandhiji explained how that was so with him: "For example, I observe *brahmacharya*, but not in all its subtle aspects. I cannot say that my mind or eyes are never disturbed.

2. "I maintain truthfulness, but I cannot say that I am never guilty of exaggeration, consciously or unconsciously. To say what I like saying, and not to say anything which I don't like saying, casts a shadow on the vow of truthfulness.

3. "I make untiring efforts to control the palate but I observe that I extract the utmost pleasure from the five articles [I permit myself in a day]. But I do want to keep these and other vows inviolate and make progress in them day by day, and I am quite confident that I shall succeed. I feel that I am not likely now to depart from a literal observance." [*Ibid*, p. 100]

2

The concept of ashram implies community living based on religious ideology. Religion for Gandhiji did not mean narrow dogma, but moral and ethical values accepted by all religions. In a way Gandhiji was made for such life. It suited his mental make-up. In his notes written in response to Kakasaheb Kalelkar's pressing request to write the history of the Ashram, he says that retrospective reflection would show that ever since he set up his own household, his home



became a sort of ashram according to this definition. "A householder's life (*grihashthashram*) is not for enjoyment, but to lead a religious life, a life of duty," he writes. There were always outsiders, friends or colleagues besides the family members living with him. Their relationship with him was spiritual from the start or developed into such a relationship later." This went on unconsciously till 1904."

In 1904 Gandhiji read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and it deeply moved him. It led to the establishment of the Phoenix Settlement. He had no concept of an ashram at that time. Phoenix had a religious basis, but the obvious object was purity of body and mind and economic equality. Celibacy was not a requirement. Co-workers were expected to live at Phoenix as householders and have children. Gandhiji called it the first step in the evolution of the ashram. [M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha Ashram ka Itihas* (Hindi), Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1970 pp.3-4]

The second step came in 1906, when Gandhiji took the vow of *brahmacharya*. Experience had taught him that it was a necessary discipline for a life of service. "From then on I began to look at Phoenix with religious eyes" - not a narrow religion, but, "the supreme religion which acts as a link between different religions and realizes their essential unity." [M. K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1955, p.4]. The Phoenix Settlement went on progressing as an ashram without being given this name.

In 1910 came the third step in the form of Tolstoy Farm. Till that time all those who lived in the Phoenix Settlement were working in the press or in *Indian Opinion* weekly. When the Satyagraha struggle was restarted in South Africa on Gandhiji's return from the second deputation to London, need was felt for a place



where the families of satyagrahis and the satyagrahis themselves, in between their prison terms, could live together a simple life as a family.

Gandhiji had met Hermann Kallenbach, a German Jew, and they had become friends. They had been living together a sort of ashram life. Each of them followed his own profession. Gandhiji was a barrister and Kallenbach an architect. But they led a simple life outside Johannesburg and tried to put into practice spiritual and religious concepts they believed in.

Kallenbach purchased a farm of 1100 acres at Lawley near Johannesburg to meet the needs of satyagrahis and put it at the disposal of Gandhiji and thus the Tolstoy Farm was started. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis lived there as members of one family. "Religious questions came up at every step, but there was never any conflict or unpleasantness on this account," narrates Gandhiji. It was not that the residents were indifferent to religion. Each one zealously followed his or her own religion, but everyone respected the religions of others.

They all shared a common kitchen, lived together, had their meals together and worked together in the fields and a few industries that were set up, besides sharing housekeeping chores. A school was started for the education of children, in which adults gave lessons. Ashram life was thus followed at this farm, but this institution too was not given the name of ashram. It was called Tolstoy Farm, because both Gandhiji and Kallenbach were ardent admirers and followers of Tolstoy.

Tolstoy Farm was closed down in 1912. In January 1913, those who wished to continue leading community life, all shifted to Phoenix. Phoenix now ceased to be the institution for running *Indian Opinion* only, though *Indian Opinion* continued to be produced at Phoenix. Phoenix became the training ground for satyagrahis. It was still called the Phoenix Settlement, but the residents led an



ashram life. A common kitchen was set up, though some joined it and some did not. Evening prayers came to have more importance day by day. The final phase of the Satyagraha in South Africa was started by the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement under the leadership of Kasturba. This struggle ended successfully in 1914 and Gandhiji left South Africa on 18 July 1914 along with Kasturba and Kallenbach to return to India.

3

Gandhiji's compact with Gokhale required not only that he should refrain from speaking on controversial topics from public platform, but that, further, he should continue to conduct what Gokhale had called the "Phoenix institution". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.54]

Thus creation of an institution on the lines of the Phoenix Settlement, initially with the group of the Phoenix settlers who had preceded Gandhiji to India and so far had been found no permanent place to stay, remained one of the chief concerns of Gandhiji in the first few months following his arrival in India.

The party had been put up for varying periods by Mahatma Munshiram at the Arya Samaj Guntkul in Hardwar and by Tagore at Santiniketan. The group had gained much from both institutions. But they had to have a home of their own.

After his visit to Rangoon, Hardwar and South India, Gandhiji returned to Ahmedabad on 11 May 1915. He held talks with Sheth Mangaldas, one of the leading businessmen of Ahmedabad, who became one of his supporters as well as his patient. On 12 May Gandhiji made him undertake a fast to get rid of his cough. ["Diary for 1915", *Ibid*, p.168]

Mahatma Munshiram tried to persuade Gandhiji to have his ashram at Hardwar. Some Calcutta friends recommended Vaidyanathdham. Some others



strongly urged him to choose Rajkot. While he had passed through Ahmedabad earlier, many friends had pressed him to settle there. They had volunteered to meet the expenses of the ashram and find a house where it could be set up.

Gandhiji made up his mind to set up his ashram at Ahmedabad. It was easily accessible from Bombay and was close to Kathiawar. Moreover, Ahmedabad was a suitable place for his activities in many ways. (a) The city was an ancient centre of handloom weaving and provided the best opportunities for the revival of cottage industry; (b) He could influence his people best through his mother tongue, Gujarati; (c) Ahmedabad being the richest trading centre in Gujarat, its wealthy citizens could be induced to help a new activity, and some of them had offered to finance his experiment for one year. A barrister friend, Jivanlal Desai, offered his single-storey bungalow at Kochrab, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad to the west of the river Sabarmati. Gandhiji decided to hire it.

He prepared a list of requirements for the Ashram and gave it to Sheth Mangaldas with an estimate of expenditure. It included a list of likely inmates. [These were Dada (Presumably the elder brother of Dr. Pranjivan Mehta and Revashankar Jhaveri), Gandhiji himself and Kasturba, Sundaram, Naiker, Santok Gandhi, Rukmini, Radha, Manilal, Ramdas, Devadas, Kaka Kalelkar, Naranji and his wife, Maganbhai Patel, his wife and son, Maganlal Gandhi, Shivpujan, Shanti, Navin, Cuppu, Fakiri, Bala, Chavda's daughter, Chhotelal, Narandas, Parthasarathi, Shanti, Ranchhod, Kaku, Keshu, Krishna, Prabhudas, Rajangam (Harihar Sharma), Rati, Magan and three other Tamils]

There would be 40 to begin with, Gandhiji wrote. "The number is likely to be 50 in a short time." There would probably be ten guests in a month on an average. Three to five of them might come with families. "The accommodation to be provided should be such that those with families can stay separately and



the rest together." Three kitchens and rooms together measuring 50,000 sq. ft. should suffice for all. He added, "In addition to this a room and cupboards for holding a thousand books will also be necessary."

At least five acres of land would be required for cultivation. Agricultural implements sufficient for at least 30 persons to work with would also be needed. These should include "hoes, shovels and pickaxes". Gandhiji gave lists of kitchen utensils, carpenter's tools and cobbler's tools that would be required.

Gandhiji also gave an estimate of expenditure. "I estimate the total cost at Rs. 500. The kitchen utensils required will cost Rs. 150. If we are far away from the railway station, one bullock-cart or horse-carriage will be needed for transport of luggage and also perhaps for conveyance of guests, etc." The annual expenses on boarding etc., he estimated at the rate of Rs. 10 per month per head. "I don't see any possibility of our being able to provide this from our produce during the first year. Thus, with an average of 50 inmates, the annual expenditure would come to Rs. 6,000."

Gandhiji had understood it to be the desire of the local leaders that he and his companions should experiment for a year in Ahmedabad. If that be so, he said, Ahmedabad should bear the whole of this expenditure. "My demand was that Ahmedabad should provide me with land and buildings complete, while I would obtain the remaining expenses from elsewhere or by other means. As we have now changed the basis, I think Ahmedabad should bear the entire burden for a year." If Ahmedabad was not prepared to do this, he said, he would meet the boarding charges.

He had worked out the estimate in a hurry, Gandhiji added. It was likely that he had missed a few items. Moreover, he had no information about local conditions except for boarding charges. "Hence my estimates may well be



incorrect." They would also need "blacksmith's and mason's tools," and equipment for educational purposes. "Five or more indigenous looms will be the main requirement among the latter, as far as I can see." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.85-86]

On 13 May Gandhiji wrote to Maganlal, who was at Gurukul Kangri with the Phoenix party, to join him. He took Rs. 200 from Sheth Mangaldas and sent the money to Maganlal for travel expenses, including sixteen and a half train tickets. His clear instructions show his concern for economy as well as his thoroughness.

You will get the most convenient train *via* Delhi : Laksar, Saharanpur, Delhi, Ajmer, Palanpur and Ahmedabad. If you purchase at Hardwar a through ticket to Ahmedabad, you will save Rs. 5. The fare is two and a half pies per mile for the first 100 miles and two pies beyond that. The Mail has only Intermediate Class. There is a mixed Third-Class Express from Delhi, reaching Ahmedabad in 27 to 30 hours. It seems you will have to change at least at Laksar, Saharanpur and Delhi. If a large stock of dates, etc., remains over, it will be better to buy it. They should not feel at the Gurukul later that we had been a burden there. [*Ibid*, p.88]

A letter dated 14 May 1915 to Srinivasa Sastri shows his anxious concern for the latter's health. Recommending a regimen of water cure, exercise and diet of fruits and nuts, he writes :

2 hip baths per day of at least 20 minutes' duration, the baths to be taken not before the completion of three hours after a meal. Two hours' gentle walk in the open air morning and evening.

Only two meals per day, the last not after sunset.



Every morsel of diet must be chewed with deliberation so that it goes down the throat not as a solid mass but as a smooth thick liquid. Whether you have done this or not can always be noticed in your stools.

The diet to consist of bananas, mangoes, oranges, oats, figs (fresh or dried), sultanas, grapes, lemons, tamarind, pawpaw, pineapple, prunes, cocoanut, groundnuts, almonds, pistachios, walnuts, olive oil, if necessary.

Only two varieties of nuts may be taken during the day. In quantity no more than four ounces of both during the day. At the commencement, i.e., for four days, nuts may be omitted altogether and then gradually introduced.

Either lemons or tamarind may be taken. Figs, dates and other dried fruits should be well washed and soaked for six hours before eating. The water in which they are soaked should be drunk. If olive oil be taken, no more than an ounce per day may be taken. Nine fair-sized bananas should be enough per day with the other fruits.

However, quantity may be regulated by each one for himself.

A month's trial without a break is sure to show you that complete recovery lies in this direction and no other. Of course, all drinks - coffee, tea, soda water, etc., - and betel leaves, etc., must be eschewed during the treatment. Later on you will go back to your old diet with variations that you may have picked up during the treatment. [*Ibid*, pp. 88-89]

On 14 May Gandhiji left for Rajkot, reaching there on Saturday the 15th, and stayed there till the 18th. He met his relatives and attended to domestic affairs. On the 19th he went to Limbdi along with his nephew Shamaldas and Maganlal's wife and daughters. He met the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi in the



morning and had a long discussion with him in the afternoon and evening regarding education and other matters.

On the 19th, Gandhiji wrote to Narandas, another nephew: "I have come here for a day, as the Thakore Saheb was keen that I should. Santok and the girls have also come along. Jamnadas will stay in Rajkot for the time being." The luggage lying with Revashankerbhai, as also "that with you and Kalyandas," [Kalyandas Jagmohandas Mehta, who had worked with Gandhiji in South Africa], he added, should be sent to Ahmedabad in a goods train. The bedding to be covered with hessian and stitched in." Alternatively, a friend coming this way could bring them along. Boxes which might have no locks should be packed well. Those containing glassware should be handled carefully."

There was a telegram from Maganlal saying that they would all leave Hardwar on Thursday. Gandhiji added in his letter to Narandas, "So they should be in Ahmedabad on Saturday or Sunday (the 22nd or 23rd of May)." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.89-90]

4

Gandhiji returned to Ahmedabad on 20 May and had a pot carried to the Kochrab house and performed *vastu*, a religious ceremony invoking the gods to make their abode in the house. In between his travels and other preoccupations, he had drafted a constitution for the Ashram, copies of which he sent to several friends for their comments. It contained a list of vows to be observed by members of the Ashram. These consisted of six primary vows, which included five *yamas*, namely (1) *Satya* (truth); (2) *Ahimsa* (non-violence); (3) *Brahmacharya* (celibacy); (4) *Asteya* (non-stealing); (5) *Aparigraha* (non-possession) and (6) *Asvad* (control of the palate) and three subsidiary vows, viz., (1) *Swadeshi*; (2) *Abhaya* (fearlessness) and (3) Vow against untouchability. Manual labour was



emphasized in the constitution though it did not figure in the list of vows at that time. Equal respect for all religions and manual labour were later additions to the vows to be observed. The number of Ashram vows thus became eleven in later years.

Five of the six primary vows (which means all except 'control of the palate') have of course been emphasized in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions as necessary disciplines in spiritual striving of individual seekers. Where Gandhiji was breaking new ground was in advocating these five *yamas* or disciplines for the achievement of political independence and social and economic reform, "to spiritualize the political life of the country". [*Ibid*, p.226]

Friends had suggested several names for the Ashram, such as 'Sevashram' (Ashram for Service), 'Deshasevashram' (Ashram for the Service of the Country) and 'Tapovan' (Austerity Grove). Gandhiji decided to call it 'Satyagraha Ashram'. This name conveyed both the goal and the way to reach it.

The inmates were to be divided into three groups: (1) Controllers; (2) Novitiates and (3) Students:

1. The Controllers were those who believed that in order to learn how to serve the country, observance of the vows mentioned above was necessary and they had been trying to do so themselves for some time.

2. Those desirous of following the programme but not able immediately to take the vows could be admitted as Novitiates. It would be obligatory upon them to conform to the observances followed by the Controllers while they were in the Ashram. They would attain the status of Controllers when they were able to take the vows for life.

On 21 May Gandhiji wrote to Kallenbach:



Here I am now hoping to settle down. The boys are at the Gurukul, Hardwar. I have wired for them and they may be here any day. Two cottages have been placed at my disposal. They are isolated from this big city. There are three acres of ground attached to them. Living there I shall conduct the institution along our lines and shall search for an agricultural plot. ... [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

Maganlal and party arrived on 23 May. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.169] Maganlal at once took up the threads and started working out details of the ashram.

After further discussions the terms adopted were 'managers', 'candidates', and 'students'. Adults too could be admitted as students.

"He who is acted upon by fear can hardly observe the vows of truth, etc." said Gandhiji. "The Controllers will, therefore, constantly endeavour to be free from the fear of kings or society, one's caste or family, thieves, robbers, ferocious animals such as tigers, and even of death. One who observes the vow of fearlessness will defend himself or others by truth-force or soul-force."

In a country where the people looked down upon manual labour, Gandhiji, firmly believing that manual labour was necessary, started education of the teachers first. He said:

The Controllers believe that body labour is a duty imposed by nature upon mankind. Such labour is the only means by which man may sustain himself; his mental and spiritual powers should be used for the common good only. As the vast majority in the world live on agriculture, the Controllers will always devote some part of their time to working on the land; and when such is not possible, they will perform some other bodily labour.



The Controllers believe that one of the chief causes of poverty in the land is the virtual disappearance of spinning-wheels and handlooms. They will, therefore, make every effort to revive this industry by themselves weaving cloth on handlooms. [*Ibid*, pp.93-95]

No one could occupy the status of a manager until he took the Ashram vows. The candidates were expected to conform to the Ashram observances, though they had not to take the vows.

On 25 May a school was started in the Ashram. Both boys and girls, above the age of four years, were to be admitted as students. The parents had to surrender all control over their children. The students were to be taught to observe the vows. They were to be taught the principles of religion, agriculture, handloom weaving and literature. Literary knowledge was to be imparted through the mother tongue. The curriculum included subjects like history, geography, mathematics and economics. Learning of Sanskrit, Hindi and at least one Dravidian language was made obligatory. Urdu, Bengali, Tamil and Telugu characters were to be taught. English was considered a second language. The full course of education was planned to last ten years. Every effort was to be made from the beginning to be self-reliant, so that no one would have to ask himself, 'what shall I do for my maintenance if and when I become an independent man?' On reaching the age of majority, people were to be given the option of taking the Ashram vows or retiring from the Ashram.

Children were not to be permitted to visit their parents until the whole course of study was completed.

Instruction at the school was to be given in an Indian language. Gandhiji affirmed :



It is the belief of the Managers that no nation can make real progress by abandoning its own language; they will, therefore, train themselves through the medium of their respective vernaculars, and as they desire to be on terms of intimacy with their brethren from all parts of India, they will learn the chief Indian languages and, as Sanskrit is the key to all the Indian languages, they will learn that also.

As a rule, a uniform style of the simplest clothing was to be worn by all. Meals, which were served thrice, were extremely simple. Chillies were excluded altogether; no condiments were used, except salt, pepper and turmeric. "Milk and its products being often a cause of tuberculosis, and having the same stimulating qualities as meat," said Gandhiji, were to be "sparingly used, if at all." But dried and fresh fruits were liberally supplied. The rules of dietetics and hygiene were taught at length, and were practised.

There was no vacation and no holidays. But during two days in a week the ordinary routine was altered, and students had some leisure to attend to their private work. During three months in a year those whose health permitted were given a chance to travel, mostly on foot. [D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. I, pp.169-75]

5

On 26 June Gandhiji received Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal at Poona. This Medal was instituted in 1900. The preamble to the Royal Warrant, amended in 1901 and 1902, states:

Whereas We, taking into our Royal consideration that there do not exist adequate means whereby We can reward important and useful services rendered to Us in Our Indian Empire in the advancement of the public interests of Our said Empire, and taking also into consideration the



expediency of distinguishing such services by some merit of Our Royal favours:

Now for the purpose of attaining an end so desirable as that of distinguishing such services present for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, do institute and create a new Decoration, 'The Kaiser-i -Hind Medal for Public Service in India.

The Medal was an oval shaped badge or decoration in gold for the First Class and in silver for the Second Class - with Royal Cypher on one side and on the reverse the words 'Kaiser-i -Hind fo1· Public Service in India'. [Stanley Read, (Ed.,) *The India Year Book*]

Someone asked Gandhiji if he would auction it. It was solid gold. He said 'no'. He probably knew he might have to return it some day.

On 11 July Gandhiji attended the 15th Bombay Provincial Conference held at Poona, where, speaking on a condolence resolution on Gokhale's death, moved by Ramabai Ranade, he quoted Gokhale: "We lack in India character ... we want religious zeal in the political field." He continued :

One of Gokhale's missions in life, I think, was to inculcate the lesson that whatever we do, we should do with thoroughness.... Whatever he did, he did with a religious zeal; that was the secret of his success. He did not wear his religion on his sleeve; he lived it. Whatever he touched, he purified; wherever he went, he recreated an atmosphere around him which was fragrant. When he came to South Africa, he electrified the people there, not only by his magnificent eloquence, but by the sincerity of his character and by the religious devotion with which he worked.... The people we represent will base their verdict not upon our speeches but



upon our actions, and how shall we act? We have a right to pass this resolution if we act in the spirit of the master. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.117]

Gandhiji also had two informal private interviews with Lokamanya Tilak on the same day, one in the morning and one in the evening. He (Gandhiji) was anxious to bring about a reconciliation between the moderates and extremists in the Congress. He wrote to Tilak on 27 July that he had spoken to him in his personal capacity, he did not wish the interviews to be published. [*Ibid.* p. 121]

On 12 July he paid a visit to the Home for Destitute Boys and left Poona for Ahmedabad.

A number of visitors came to see the Ashram including Amritlal V. Thakkar who had been working with untouchables. Thakkar left after two days. ["Diary for 1915", *Ibid*, p.182]

On 20 September Gandhiji received C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson at Bombay and left with them for the Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad. On 23 September Andrews and Pearson left for Fiji to study the problems of indentured labourers there.

It had long been a demand of India that the indenture system should be abolished. Gokhale, who had held indenture as a "state bordering on slavery" had proposed this in a resolution in the Viceregal Council as early as March 1912. And though the Government of India had put a stop to the recruitment of indentured labour for South Africa, the system itself had not been abolished. Bringing about the end of this evil system absorbed a good deal of Gandhiji's time and energy during his first few years in India. It was a system, he wrote to J. B. Petit on 16 June 1915, "which cannot be mended but can only be ended." [*Ibid*, p.111]



At a meeting held under the auspices of the District Congress Committee, Bombay, on 28 October 1915 he made an eloquent plea for the ending of the system. He quoted the Prime Minister of Natal and Lord Selborne to the effect that the system of indenture was a most inadvisable thing, and that Sir William Hunter had described it as semi-slavery. [*Ibid.* pp.131-32]

At the 11th session of the Indus trial Conference at Bombay on 24 December held under the chairmanship of Sir Dorabji Tata, Gandhiji supported the resolution for the abolition of indenture system. The resolution thanked the Viceory for recommending the abolition of the system and stated that in the interests of the country, "the system of Indian indentured labour is undesirable and (the Conference) urges its abolition, looking to the highly injurious and immoral effects of the same, as soon as possible." In the course of his speech Gandhiji said the two adjectives, "injurious" and "immoral", were not chosen haphazardly, but that they bore the "imprimatur" of their deceased countryman, Mr. Gokhale. He urged them to insist on the abolition of the system even while the war was on. [*Ibid.* p.153]

6

Satyagraha Ashram started functioning at Kochrab from 25 May 1915.

From the very beginning the Ashram was besieged with problems and difficulties, not least on account of widespread sickness. Among the sick was Kasturba Gandhi. On 4 June Gandhiji was writing to Kallenbach:

I feel like crying out to you: Do come and help me ! Mrs. Gandhi is again down with the swellings. She has lost all power of resistance. She weeps like a child, is ever angry with me, as if I was the party responsible for her swellings. I am over head and ears in work. This institution is to me much trouble. I wish I had the time to describe to you the troubles I am



passing through. I am not dejected but I feel lonely.... There are so many sick people.... [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

Having to travel constantly during this period between Ahmedabad, Bombay and Poona added to Gandhiji's difficulties and feeling of exhaustion. His letter to Kallenbach of 15 June said:

This has been a sad week. Bombay has so weighed me down that I am in a most melancholy mood. If I had to live in Bombay for one year, I should die. I am glad just now you are not with me. I go about barefoot. There is hardly a road clean enough to make you feel safe about your tread. This had not got on my nerves so much hitherto, because I have not had the opportunity of walking much. And the closets ! I know you would vomit eternally if you merely looked at them. Now what is the duty of a reformer in this position ? Can the city life be mended? If not, can he by working in a city perpetuate the life ? Suppose he succeeded in getting clean roads and clean closets - not by any means an easy task - what will he have gained ? How is he to deal with the filth within ? How will he regenerate the morality of the people ? These are awful questions, and I have to answer them, you have to answer them. [*Ibid*]

There were difficulties of other kinds too. The people around did not quite understand the Ashram people and their strangely simple life. Gandhiji's letter of 25 June to Kallenbach reported :

There is one man who strikes and swears at the boys and prevents them even from using water we are entitled to. Things are getting better somewhat. But new situations give rise to new difficulties.

The following was the daily routine followed :



To rise at 5 a.m. Worship 6 a.m. Fruit breakfast (meagre) at 6.30 a.m. Manual work 7 to 8.30 a.m. School 8.30 to 10. Meal 10 to 12. School 12 to 3. Manual work 3 to 5. Meal 5 to 6.30 p.m. Worship 6.30 to 7 p.m. Sanskrit class for the grown-ups between 7 to 9 p.m.

There were five new admissions and the total strength of the Ashram in June was 32. Maganlal Gandhi, Maganbhai and Manilal were the real helpers. *[Ibid]*

The principles of self-help were followed and no servants were employed. The inmates shared the chores of cooking, cleaning, sanitation, drawing water and carrying it to the Ashram. Maganlal was the chief Manager under Gandhiji's overall supervision. Besides the Phoenix group and some members of his own family and friends living in the Ashram, visitors came from all over the country. Some of them joined the Ashram.

Gandhiji needed teachers for the school. Two teachers, Dr. Mahadev Prasad and Bhogilal Kantharia, made themselves available from the first day. Gandhiji taught some of the subjects himself, but he was on the look-out for other teachers, especially for Sanskrit and Southern languages, Tamil and Telugu, music and weaving. A frequent visitor in the early days of the Ashram was Girija Shanker, an astrologer. Gandhiji suggested that since he visited the Ashram so regularly, he might take up teaching Sanskrit to the boys. He agreed and started work as teacher from 6 June. He was a successful astrologer with a large and wealthy clientele in Ahmedabad.

Then came, also in 1915, Kaka Kalelkar and Swami Anand. Kakasaheb taught Sanskrit. He was a very good teacher. Others, such as Narhari Parikh, Mahadev Desai and Vinoba Bhave came later. Vinoba came in June 1916, though



he did not remain as an inmate for long at that time. Mahadev Desai came in August 1917.

One of the visitors to the Ashram in 1915 was Swami Satyadev. The Swami and Kakasaheb had met in Almora in 1911-12, when Satyadev had just come back from a visit to America. Soon after that he had taken *sannyasa* and dedicated himself to the attainment of India's freedom.

Swami Satyadev had written several books before he came to the Ashram and had become famous as Satyadev *Parivrajak* (itinerant monk). On his coming to the Ashram, recitation of Tulsi *Ramayana* after the evening prayers was introduced. He also took up teaching in the Ashram school. Seeing his passion for Hindi, Bapu sent him to propagate Hindi in Madras. The first text -book to be published in connection with the Madras Hindi Prachar (propagation) programme was written by Swami Satyadev. [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, pp.123 -24]

Swami Satyadev was a political firebrand in those days, writes Indulal Yajnik, and had gone to the Ashram in search of real political inspiration. He told Yajnik of Gandhiji's reply to his question how his (Gandhiji's) doctrine of non-violence would help us to protect the North-West Frontier against the invasions of the turbulent Pathan tribesmen. He gave a very curious reply, said Swami Satyadev. He said:

All that you want to do is to train an army of strictly non-violent men who would offer themselves as willing sacrifices to the fury of the tribesmen and over whose corpses these tribesmen must tread before entering the gates of India. But I am sure that these chivalrous men would hate to strike and kill such non-resisting satyagrahis and their stout hearts would, therefore, easily succumb to the mighty powers of truth and love.



So you see in my opinion India would be better protected by such satyagrahis than by a mighty army, armed and equipped with the latest ammunitions and machine guns. [Indulal Yajnik, *Gandhi as I Knew Him*, G. Bhatt Publication, Bombay, p.13]

Gandhiji took advantage of visitors to inculcate the basic values of Indian culture in the Ashram inmates, especially among youngsters. Soon after the start of Kochrab Ashram Professor D. K. Karve came to Ahmedabad to collect funds for his institution. He came to the Satyagraha Ashram to meet Bapu.

Bapu gathered all the Ashram inmates together and told them to prostrate themselves before Prof. Karve. He said that when Prof. Gokhale came to South Africa, he had asked him who were the most truth-loving people in his province. "He (Gokhale) said, 'I am afraid I cannot give my own name. I try to stick to truth as far as possible, but the exigencies of political life sometimes compel me to utter falsehood. There are only three perfectly truthful men amongst all the people I know - Professor Karve, Shankarrao Lawate (who was doing prohibition work) and ...' "Narrating the above conversation, Bapu added, "Lovers of truth are as sacred to us as places of pilgrimage. The Satyagraha Ashram is dedicated to the worship of truth. It is a truly blessed day for us when a real lover of truth steps into our Ashram and sanctifies it by his presence."

Poor Karve was so moved, writes Kakasaheb Kalelkar, that he could hardly reply. He said with great effort, "Gandhiji, you have made me feel very embarrassed. What am I in comparison with you ?" [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, pp.123-24]

On 5 June Gandhiji wrote to Ranchhodlal Patwari, a Limbdi school teacher, "I have taken up residence in two bungalows here. Efforts for acquiring land will now be taken up.... "He added that things had not made as much progress as he



would have liked, for the various "articles take a long time in arriving." He asked Patwari if he (Patwari) could send someone to teach them how to operate an indigenous loom, and also send such a loom and a sample of handloom cloth woven on it. He further asked Patwari, "Do you know of any teacher, a man of character, who can teach Sanskrit and Gujarati? We may pay him. We shall be satisfied [even] if we get one for a short period." He also sent Patwari a copy of the draft Ashram constitution and asked for his comments. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.101]

In reply to Ranchhodlal Patwari's comments on the Ashram constitution, Gandhiji wrote to him again on 9 June that the portion concerning parents (relinquishing all control) was written with the best intentions. He would all the same make changes in it. He added, "I would sacrifice this life itself to uphold the *Sanatan Dharma* as I understand it."

Gandhiji asked Patwari to send coarse as well as fine handloom cloth as also the loom and the man, who could teach them how to operate it, at the earliest. [*Ibid*, p.103]

Gandhiji wrote again on 10 June answering some more points raised by Patwari which he had not been able to do on the previous day. The letter said :

There need be no congratulations on the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal. One may get it and also lose it. I do want a medal, but of a different kind altogether. There is no knowing when I shall get it, if ever.

The English article which is sold as flour is often no flour but a mixture of other things. There is fraud in this article. The retailer, being a third party, may not perhaps be involved in it. Handloom cloth is only an example. The vow of swadeshi implies that every article should be



swadeshi. Kindly permit me to say that the observance of this vow has a subtle moral bearing.

Arithmetic will certainly include oral sums and Indian accountancy. It cannot be that Gujaratis will never look outside Gujarat. They will go everywhere in India. They are to serve the nation. If they do not know the languages of Madras, they can have no contact with the people there. As for English, it can be of service only to those who know English. Shankara had learnt all the languages of India. Vallabh, who belonged to the land of the Dravids, had learnt Gujarati. There are at present hundreds of Gujaratis in Madras who know Tamil. [In] Europe, people in various countries know four or five European languages. It is very easy to acquire such proficiency in languages. The time wasted over English will, if saved, be sufficient for the purpose of these other languages.

Gandhiji continued:

Pupils are to receive education which will incline them to do nothing but national service when their studies are over. If on growing up they leave the Ashram, the education will have failed to that extent. Should any occasion of the kind arise, the student will be free [to follow his inclination]. It is not the aim, however, that the students should return to their parents and get lost in the sea of practical affairs.

Referring to the plea for exceptions, Gandhiji said:

I have had bitter experience that, when provision is made for exceptional circumstances, parents conveniently fall ill. While they are still in the stage of *brahmacharya*, students must not go to attend marriages. They are to be surrounded with a new kind of atmosphere and I always feel that, if there is frequent breaking away from this, building of character is impossible.



As for dress, a single uniform is prescribed for the present, it being necessary to do this for several reasons.

I think I have given very deep thought to the subject of milk. It is a legacy of our non-vegetarian past. It is objectionable from so many points of view that it ought to be avoided altogether. Quite a number of boys have gone through the experiment for several years and I have observed no ill effects on their health.

In a postscript he added :

For washing clothes, I use for the present an Indian soap which is free from fat. I am looking out for a substitute. [*Ibid.* pp.104-05]

In later years, Gandhiji was to revise his views on the use of milk and accept it as an essential ingredient of vegetarian diet.

7

Gandhiji wanted to introduce handlooms for weaving in the Ashram. On 24 July he went to see Vadilal's looms. Manilal started going to Vadilal's looms from 26 July. A *mistri* (mechanic) was employed for 30 days at Rs. 40.

The beginning of the handloom experiment in the Satyagraha Ashram is thus described by Maganlal Gandhi :

The first experiment was started in the Satyagraha Ashram in 1915. For about ten months, we used to weave only short width coarse khadi. Then those who had returned with an experience of weaving obtained outside, began to weave broader and finer cloth, established fly -shuttle looms of the Madras type, and began sizing yarn after the Madras fashion. But it was all amateur work and it could not come to the level of work of those born to the profession. We began to experience difficulties in weaving. We had not yet produced cloth suitable for women.



One of the ashram sisters was in need of a garment. It was not easy to obtain a hand-woven one in the market. She expected that she would be permitted to have a mill-woven one, but she was disillusioned. She was told, 'weave what you require or do without it.' This curt reply disappointed her and hurt her husband. But the disappointment and hurt were momentary. The rebuke had the desired effect. The husband went to the city and obtained twisted yarn such as would need no sizing and began weaving out of it cloth of fifty inches width. The experiment was successful and this gave a fillip to the enterprise.

At the end of 1916 there were three country looms and three fly-shuttle looms working in the Ashram. On the Indian new year day we began to take stock of work done during the past year. Our work was mainly weaving and the work at the end of fifteen months was not very creditable. It was, therefore, resolved that, before the close of the new year, everyone should learn enough to be able to weave cloth sufficient for himself. And everyone bent his energies in that direction. In about six months' time four fly-shuttle looms were added; there were thus ten looms in all working at that time. We used to work nearly eight hours during the day. Mr. Gandhi himself used to work [for] nearly over four hours on the loom. Three fly-shuttle looms used to turn out cloth of forty-five to fifty inches width and each one turned out three to five yards of such cloth at the end of the day. Cloth of smaller breadth could be turned out at the rate of one yard per hour. That is to say, most of us began to turn out work earning in the market a daily wage of eight to twelve annas. [D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol.I, p.173]



From weaving they went to spinning. Khadi now became hand-spun and hand-woven cloth.

Gandhiji had made it clear to friends at the very start that he was opposed to the observance of untouchability. He would take the first opportunity to admit an untouchable candidate in the Ashram if he was otherwise suitable and worthy. They did not take him seriously. They never thought that he would actually take such a step. But his mind would appear to have been made up. On 26 July he wrote to Mathuradas Tricumji :

I think we are committing a great sin in treating a whole class of people as untouchables. ... If we don't mind contact with a Christian or a Muslim, why should we mind it with one belonging to our own religion ? No defence of untouchability is possible now, either from the point of view of justice or that of practical common sense. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.120]

In the Ashram, at that time, there were about 13 Tamilians, five of whom had come with Gandhiji from South Africa. The rest came from different parts of India. The number of men and women was 25 to start with. They had a common kitchen and tried to live as one family.

The test came within a short time. Amtital V. Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa, had been working among the untouchables, especially the lowest in the untouchable hierarchy, the *bhangis* (scavengers), and had visited the Ashram. He wrote to Gandhiji, "A humble and honest untouchable family is desirous of joining your Ashram. Will you accept them ?" Gandhiji had hardly expected this development so soon. He wrote back to Thakkar Bapa that the family would be admitted if they all agreed to observe the Ashram rules.



The family consisted of Dudabhai, a school teacher in Bombay, his wife Danibehn and their daughter Lakshmi, a toddler at that time. Dudabhai came to see the Ashram on 11 September. There was quite a flutter. Maganlal's wife Santokbehn refused to eat in protest against the admission of an untouchable. Kasturba also rebelled against the admission of the untouchables. Gandhiji also fasted that day because someone had smoked and then lied, but he broke his fast on admission of guilt by the culprit. ['Diary for 1915', *Ibid*, p.179]

Gandhiji wrote to Kallenbach on 17 September:

Greater work than passive resistance has commenced. I have taken in the Ashram a *pariah* from these parts. This is an immense step. It caused a break between Mrs. Gandhi and myself. I lost my temper. ... Navin has left the Ashram on that account. Many further such developments will take place and I may become a deserted man.

And again on 24 September :

... Mrs. Gandhi as also Maganlal's wife were up in arms against me. They made my life miserable so far as they could.... The storm has not yet subsided.... The step I have taken means a great deal. It may alter my life a bit, i.e., I may have to completely take up *pariah* work and might have to become a *pariah* myself. [Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence; Pyarelal Papers]

And to Srinivasa Sastri on 23 September:

... The step is momentous because it so links me with the suppressed classes mission that I might have, at no distant time, to carry out the idea of shifting to some Dhed (untouchable) quarters and sharing their life with the Dheds. It would mean much even for my staunchest co-workers.... It is



of importance to me because it enables me to demonstrate the efficacy of passive resistance in social questions and when I take the final step, it will embrace swaraj. [C.W.M.G, Vol.XIII, p.128]

Dudabhai and his family accepted the Ashram rules and joined on Sunday, 26 September. Kasturba, so as to avoid taking food cooked or touched by an untouchable, went on fruit diet. [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, p.143]. Bapu tried patiently to argue with her and others, but it was not easy to change age-old beliefs.

Friends in Ahmedabad were upset too. They stopped all monetary assistance to the Ashram. To orthodox Hindus the observance of untouchability was a part of religion at that time. Gandhiji saw clearly that untouchability was a sin and a blot on the fair face of Hinduism. "If untouchability lives, Hinduism must die," he declared. But it was not easy to overcome prejudices nurtured through generations.

Gandhiji in those days had to go to Bombay from time to time. It meant putting up with vicissitudes of third-class travel, no sleep at night and unremitting work on arrival in the city and more work on his return to Ahmedabad before he could go to bed, writes Kakasaheb Kalelkar. One day when Kakasaheb thought that Gandhiji must be asleep, he found him sitting up and arguing with Kasturba about the abolition of untouchability. He told her, "Look, I simply will not have untouchability in the Ashram. If you insist on making these distinctions between human beings, go and live in Rajkot. You cannot live with me and practise untouchability." The bickering continued till late into the night. In the morning the work of converting Ba was taken up by her two teen-age sons, Ramdas and Devdas. "Ba !" they argued, "you had none of these scruples in South Africa. What has come over you here?" Ba replied, "That was a foreign land. Things did not



matter much there. But here we are in our own country. How can I break the rules and conventions of my society here ?" [*Ibid*, p. 143] This went on till the older women of the family ultimately persuaded Kasturba to fall in with the wishes of her husband. No sin would attach to her in doing so, they said. Gandhiji did not believe that a woman should follow her husband in wrong-doing. But in this case it suited him to have Ba give up untouchability in order to follow her husband and he accepted it. He later made her adopt Dudabhai's daughter Lakshmi, as Ba and Bapu had no daughter of their own. [M. K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, p.76]

9

Maganlal soon gave notice to Gandhiji that they were out of funds. There was no money for the following month. Gandhiji quietly replied : "Then we shall shift to the untouchable quarter."

This was not the first of such trials. He had been faced with such critical situations before. On all those occasions God had sent help at the last moment. It happened again this time. Soon after Maganlal's warning one of the children came and said to Gandhiji that a Sheth was waiting in his car on the road outside and wanted to see him. Gandhiji went to meet the Sheth who said that he wanted to give some money to the Ashram and asked if Gandhiji would accept it. "Most certainly," replied Gandhiji, "and I confess I am at the present moment at the end of my resources." The Sheth said he would come at the same time the next day and asked him to be there. The car came at the appointed time on the following day. The horn was blown. Children came to Gandhiji with the news. The Sheth did not come in. He was Ambalal Sarabhai. Gandhiji went out to meet him. He handed him currency notes of the value of Rs. 13,000. This was most unexpected



help. [*Autobiography*, pp.397-98]. While narrating this incident to us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp, Bapu called it an occasion when he "saw God".

Paucity of funds, though acute at times, did not really bother Gandhiji. But the atmosphere in the Ashram oppressed him. There were objections to Danibehn and Dudabhai even drawing water from the well from neighbours who also drew water from there. Gandhiji could detect indifference if not dislike towards the untouchable family in the Ashram. Danibehn was an ordinary woman. Dudabhai was a man of modest education but good understanding. Sometimes he did lose his temper but on the whole Gandhiji was well impressed by his forbearance and his patience. Gandhiji pleaded with him to swallow minor insults and he not only agreed but also persuaded his wife to do so. [*Ibid*, pp.397-98]

Maganlal also harboured prejudice against untouchables in his heart. He therefore packed up his things and went to Gandhiji to say goodbye even though Bapu had said nothing to him and his wife. He wanted to spare Bapu the strain and pain. Gandhiji told him that the Ashram was as much Maganlal's creation as his own. How could Maganlal think of leaving it ? He could lose anybody, he said, but he could not afford to lose Maganlal. This was enough for Maganlal. He stayed on.

Gandhiji sent Maganlal to Madras to learn more about weaving. The teacher that they had employed in the Ashram would not teach them beyond a certain stage. Somehow the idea had gained currency among the weavers that if they taught everything they knew about weaving to the Ashram inmates, the weavers would lose their occupation. Gandhiji had already sent Manilal to Madras to learn weaving. But there, too, the same situation had arisen. Maganlal was more mature and tactful. He also knew more about weaving than Manilal. So



Gandhiji felt he might succeed where Manilal had not. He advised Maganlal to spend some time in Madras with his wife to establish closer contacts with the people in the South, learn Tamil and gain proficiency in weaving so as to improve the standards of weaving at the Ashram. His wife would observe the usual Ashram vows in Madras.

The couple went on 28 October and were in Madras for almost six months. Mixing with untouchables there, she shed her prejudice. Maganlal having learnt all that he could of weaving, the husband and wife returned along with Manilal to Ahmedabad. Gandhiji had written to him, while he was at Madras, that his wife could go and live in Rajkot or she could stay on in Madras. Maganlal himself must remain firm on the question of non-observance of untouchability. But Madras had brought about a change in her. Maganlal's wife and other women in the Ashram all gave up untouchability in due course. The storm subsided outside as well as inside the Ashram. [*Ashram Observances in Action*]

10

More people joined Gandhiji's Ashram. Kakasaheb made a selection of verses from various scriptures for the morning and evening prayers. These were conducted chiefly by Maganlal who also selected the hymns to be sung at the morning and evening prayers and generally led the singing. They felt the need of a music master. They discovered one in Pandit Narayan Moreswar Khare, a favourite pupil of Pandit Vishnu Digambar. He fitted into the Ashram atmosphere and along with his family became a member of the Ashram. Panditji, as he was called, led the morning and evening prayers, sang hymns and gave music lessons to all who wished to learn music.

The ashram inmates had their daily programme of drawing and fetching water from the well. Bapu, too, went with his water pot. He liked to share all



work, especially manual labour. One day Kakasaheb said to him, "Bapuji, you had no sleep last night, and your head is aching. You ground corn with me for quite a long time this morning. Please go and rest a little now. We will see to the water." But Bapu would not listen. Knowing how futile it was to argue with him, Kakasaheb started drawing water from the well along with Ramdas and the other Ashram inmates began to take it in vessels to the Ashram in order to fill the empty vessels there. An idea struck him to stop Bapu from drawing water or carrying it to the Ashram.

Kakasaheb writes :

Suddenly I got my chance and stole off to the Ashram unperceived. I gathered together all the empty vessels I could find, big and small, and, calling all the Ashram children to follow me, went off to the well at the head of the impromptu procession. And then I began my mischief. I drew the water, filled a vessel and cleverly avoiding Bapu, would hand it over to someone or the other to carry it back to the Ashram. The children 'caught on', and helped me gleefully and with a will. They would rush up to me, wait tense and alert for the vessels to fill, pounce upon them, and make off with them in the twinkling of an eye. Poor Bapu stood there, patiently awaiting his turn, but we saw to it that his turn never came ! At last, tired of waiting, he went back to the Ashram to bring an empty vessel. But none could be found. Seeing a children's bath-tub lying empty, he took it up, brought it to the well, and ordered me triumphantly, "Fill this !" "But how will you carry it, Bapu ?" I asked, appalled. "I will show you how I will carry it," returned Bapu grimly, "you just fill it !"



As usual, Bapu won. Mutely I filled a medium-sized pot with water. Mutely I placed it on his head. Mutely I watched him carry it off. [*Kaka Kalelkar, Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, pp.142-44]

11

The Ashram at Kochrab was not a suitable place for the practice of the disciplines which were considered necessary for the full development of the inmates. A second bungalow nearby had also been hired and yet the accommodation was insufficient. There was no land for an orchard, a dairy farm or agriculture. The two bungalows were quite inadequate for housing scores of men and women observing a vow of *brahmacharya* and body labour. There was no room for handlooms. Finding an alternative site for the Ashram had, therefore, acquired urgency. In the meantime outbreak of plague in Kochrab decided the issue.

The activities of the Ashram had increased considerably. Handloom weaving in particular had made marked progress. Whereas two years earlier there had been no one at the Ashram who knew weaving, there were, by the middle of 1917, seven looms working in the Ashram and five under its supervision. The capital invested in this activity amounted to Rs. 3,000/-. Cloth worth Rs. 500 had been sold. Altogether 17 persons were making a living by the activity. Gandhiji hoped in ten years' time to give work through this enterprise to hundreds of weavers who had given up weaving. The monthly expenditure on the work came to Rs. 100.

Then there was the National School and the propagation of Hindi, each requiring expenditures of Rs. 500 and 200 a month and the question of accommodation for house workers.



So the site for the Ashram, a plot on the western bank of the river Sabarmati, measuring about 55 bighas, was purchased in 1917.

Gandhiji asked Amritlal Thakkar, who was an engineer by profession, to draw up the building plans for the Ashram, and the latter estimated that the project would cost Rs. 100,000.

Gandhiji accordingly issued appeals for funds to cover the capital expenditure needed for the buildings and the expenses on running the Ashram which were estimated at Rs. 18,000 for the year. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.454-58 and 460-63]

Shankarlal Banker who became a leading trade unionist later had come in contact with Gandhiji. Gandhiji had long discussions with him and others as to the material to be used to put up structures for the Ashram. Bapu wanted to have mud huts. Shankarlal was for brick masonry because mud huts would be too costly on maintenance. Ultimately simple brick masonry was chosen. The floors were mostly of unpolished Kota stone. Lavatories were of the dry type with a bucket for faecal matter at the back and another for urine and wash water in front. A barrel of dry earth stood in one corner. Everyone was expected to cover up the faecal matter with dry earth after using the lavatory so that there were no flies and no foul smell. Every day those on duty carried the buckets and buried the excreta in shallow trenches, to turn into manure in course of time.

Handloom weaving formed the main industry. On 2 July 1918 Gandhiji was writing to Dr. Pranjivan Mehta:

I have to provide accommodation for at least 150 persons and install 16 looms. Work on cloth is expanding rapidly.... I have come into contact with a number of weavers. About 300 women have started working the



rentia [spinning-wheel]. I believe we shall get, before long, about two maunds* of handspun yarn every day. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.467]

Dairying and agriculture were introduced as also some carpentry. A later addition was tannery in which only hides of naturally dead cattle were used.

Gandhiji followed the principle that they should take up such activities only for which the means in men, money and materials were readily available. He believed he was doing God's work through the Ashram. Therefore, if God wanted him to do His work, He was sure to send him the means to do it. He had put himself entirely in God's hands.

*A Gujarati maund was about 18 kg. though in North India a maund was equal to 40 seers, or 37 kg. approximately.

Bapu's mind was free from all distinctions between high and low, great and small, rich and poor. He was punctilious in his observance of social conventions so long as they did not militate against his principles.

In those early days, whenever he went to Bombay he stayed with Revashankar Jagjivandas, elder brother of his friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. After Bapu became known as Mahatma, 'the cream of the cream' of Bombay society vied with one another in offering him their eager hospitality. But as long as Revashankarbhai was alive, he never dreamt of staying with anyone else. 49 Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, pp. 142-44]

One day Swami Anand fell out with Revashankarbhai's cook. The cook insulted Swami Anand who, becoming incensed, struck the cook with such violence that the latter buckled under the blow. The matter reached Bapu's ears.



Bapu said to Swami, "Had it been a quarrel between you and someone of your own class, you would not have struck him. This man is a servant, that is why you dared to raise your hand against him. Go and apologize to him at once." Swami was too proud to do so. "Very well, then," said Bapu, "if you are not prepared to rectify an injustice, you will have to leave me." What could poor Swami do ? He apologized to the cook.

Swami in striking the cook had sprained his own wrist, which never regained full strength. [*Ibid*]

13

Bapu's mind always dwelt on fundamentals. He went to the root of every matter, and nothing was too insignificant for his consideration. His friend Kallenbach always said, "What you say may convince one, or it may not; but no one can possibly doubt that there is deep and serious thought behind it."

Writes Kakasaheb:

As soon as I went to the Ashram I realized the truth of this for myself. I simply could not bring myself to like the Ashram rice and I said to Bapu one day, 'Is this rice or clay, Bapu? We never eat rice like this.' Bapu laughed. 'I know, I know; he assured me mirthfully, 'but do not be so hasty. Give it a chance to prove its worth.'

And then he explained the matter to me with his usual zeal and thoroughness.

'The trouble is, he said, 'that people want their rice to be white and dainty like jasmine buds. They eat rice that has been polished in the mills, and so denuded of its nourishing properties. The most nourishing part of the rice is the part where it sprouts, and that part is usually polished



completely away. Not content with this, they wash and wash the rice to whiten it still further, thus stripping it of a few more of its nourishing properties. Then they boil the starch out of it, and throw it away!.... That kind of rice is taboo in the Ashram. First, we only have hand-pounded rice in our kitchen. We are careful not to wash it too much. We allow it to soak for a long time in water, and then we cook it in such a way that neither the starch nor the water is wasted and all its nourishing properties are preserved. When it has been thoroughly cooked, we chew it into pulp. It is quite tasty then. It is sweet without sugar. You can only eat a little of it, it is very nourishing, and it doesn't make one drowsy or lethargic". [*Ibid*, pp.136-37]

14

Kakasaheb recalls how once when Gandhiji noticed him reading Fitzgerald's rendering of Omar Khayyam, he sighed and said: "I, too, used to be very fond of English poetry. But I gave it up. I thought to myself: I don't even know as much Sanskrit as I should. And if I have some time to spare, why should I not utilize it in trying to become better in Gujarati? My job is to serve India to the best of my ability, so I must dedicate all my time to developing my capacity for service." He paused, then continued in the same simple, meditative fashion, "If I can be said to have really renounced anything for the sake of national service, it is my passion for English literature. Money and career mattered so little to me that leaving them was no 'renunciation' at all. But oh, how I loved English literature ! However, I decided that I must give it up, so I did." [*Ibid*, pp.63-64]. Kakasaheb too followed Gandhiji and concentrated on learning and writing in Gujarati.



Kakasaheb also recalls how once when Gandhiji had misplaced a tiny pencil and was frantically trying to locate it, Kakasaheb offered him his own to save him the time and trouble of searching for the lost pencil. His offer was turned down. "You don't understand," he had said, "I simply must not lose that little pencil!... It was given to me in Madras by Natesan's little boy. He brought it for me with such love ! I cannot bear to lose it."

The pencil was at last traced and Bapu was happy. [*Ibid*, p.17]

15

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta passed away in Bombay on 5 November 1915. He was Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Bombay Congress session but he died before it was held. On 15 November at a condolence meeting held in Ahmedabad under the presidentship of Sir Chinubhai Madhavlal, Gandhiji, moving the condolence resolution, paid glowing tributes to Sir Pherozesha Mehta as the father of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and as the "uncrowned king of Bombay, say rather, of the whole of India - king chosen by the subjects themselves.... His interest in public service was so keen that he would get his clients' cases adjourned or let go his fees, suffer all manner of inconvenience even, to attend the meetings of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. He would sometimes not go to the Assembly; he considered the work of the Corporation of greater importance." He believed that whatever one took up one must carry to success. He said, "The right memorial to Sir Pherozeshah would be for all municipalities to work in the manner he did...." The discussions in his office were mainly concerned with how we could fight fearlessly for our rights.

Gandhiji recalled Sir Pherozeshah's advice to him in his early youth to swallow an insult. It had been most useful to him in his public work. "I must admit that whatever capacity for work I possess, I owe to this advice," he said. He



suggested that a suitable hall should be constructed in Ahmedabad as a memorial to Sir Pherozeshah. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.141-43]

16

A meeting was held at Premabhai Hall, Ahmedabad on 21 November on the birth anniversary of Shri Rajchandra Raojibhai Mehta, a businessman and expert jeweller who lived his life in the spirit of *Karma Yoga*, the path of action. He had been Gandhiji's spiritual guide when Gandhiji was perplexed in his early days in South Africa. Gandhiji called him the best religious philosopher of modern times in India. "He was incomparable in true perception, he was free from attachment, and had true *vairagya* in him," said Gandhiji. "He had *jnana* (knowledge), *vairagya* (detachment) and *bhakti* (devotion). He followed no narrow creed. He was a universalist and had no quarrel with any religion in the world." Gandhiji advised the gathering to study Shri Rajchandra's writings and he promised that they would feel the better for the trouble. [*Ibid*, p. 143]

In a letter to Phoenix friends Gandhiji wrote on 26 November that there were 33 inmates in the Ashram, three of whom were Dheds (untouchables). He mentioned the storm caused by their admission among the orthodox Hindus of Ahmedabad. "At first we thought the entire Ashram would be outcast, and that may yet happen."

The boys had made good progress in the study of Sanskrit, Hindi and Tamil, Gandhiji wrote. They were being taught carpentry and hand-weaving. He hoped to send some cloth woven by them in a few days. The boys had made tables and were now making book cases. [*Ibid*, p.144]

From December Gandhiji toured Kathiawar in connection with the collection of funds for Gokhale memorial. He made speeches at Viramgam, Gondal, Jetpur, Bhavnagar, Amreli and Bagasara. He inspected the jail at Amreli.



He went next to Limbdi and then to Wadhwan and Viramgam and reached Ahmedabad on the evening of 16 December. On 20 December he left for Bombay along with the students, to attend the Congress session which was being held there. ["Diary for 1915", *Ibid*, p.185]

17

The thirtieth session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay from 27 to 29 December under the presidentship of Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, in the spacious pavilion specially erected for the occasion on the Marine Lines Maidan, close to the Churchgate Railway Station. The pavilion, which was tastefully decorated, was most admirably adapted for this purpose. It was fitted up with the necessary requirements, including revolving electric fans fixed to posts, to secure the convenience of the record gathering. The pavilion was flat-roofed and well ventilated on all sides, giving free access to light and air. The ceiling was elegantly draped in spotless white; and the decorations of the pandal were in colours of yellow and black and those of the pillars that supported it were in black and white. The preponderance of black at once recalled to the memory of those present the shadow of the double calamity under which the Congress was meeting that year in Bombay. The country had been deprived by the cruel hand of death of two of her greatest sons, G. K. Gokhale and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. [*Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*]

At the entrances to the pandal were put up inscriptions "Long Life to the King-Emperor"; "God bless the King-Emperor, Protector of India's Rights". In memory of the two great souls was another inscription "India weeps for the loss of two of her greatest patriots," accompanied by portraits of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale.



Gandhiji attended the session. K. Gopalaswami records that Gandhiji played a minor part in the proceedings. He was not even elected to the Subjects Committee. He was nominated by the president. He sat right at the end of the table on the dais the centre of which was occupied by Sinha, Surendranath Bannerjee and Madan Mohan Malaviya.

At this time Gandhiji was staying at the Marwadi Vidyalaya as arranged by Jamnalal Bajaj, where he sat on the floor - chairs were brought for visitors dressed in Western style.

Gandhiji and his party were all lodged in the big hall. One evening after prayers, Kakasaheb sat near him, reading. Harilal came and sat down close to Kakasaheb and said, "Kaka, you came into such close contact with Bapu in Santiniketan, and had become so much a part of the Phoenix party that we took it for granted that you must have joined Gandhiji's Ashram long ago. It is amazing that you have not done it yet." Kakasaheb replied that he was deeply attracted to Bapu. But how could he join him? "I am bound to him with whom I did national work before going on my Himalayan pilgrimage. If he starts some new work, I must offer him my services. It would not be right, would it, to leave him in the lurch, hunting high and low for new workers while I walked coolly off whither my fancy led me, acquiring new bosses?"

Bapu was quite absorbed in his writing and Kakasaheb and Harilal were talking in very low tones. But somehow their conversation reached his ears. Involuntarily the words broke from him: "Kaka, your idea is pure gold !" Then he turned to Harilal, "If all the workers in India worked with such mutual loyalty, we should be out of the wood in no time." Kakasaheb writes: "I bowed my head, overwhelmed with gladness. And I confess to a little upsurge of pride, too: 'I am



worth something, after all !" In that moment I became all Bapu's." [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, pp.18-19]

G. L. Mehta writes that Gandhiji was the first who protested against the term "depressed classes" and would rather call them "suppressed classes". He recalls a conversation he had with Gandhiji at the time of the Congress in 1915 in which Gandhiji said it was the so-called high castes which were really "depressed". He added that this term was not his original but was suggested to him by someone else, probably Mr. Andrews. Mehta adds: "I was too young then - only about fifteen - to appreciate his greatness. All that I felt was, I remember, a feeling that this man seemed to be very different from the normal men one knew, a 'crank'. if you will !" [Quoted in K. Gopalaswami, *Gandhi in Bombay*, p.32]

It was at the Bombay Congress that Gandhiji met Maulana Mazharul Haq who was then President of the Muslim League. Gandhiji had known him in London while they were studying for the Bar. Haq invited Gandhiji to stay with him whenever he visited Patna. When Gandhiji went to Bihar early in 1917 in connection with the Champaran problem, Mazharul Haq gave him hospitality and all the help he could.

In private talks with Indulal Yajnik and othen Gandhiji used to say that the three-day *tamasha* of the Congress would bring them nothing substantial, although he had a profound respect for the Congress. "He was a master tactician even in those days," writes Gopalaswami, "he was willing to bide his time, to stoop to conquer and to bend the Congress to his own way of thinking." [*Ibid*, p. 32]

Valji G. Desai, then a professor in Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, wanted to attend the Congress in Bombay, but did not get leave. He wrote to Gandhiji who replied: "It is in their hands to give you leave, but in yours to take it." Valji took



the hint, resigned his job and came to Bobmay. "*Shabash* (well done)," said Gandhiji. From that day till 1948 Valji Desai was with him and continued Gandhian work even after Gandhiji's death." [*Ibid*, p.32]

Gandhiji moved the resolution on India and the Colonies on 28 December. It said:

This Congress regrets that the existing laws affecting Indians in South Africa and Canada have not, in spite of the liberal and imperialistic declarations of colonial statesmen, been justly and equitably administered and this Congress trusts that the self-governing colonies will extend to the Indian emigrants equal rights with European emigrants and that the Imperial Government will use all possible means to secure the rights which have been hitherto unjustly withheld from them, thus causing widespread dissatisfaction and discontent.

Speaking on the resolution Gandhiji told the Congress that though the settlement of 1914 had secured for the South African Indians "legal equality in connection with emigration from British India and certain other things," many disabilities still remained. "They are," said Gandhiji,

in connection with the holding of landed property; they are in connection with men who, having been once domiciled in South Africa, return to South Africa; there are difficulties in connection with the admission of their children and in connection with trade licences. There are, if I may call them so, bread-and-butter difficulties.... In Canada, it is not possible for those brave Sikhs who are domiciled there to bring their wives and children. (cries of 'shame').... I feel that this unequal administration will not be altered because of the splendid aid which India is said to have rendered to the Empire.



Then how are these difficulties to be met? I do not intend to go into details, but the Congress proposes that these difficulties can be met by an appeal to the sense of justice of the colonial statesmen and by an appeal to the Imperial Government.

The Congress, Gandhiji feared, could only do this. It was for associations such as the Imperial Citizenship Association to help in finding a solution that would satisfy the colonial Governments as well as the Indian people. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp. 153-54]

Giving his impression of Gandhi's speech, G. L. Mehta writes:

Gandhiji's speech in the open session of the Congress was a great disappointment at least for the younger members of the audience like myself. He was received with tremendous ovation, coming as he did after his historic fight in South Africa. But he spoke slowly and unemotionally without any rhetorical flourishes or gestures. His simple conversational style and low voice - there were no loudspeakers and microphones even - were in sharp contrast to the eloquence and histrionic arts of Surendranath Banerjea, who dominated the platform in those days. 'No,' we said 'this gentleman may have led a movement and fought the whites in South Africa, but he is no speaker! He cannot move the masses or carry vast audiences with him !' How sadly mistaken and immature judgment !
[Quoted in K. Gopalaswami, *Gandhi in Bombay*, pp.31-2]

G. A. Natesan (Madras), seconding Gandhiji's resolution, hailed him as "the brave and victorious general, who has just returned to his motherland after winning, in a brave feat of arms with weapons unique and almost unparalleled in the history of the world," and recalled that



the resolution this year on the subject is somewhat different from that which we used to adopt for some years past. In previous years, we used to state with indignation and sometimes with despair, that the Imperial Government by their *non-possumus* attitude had done little or nothing on behalf of ourselves and our countrymen in South Africa. We were also feeling sometimes in despair about the colonies; the Imperial Government having often told us that they were unable - sometimes they went so far as to frankly confess that they were almost impotent - to influence these great colonies. But, Sir, we are now in better times.... Some months ago, when the resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council that India should also be allowed to send her representatives to the Imperial Conference, was accepted by the Government of India, there was an unexpected outburst of enthusiasm over the proposal in India and even in some of the colonial newspapers.... *Ottawa Free Press* said that the time had come when it should change its views and India should be given its proper place in councils of the Empire. If I am not mistaken, an Australian newspaper, a leading organ of opinion, also declared in the same way. I sincerely hope... these high thoughts will be translated into action, that the present policy of unjust and invidious distinction between the various classes of his Majesty's subjects will soon be a thing of the past.

Natesan then drew attention to the presence at the Congress of "two of Mr. Gandhi's distinguished colleagues who have borne with him all his troubles and sorrows in the gigantic enterprise in which he was engaged. I refer to one presence, of Imam Saheb Abdul Kadar Bawazeer who has gone to jail in South Africa for our cause and for the cause of our country. I also refer to Sorabji Rustomji, like son of that famous passive resister."



Jehangir B. Petit also supported Gandhiji's resolution. He said:

...When one approaches the question of treatment of Indians in the self-governing colonies ... I confess it is difficult to speak with restraint and with moderation. The history of this question, the many difficulties under which our countrymen have to live in the colonies is old history, it is an oft-repeated tale of misery, of lamentation and of disgrace, and I do not think it necessary to go over that ground at the present moment. All that is necessary at present is to say that the conditions that prevailed here months ago prevail today in all their acuteness and in all their injustice.... There are forces in this country, great forces, moral, political, social and economic, which are daily coming into existence ... and I venture to think that these forces will come forward and solve this question.... [*Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*]

Moving the resolution on indentured labour, Srinivasa Sastri said:

We would turn for our facts and information to such sources as Andrews and Pearson who at the request of the Indian Citizenship Association of Bombay proceeded on a voyage to conduct a personal investigation and tell us the exact condition of affairs. They have told us through newspapers and otherwise a good many things to which we should pay proper attention. We should turn for information to such a person as Gandhi, who is the soul of truth as he is the ideal of citizenship in the Empire. When we take their facts into consideration, we are driven to conclusions and there is no alternative, that the system must be ended because it is impossible to mend it. [*Ibid*]

The year 1915 was a landmark in the political history of India. For the first time the Muslim League and the Congress held their sessions at the same time in



Bombay. A large number of Congress leaders, among them. Surendranath Banerjea, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, D. E. Wacha, Mrs. Annie Besant, B. G. Horniman, Mrs. Naidu and Gandhiji attended the session of the Muslim League. The Nationalist Muslims had at last triumphed and the League asserted its emancipation from its old policy. In pursuance of the resolution of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League set up a committee to draft in consultation with the Congress a scheme of reform for India. [D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol.I, p.178]

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur writes:

The late Shri Gokhale was an honoured friend of my father's and often used to stay at our home. I may say that the flame of my passionate desire to see India free from foreign domination was early fanned by contact with him. He once said to me: "One day soon you will, I hope, see a man who is destined to do very great things for India." With this at the back of my mind I seized the very first opportunity I could of being presented to Gandhiji. This was in 1915 at the Bombay Congress when Lord Sinha was presiding. It was the first Congress I had the privilege of attending. Gandhiji was more or less an unknown factor in the political life of India at that time. The tumultuous ovation went to Tilak, who had just returned from Mandalay. Gandhiji spoke a few words about Indians in South Africa. With no loudspeakers in those days his speech was more or less inaudible except to those on the dais or in the front rows of the audience. But there was a quiet strength, an earnestness, and a deep humility about him that went straight to my young heart, and I feel I have owed allegiance to him and his way of life ever since, though circumstances didn't permit my actually joining him till much later. [C. S. Shukla (Ed.), *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life*, Vora & Co., Bombay, 1949, pp.7-8]



From Bombay Gandhiji went back to his tour of Gujarat to collect funds for the Gokhale Memorial. On 2 January 1916 he addressed the annual function of the Arya Samaj at Surat. He said that though he was not a member of the Arya Samaj, he had special respect for it. "Swami Dayanand, the adored founder of the Arya Samaj, was a rare man and I must acknowledge that I have come under his influence." He regretted that "some of the spokesmen of the Samaj seem to be only too ready to enter into violent controversy to gain their end. They could ... achieve their purpose without recourse to controversy."

Gandhiji deplored the tendency among the Indians to spend too much time in making and listening to speeches.

It has been remarked even at a session of the Congress that we are fed only on speeches and discourses.... As you know, there is much hunger in India, and it has always been hungry for spiritual food. If ... the day is spent merely in listening to speeches for seven or eight hours, when can we have time for work? ... If I could take the leading workers of the Arya Samaj round the town and make them clean up the dirty spots, they would certainly earn the gratitude of the people of Surat.

He added that in the West they did not spend so much time in speeches, "In order to make the progress that they are making, there are certain rights we must demand and secure from the Government. For that purpose we must get ready for a struggle." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.186-90]

Very early Gandhiji had come to hold the view that for communication with the masses, as for transaction of national business, English was not the right medium. Speaking at the Congress on 28 December he had called it "unfortunate" that "the language, the predominant language in the assembly,



should be English. On 3 January 1916, speaking at the opening of the Jain Students' Library in Surat, he dwelt on the same theme. He deplored the tendency among students to make speeches in English - "broken, incorrect English" - a language "which their brothers and sisters do not know, and their servants, wives, children and kinsfolk cannot follow." He ridiculed the notion that English could be India's national language. He said:

I am sure it can never happen that 300 million people will pick up English, so that it becomes our national language.... It does not become any son worthy of the name to slight his mother tongue... instead of removing what imperfections it may have.... Our society will be reformed only through our own language. We can ensure simplicity and dignity in communication only through our own language.

He called upon the students present to take a vow that they would not use English at home. [*Ibid*, pp.191-92]

Gandhiji spent the early days of January 1916 in and around Surat. On 3 January he also spoke at the District Bar Association and the Mahomedan Association. On 4 January he spoke at Kathor and Mota Varachha and on 5 January at Navsari. He asked the audience to be truthful, to shed fear and promote communal unity. He also collected funds for the Gokhale Memorial.

On 4 February Gandhiji sent to *Bhagini Samaj Patrika*, being brought out by Karsandas Chitalia, an article on the "Message of Gokhale's Life". Describing Gokhale as "Dharma incarnate", he mentioned Gokhale's services to the Servants of India Society, to Fergusson College, his work in connection with the Welby Commission set up to consider the quantum of military expenditure to be apportioned to India, his work as editor of the quarterly of the Sarvajanik Sabha and above all his endeavour to improve the conditions of the indentured Indians



in the colonies. "As early as in 1896," Gandhiji wrote, "Gokhale's political life became my ideal.... He took possession of my heart as my guru in matters political." He asked for emulation of Gokhale's religious attitude expressed in his *mahavakya* (great saying) that "political life should be spiritualized.... He who follows this line will always know the path he should take." [*Ibid*, pp.202-08]

The year of Gandhiji's silent study in accordance with Gokhale's advice was now coming to an end. India was waiting for him to take a more active part in the political sphere. But he had his own way of doing things and would take up problems as they came to him. He did not go in search of them.



CHAPTER V: A PROPHET AMONG THE PRINCES

1

In accordance with the promise made to Gokhale, who lived barely 40 days after Gandhiji's arrival in India, Gandhiji left all politics strictly alone during the whole of the year 1915. He toured extensively in Kathiawar, Gujarat, Bombay, Poona, Santiniketan, Calcutta, Rangoon, Hardwar, Delhi and Madras before finally setting up his Ashram at Ahmedabad in May. He addressed numerous meetings and wrote many articles and letters. But the emphasis was on questions of education, cultivation of character and promotion of moral and ethical values. No wonder the chronology of Gandhiji's movements during this period is dotted with mentions of educational institutions visited: Santiniketan; Gurukul Kangri; St. Stephen's College, Delhi; Rasashala, Gondal; Anath Balikashram and Fergusson College, Poona; Sanatana Dharma Nitishikshan Pravartak Sangh; Lakshmi Memorial Arya Pathshala and Y. M. C. A., Madras and Mission School, Bombay.

Gandhiji held the main object of education to be character-building through the practice of the disciplines of *yama-niyamas* - truth, non-violence, celibacy, non-stealing, non-hoarding and body labour - became the cardinal principles of conduct in the Ashram and the school he founded at Ahmedabad.

In so far as political questions were concerned, Gandhiji scrupulously refrained from pronouncing on them, except where they concerned overseas Indians and in particular the indentured Indian labour in the self-governing Colonies such as South Africa and Fiji.

The one year of this voluntary silence on political questions ended in January 1916. It was at this stage that Gandhiji was invited by Madan Mohan



Malaviya to the opening of Benares Hindu University by the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, on 4 February 1916.

In 1898 Mrs. Annie Besant had founded, almost single-handed, the Central Hindu College in Benares to give right education to youth and inculcate values of Hinduism in them. Year after year she had presided over the fortunes of the college. Now at last, nearly a quarter of a century later, it was officially granted the status of a university. After making all preparations, she had handed over the institution to Madan Mohan Malaviya, a veteran scholar of Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures and an accredited leader of the Congress.

On 4 February 1916 Benares Hindu University was solemnly declared open by the Viceroy in the presence of a great many dignitaries, various Maharajas and educationists from all over India. A smiling Mrs. Besant, white-haired and attired in white clothes, white stockings and white shoes, looked down from the platform at the crowd of admiring students who looked upon her as a revolutionary and educator. It might have appeared incongruous to some that the revolutionary should have been so happy to receive the foundation-deed of the University from the Viceroy. It must be borne in mind, however, that Lord Hardinge had endeared himself to India by undoing the partition of Bengal which had agitated Indians, by stopping export of indentured labour to South Africa, and by supporting the Indians' struggle and Gandhiji's Satyagraha.

At the opening of the University, it was inevitable that many speeches should be delivered. Gandhiji arrived after the ceremonial functions were over and the Viceroy had already returned to Delhi. He did not bring a prepared speech and was determined to tell the students and the princes who sat with Mrs. Besant on the dais some home-truths. The speech which he delivered on the evening of 6 February 1916 ended in an uproar. The Maharaja of Darbhanga,



Sir Rameshwar Singh, was in the chair. Like the other princes he wore resplendent regalia bedecked with jewels. Gandhiji, striding across the dais in a white dhoti, was clearly made from another mould .

In the course of his speech Gandhiji referred to the dirty insanitary lanes of Benares where stood the great temple of Kashi Vishwanath. He said:

Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even our temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be? Shall our temples be abodes of holiness, cleanliness and peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage? [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.213]

A large part of Gandhiji's speech was taken up with the question of language. They all spoke in English at the gathering. He said it was "a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening, under the shadow of this great college, in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me." He was assured, he added, " that every Indian youth , because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life Suppose that we had been receiving, during the past fifty years, education through our vernaculars ... we should have today a free India" [*Ibid*, p.211]

Proceeding, Gandhiji drew the attention of the audience "to another scene". He referred to the stress laid on the poverty of India by the Maharaja of Darbhanga and others in their speeches earlier, He asked:

But what did we witness in the great panda!? ... Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for



the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' (Applause).... Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India ... I become jealous at once and I say: 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists'. [*Ibid*, pp.213-14]

Gandhiji then went on to comment on the security arrangements made for the Viceroy, with "detectives stationed at many places", and asked: "Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?" He knew like everyone else that an attempt had been made on the Viceroy's life a little earlier. He sympathized with the Viceroy, but he was galled by the security men posted on housetops. [*Ibid*, p. 214]

Gandhiji went on:

We may foam, we may fret, we may resent, but let us not forget that India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India if India is to conquer the conquerer. It is a sign of fear. If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maharajas, not Viceroys, not the detectives, not even King George. I honour the anarchist for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him: Is killing honourable? ... There is no warrant for such methods in any scriptures. If I found it necessary for the salvation of India that the English should retire, that they should be driven out, I would not hesitate to declare that they



would have to go, and I hope I would be prepared to die in defence of that belief. That would, in my opinion, be an honourable death. The bomb-thrower creates secret plots, is afraid to come into the open and, when caught, pays the penalty of misdirected zeal. I have been told: 'Had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the partition movement (partition and reunification of Bengal) [*Ibid*, pp.214-15]

At this point there was interruption from Annie Besant who was getting impatient and wanted Gandhiji to stop. She was heard saying, "Please stop it." Gandhiji turned towards her and explained that he had said the same thing in Bengal only a few days previously, that it was necessary to say these things. But if she felt that he was not serving his country and the Empire he would stop at once. The Maharaja of Darbhanga said, "Please explain your object." Gandhiji went on: "I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side." He had recently encountered an Englishman in the Indian Civil Service, who had complained that the Indians regarded him as an oppressor. Gandhiji had answered that not all of them were oppressors, "but the atmosphere of sycophancy and falsity that surrounds them on their coming to India, demoralizes them, as it would many of us." [*Ibid*, p.216]

There were cries of "No ! No!" Some of the princes were already leaving the dais. A young lawyer, Sri Prakasa, who was to occupy many high positions later in free India and who was present, has recorded that pandemonium broke loose. Some people were shouting to Gandhiji to go on, while others shouted that he should leave the platform. In the midst of the uproar he was saying that he would go on only if he had the permission of the chair. Suddenly the Maharaja of Darbhanga rose and left the hall. There was no chairman, and the meeting ended



in confusion as Gandhiji came to his peroration: "If we are to receive self-government, we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government." [Ibid, p.216]

The British Commissioner, sitting next to Dr. Bhagwandas, father of Sri Prakasa, muttered loudly, "We must stop this man from talking such rot!" And Malaviya ran after the Maharajas shouting: "Your Highness! Your Highness ! Please come back, we have stopped him!" But panic had gripped their souls too effectively, and none returned. [C. S. Shukla (Ed.), *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life*, pp.16-17]

Thus the meeting ended in chaos. Gandhiji felt it would not have happened if Mrs. Besant had not interrupted him. He was explaining his remarks and no confusion would have occurred if he had been able to complete what he had wanted to say.

Later explaining her interruption Annie Besant said she had feared that with the kind of 'gunpowder' audience that the students made, Gandhiji's remarks on the results of bomb-throwing might have been misunderstood as a justification for such means. Similarly his bold statement that he was an anarchist could also be misunderstood in a country where anarchism denoted bombs. She declared that while Gandhiji's politics might be regarded as impracticable and even as a hindrance in the path of constitutional change, "we would, tens of thousands of us, stand round him in any attack from Anglo-Indians or from the bureaucracy, as one man, we honour and venerate him for his life and his lofty ideals." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.566 (Appendix I)]

Gandhiji refused to take at its face value Annie Besant's protestation that her interruption of the proceedings was intended to protect him. For, in that case, he said, she could have passed a note round or whispered to him. He also disagreed with her that the student audience would have misunderstood him.



"Indeed," he wrote, "some of them came to me the following morning and told me that they perfectly understood my remarks." [*Ibid*, p.241]

The Bombay Chronicle, of 8 February 1916 reported under dateline 7 February:

An unfortunate incident occurred last night at Benares when Mr. Gandhi was addressing the students. While speaking about anarchism and murders which he deprecated, he referred to the action of the authorities in taking the most extraordinary precautions to protect the Viceroy in Benares.

At this he was interrupted and was asked to explain very briefly what he was about to say, but he took a rather long time to come to the point. At this stage all the princes present left in a body, though Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya explained to the meeting that what Mr. Gandhi was driving at was that it was considered a shame on themselves that such a course was thought necessary because of the misdeeds of a few misguided youths.

The meeting dispersed at once.

The precautions were certainly most extraordinary. A *Leader* report, referring to the rehearsal of police arrangements and C.I.D. activity, said that the roads leading to Nagwa were lined on either side with constables standing within a few yards of each other, that policemen lined the balconies of houses and rooftops, to which often they had to make their way through the *zenanas* of houses. Even eminent people invited to the ceremony, such as the scientist J. C. Bose, were searched and questioned before being allowed to enter the city.

Lectures were resumed the following morning with almost all the princes then in Benares being present. The Maharaja of Darbhanga, who presided, made



a very brief reference to the previous night's incident, observing that they had heard with great grief and pain the remarks of Mr. Gandhi and he was sure that they all disapproved of the attitude Mr. Gandhi had taken up. (Voices: "We all disapproved.")

The Bombay Chronicle of 9 February 1916 reported the closing of the Uruversity extension lectures on 8 February.

According to a report in *The Bombay Chronicle* of 10 February 1916, Gandhiji being interviewed about the incident at Benares, said that he was unable to say what particular remarks of his were objected to. Nor did Mrs. Besant point out any such remarks. She only appealed to the Chairman to stop him. Gandhiji said that his speech that evening was practically a repetition, in so far as it related to anarchism, of what he had said a year earlier at the Calcutta meeting of which the Hon. Mr. Lyons was chairman. At this point the audience wanted the speaker to go on but Gandhiji said that he would not do so unless he received the Chairman's permission to continue. He also asked the audience not to resent, as it was inclined, Mrs. Besant's interruption, as anybody who might feel aggrieved against the speaker's remarks had a right to ask for a ruling from the chair.

Continuing Gandhiji said:

And I proceeded with my speech only after the Maharaja of Darbhanga's permission, which he gave after considering the matter for a while and cautioning me to explain matters briefly. I proceeded, but still noticed a stir on the platform, and that Mrs. Besant was whispering to the princes who were sitting near her that I was neither withdrawing nor explaining and saying that they ought not to stay. The next thing I observed was that the princes rose one after another and as the Chairman also left, I could not finish my speech.... [*Ibid.* p. 218]



Questioned whether it was a fact that Madan Mohan Malaviya had apologized to the meeting after the incident had occurred, Gandhiji replied:

Mr. Malaviya did address the meeting. But I could trace no apology in his remarks. He merely said that I had spoken at his Special request and my sole intention was to show how suicidal methods of violence were. [Ibid, p. 218]

Annie Besant joined issue with Gandhiji on his statement that she had been whispering to the princes sitting near her and repeated that her interruption was solely inspired by the knowledge of how his statements would appear in a C.I.D. report. She said: " ... He should not have twice spoken of the possibility of the English being driven bag and baggage out of the country and of his being ready, if he thought Indians fit for self-government which he did not, to march with thousands of his countrymen to the muzzle of English guns and die gloriously; that it was unwise to say bluntly, 'I am an anarchist'... and to speak of bombs bringing about the annulment of the partition of Bengal." [Ibid, pp.563-64]

Annie Besant subjoined to her statement a letter to the editor penned by S. S. Setlur, a former judge of Mysore who had been among the audience. Setlur said his impression was not that Gandhiji was encouraging the anarchists, but that he was playing the role of an apologist for the civilian bureaucrat and that his expatiating on the so-called virtues of the misguided anarchists and the "indecent attack he made on the ruling princes was inspired by the unconscious awkwardness he felt because of his 'Kaiser-i-Hind Medalist' views". [Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, Vol.III (I), pp.22-23]



Thus while Annie Besant thought that Gandhiji's remarks might sound as sedition to the C.I.D. ears, the person she quoted in her support thought Gandhiji had given expression to views which were too loyalist !

As might be imagined, British officials were peeved by the speech. C. Y. Chintamani, editor of *The Leader*, was served with an order not to publish the speech. The Chief Secretary of U. P., reporting to the Home Department, Government of India, on 23 March, expressed the view that though part of Gandhiji's speech was admirable, part was in thoroughly bad taste; " the rest, though not a deliberate or intentional incitement to sedition, was in effect seditious and open to grave objection."

The Chief Secretary went on:

I am to say that this Government is advised that an offence was committed under Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code. Sir James Meston does not, however, think it desirable to take any action at law against Mr. Gandhi for his actual speech.... Mr. Gandhi's speech has been sufficiently reprobated by influential men in his own community.... Sir James Meston is sure that the wisest course is to let that affair slip into obscurity and oblivion. Mr. Gandhi's future visits to this province will be watched.... His Honour regrets that this should be so, as he gathers that Mr. Gandhi, whom he does not know personally, is a man of personal probity and high ideals.

The Government of India agreed with the course proposed. [Proceedings of the Government of U.P. Administration Department, N.A.I. Home Poll. March 1916]



Vinayak Narhari Bhavé, better known as Vinoba Bhavé, had followed in the newspapers the storm generated by Gandhiji's speech at Benares and he was thrilled. He was attracted towards Gandhiji's idea of fearlessness and non-violent resistance even unto death. While his desire to study Sanskrit had taken him to Benares, the urge to join Gandhiji took hold of him. The climate of Benares, moreover, did not agree with him. This made his stay in the city a short one. He wrote to Gandhiji frankly mentioning some of his doubts and difficulties and raising certain philosophical queries. Gandhiji replied that it was not possible to answer all these questions through correspondence. He, therefore, invited Vinoba to meet him at Kochrab Ashram. On reaching the Ashram on 7 June 1916, Vinoba was taken to the kitchen where Gandhiji was cleaning and shredding vegetables. The first conversation took place while Gandhiji was engaged in this daily chore. Gandhiji welcomed this young man of 20 to the Ashram and offered him full membership.

Recollecting his first meeting with Gandhiji at Kochrab Ashram, Vinoba writes :

When I was at Kashi, my main ambition was to go to the Himalayas. Also there was an inner longing to visit Bengal. I was attracted by the patriotic young anarchists of Bengal. But neither of the two dreams could be realized. Providence took me to Gandhiji, and I found in him not only the peace of the Himalayas but also the burning fervour of revolution typical of Bengal. I said to myself that both of my desires had been fulfilled. [Shriman Narayan, *Vinoba: His Life and Work*, pp.34-37]

Vinoba took to Ashram life like a duck to water. He cleaned latrines, ground corn , shredded vegetables and studied the *Gita* and the Upanishads with



Gandhiji. But he had hardly been at the Ashram for ten months when he got malaria and had to go for a change of air. He first went to Waid, where his grandmother lived in their ancestral house. But having renounced the world and the family, he chose to put up in a hotel, maintaining himself by giving tuition in English and mathematics. He spent six months at the place and then wandered out, visiting Raigarh, a fort near Bhor, Sinhgarh, Lonavla, Satara, Karad, Islampur, Miraj, Tasgaon and Belgaum, delivering discourses on the *Gita*. He returned to the Ashram in March 1918. [Statement before DIG, CID, Ahmedabad, 20 May 1919, reproduced in *Source Material*, Vol.II, pp.771-74]

Some time later, Gandhiji described Vinoba to C. F. Andrews as “one of the few pearls in the Ashram who came there not to be blessed, but to bless it.” Vinoba was all humility and tried to reduce himself to zero. He did nothing which would give the slightest impression of showing off. This is what Vinoba said in the course of a talk to an Ashram inmate: "Only I can know what I have got in the Ashram. It was an early ambition of mine to distinguish myself by some violent deed in the service of the country. But Bapu cured me of that ambition. It is he who extinguished the volcano of anger and other passions in me. I have been progressing every day of my life in the Ashram. [Shriman Narayan, *Vinoba: His Life and Work* pp.34-37]

Gandhiji wrote to Vinoba's father, Narhari Shambhurao Bhave, who was at Baroda:

Your son has acquired at so tender an age such high-spiritedness and asceticism as took me years of patient labour to do. [C.W.M.G., Vol. XIII, p. 279; quoted from *Life of Vinoba*, p.8]



On 14 February in a paper read at a missionary conference in Madras, Gandhiji explained his ideas on Swadeshi. The definition of Swadeshi which best illustrated his meaning, he said, was that it was "that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." [*Ibid*, p.219]. Thus in regard to religion he would restrict himself to his ancestral religion, not because he thought it was the best, but because he knew it could be complemented by introducing reforms. In economics, he would use only things that were produced by his immediate neighbours.

In the domain of politics, following the swadeshi spirit, it was the village panchayats that held Gandhiji. Had it not been for the attempts to separate politics from religion, he said, they would not have degenerated as they had. India was a country of village republics and because it was that, it had survived so many shocks. The rulers, whether Indian or foreign, hardly touched the vast masses except for the collection of revenue. The caste system showed wonderful powers of organization.

In language, swadeshi was manifested in the use of the mother tongue. Because of the barrier of language educated people had not reacted upon the masses. "Their aspirations are not ours. Hence there is a break ... you witness in reality not failure to organize, but want of correspondence between the representatives and the represented." [*Ibid*, p. 221]

Lastly, swadeshi meant not using articles brought from outside - "The deprivation of a pin or needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror." Stiff protective duties on foreign goods were necessary, he said, not by way of revenge but as a matter of religious principle. "India could live for herself only if she produces and is helped to produce everything for her



requirements within her own borders. She need not be, She ought not to be, drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds fratricide, jealousy and many other evils." [*Ibid*, pp.219-24]

4

Touring incessantly, addressing meetings large and small every day and writing for newspapers and journals such as *The Leader*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Review* and various Gujarati magazines such as *Praja Bandhu*, Gandhiji went on with his work of public education. What the country, indeed the world, needed above all was, in his view, "nothing less than character-building". The setting up of Satyagraha Ashram and drawing up of a list of vows that must be observed were steps in furtherance of this purpose.

Speaking at Y.M.C.A. Madras on 16 February, Gandhiji again elaborated the significance of the vows of truth, non-violence, non-hoarding, control of the palate, fearlessness, swadeshi, freedom from untouchability, education through the vernaculars and hand-weaving.

The vow of truth implied that one must never say 'yes' when one meant. 'no', whatever the consequences.

Ahimsa similarly did not merely mean non-injury; it meant that "you may not offend anybody, you may not harbour an uncharitable thought even in connection with one who may consider himself to be your enemy." Under this rule there was no room for violence even for the sake of the country and "even for guiding the honour of precious ones that may be under your charge." Ahimsa required that "we may guard the honour of those who are under our charge by delivering ourselves into the hands of the man who would commit the sacrilege." [*Ibid*, pp.228-29]



It was apparent that in thus enunciating the doctrine of non-violence Gandhiji was introducing a new element into the prevailing political temper in the country.

Lala Lajpat Rai, writing shortly afterwards, debunked the notion. "Ahimsa, overdone and misapplied," he wrote, "is a gangrene that poisons the system, enervates the faculties and converts men and women into half-lunatic, hysterical, unnerved creatures, good for nothing that requires the energetic pursuit of noble ends and noble virtues."

Rejecting Gandhiji's counsel that in the event of a ruffian attacking the honour of a woman under one's charge, one should deliver oneself into the hands of the attacker, Lala Lajpat Rai continued :

Not even Buddha, much less Christ, ever preached that. I do not know if even the Jains would go to that length.... Why did Mr. Gandhi then injure the feelings of the white men of South Africa by raising the standard of revolt against their cherished policy of excluding the Indians from that country? [*Ibid*, pp.566-69 (Appendix II)]

Gandhiji rejected Lajpat Rai's criticism of Ahimsa. India, he said, had not come to harm through Ahimsa, but because Indians had been "dominated by love of self instead of love of country". Ahimsa required "deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer." A helpless girl in the care of a follower of Ahimsa had better protection than in the hands of one who was prepared to defend her only to the point to which his weapons would carry him. "The tyrant in the first instance will have to walk to his victim over the dead body of her defender, in the second he has but to overpower the defender..... If we are unmanly today," Gandhiji continued, "we are so, not because we do not know



how to strike but because we fear to die." Ahimsa, truly understood, was a panacea for all evils mundane and extra-mundane. [*Ibid*, pp.294-97]

In later years Gandhiji was to further explain what he meant by "delivering ourselves into the hands of the man who would commit the sacrilege." In the course of disturbances following the Quit India movement of 1942, men in one place had run away leaving women and children at the mercy of British soldiers. Some of the women had to suffer shame and dishonour at their hands. There was a violent reprisal by some Indians. Gandhiji came to know of the incident after his release in 1944. It made him angry and very sad. He refused to condemn the violent actions of those who had reacted in this matter and had hit back. He took to task the men who had run away in the name of non-violence, leaving women and children undefended. "Cowardice and non-violence do not go together," he thundered. If those men had perished defending non-violently the honour of the women, he could have understood and appreciated it. He could not understand, accept, or condone their running away which was nothing but sheer cowardice. Evil must be resisted. He believed it could be done best through non-violent resistance, which could bring about a change of heart in the evil-doer. who would be forced to ask again and again even after killing the defender, "What was it that this man was trying to convey to me? What was it for which he has laid down his life? But if you do not have the courage to offer non-violent resistance, use violence by all means. Do not be silent witnesses of injustice and evil-doing. Do not run away as cowards." Cowardice was worse than violence, he always said.

Gandhiji was convinced that only after one had acquired the necessary spiritual discipline through a rigorous observance of the prescribed Ashram vows, did one become fit to take up political work.

" Politics," he said,



are a part of our being.... In our Ashram every child is taught to understand the political institutions of our country, and to know how the country is vibrating with new emotions, with new aspirations, with a new life. But we want also the steady light, the infallible light of religious faith, not a faith which merely appeals to the intelligence but a faith which is indelibly inscribed on the heart. [*Ibid*, p.234]

Gandhiji continued to raise his voice against the continuation of the indenture system. In February 1916 Madan Mohan Malaviya gave notice of a bill in the Imperial Legislative Council seeking abolition of the system. Gandhiji, in an article in *The Leader*, pleaded for the end of the indenture system "at any cost and that too now!" For the system was "demonstrably degrading to us, even Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had made the British Isles from end to end ring with denunciation of the system." [*Ibid*, p.248]

5

After Bombay, Madras and Poona Gandhiji moved on to Sind in the last week of February. On 26 February 1916 in Hyderabad (Sind) Gandhiji was given a rousing reception by the citizens. According to a report in *The Hindu* Gandhiji was carried in a procession consisting of 50 carriages, "which took three hours to pass through the crowded streets owing to numerous stops for Mr. Gandhi to be garlanded ."

Gandhiji, replying in Hindustani to the speeches of welcome, which were all in English, referred to the demand for self-government which was in the air and for which the leaders of the Congress and the League were trying to frame a scheme. Tilak had given the slogan 'Swaraj is my birth-right.' It rang from every Indian heart and the youth took it up with great enthusiasm. Gandhiji said India could have only as much swaraj as it was fit for - one condition for getting swara]



was for people to take up swadeshi whole-heartedly. Swaraj and swadeshi must go together.

Gandhiji visited numerous educational institutions in Hyderabad, Sind. Speaking at Holmstead Hall he dwelt on the theme of vaccination against smallpox. Since the serum for vaccination was obtained by a process which spell torture to the cow, he expressed the view that vaccination went against the "fundamental principle of Hinduism which is Ahimsa". In any case, he said, vaccination should not be made compulsory. [*Ibid*, p.252]

On 29 February Gandhiji spoke at three different functions in Karachi - there was first the reception held by the Citizen s' Association, then there was a Gokhale Memorial meeting at the Khalindina Hall where he unveiled a portrait of Gokhale, and lastly there was the meeting of the Gujarati Hindus. At the Citizens' reception Gandhiji said that in the course of his tour in India he had been "particularly struck with one thing and that is the awakening of the Indian people. A new hope has filled the heart s of the people, a hope that something is going to happen which will raise the motherland to a higher status." [*Ibid*, p.253]

But side by side with this spirit of hope Gandhiji had also noticed "awe not only of the Government but also of heads of castes and the priestly class. As a result of this we are afraid to speak out what is in us." He called upon the audience to shed fear, for "so long as this spirit (of fear) remains, there will be and there can be no true progress."

Gandhiji's advice to the Gujaratis in Karachi, who were mostly businessmen, was that they "should follow truth in their business and not bear hard on people through their operations." The duty of businessmen, he pointed out, was service of the people, not amassing of wealth. [*Ibid*, pp.255-56]



From 14 March onwards Gandhiji was in Hardwar in connection with the annual function of Gurukul Kangri, held on 20 March. Speaking on the occasion he said the immediate need for India was a proper religious spirit. This was, of course, "true for all time". What he desired to say was that "owing to the religious spirit being dormant in us, we are living in a state of perpetual fear. We fear the temporal as well as the spiritual authority. We dare not speak out our minds before our priests and our pundits. We stand in awe of the temporal power." He alluded to the observation of Lord Willingdon that Indians hesitated to say 'No' when they meant no. He advised the audience to cultivate fearlessness. "In my opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man, he added.

The next thing necessary for the salvation of the country, Gandhiji reiterated, was swadeshi.

Swadeshi in religion teaches one to measure the glorious past and re-enact it in the present generation. The pandemonium that is going on in Europe shows that modern civilization represents forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, i.e. Indian, civilization represents in its essence the divine force. Modern civilization is chiefly materialistic, as ours is chiefly spiritual.... Our shastras lay down unequivocally that a proper observance of truth, chastity, scrupulous regard for all life, abstention from coveting others' possessions and refusal to hoard anything but what is necessary for our daily wants, is indispensable for a right life....

It was similarly necessary to cultivate the spirit of Ahimsa, "which in its active form means purest love and pity". Gandhiji expressed his belief that



through her civilization India had a message to deliver to the world. He would like "to use the British race for transmitting this mighty message of Ahimsa to the whole world."

As a lover of the Gurukul Gandhiji felt that the Gurukul boys needed a thorough industrial training if they were to become self-reliant and self-supporting.

It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of the population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving.
[*Ibid*, pp.260-64]

7

Ever since the split between the Moderates and Nationalists at the Surat Congress in 1907, efforts to bring about unity between the two wings had been going on. Upon the return of Tilak from the jail in Mandalay in August 1914, these efforts gained momentum. Attempts to bring about a united Congress at the organization's Madras session in December 1914 failed because of the insistence of Tilak that the Nationalist Party on rejoining the Congress would seek to obtain recognition for their "methods by education of public opinion and securing a majority in the Congress." Annie Besant and some others continued their endeavour to have Article XX of the Congress constitution amended to enable the Nationalists to rejoin the organization. The proposed amendment stated

that any public association of two years' standing, having accepted the Congress creed, and made the acceptance of the creed a condition precedent to membership, and having notified such acceptance of the creed to the Congress Committee of the province in which that Association



is situated, will have the power to hold public meetings for the election of delegates to the Congress, the number of delegates thus elected being 15.

[*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.237]

This amendment was accepted by the Congress at Bombay in December 1915.

The Nationalists decided to consider the matter at their Provincial Conference to be held at Belgaum from 29 April to 1 May 1916. Tilak had decided to join the Congress and to persuade members of his party to do the same. The question whether it should be a united conference was discussed, but it was finally decided to leave it to the Moderates to join the deliberations or hold their own separate conference. All the leading Nationalists of Bombay attended the Belgaum conference, as also a few from the Central Provinces and Berar.

Gandhiji had been keen that the two organizations, the Congress and Tilak's Nationalist Party, which were fighting for the same goal of Home Rule for the country, should reunite. To this end he had been making earnest efforts privately. He had, on his own initiative, twice met Tilak on 11 July 1915, at Poona and placed before him certain proposals. Gandhiji was persuaded by Kaka Kalelkar to accept the invitation of Gangadharrao Deshpande to attend the Provincial Conference at Belgaum.

Kakasaheb and Gangadharrao were followers of Lokmanya Tilak. "But," writes Kakasaheb in his reminiscences, "we had lost our hearts to the grandeur of Bapu's personality, to his patriotism and to the flawless purity of his character. I had become completely his, and I was trying to win Gangadharrao over to Bapu too." [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, p.109]

Kakasaheb and Gangadharrao Deshpande both believed that if Tilak and Gandhiji could get to know each other and work together it would prove a great



blessing for the country. They tried to bring about a private meeting between the two. Gangadharrao took Lokmanya to Bapu and left the two together. "We never learnt what took place between the two leaders," Kakasaheb has recorded, "but as Lokmanya quit Babu's room he said to Gangadharrao, 'This man is not one of us. He follows a different path altogether. But he is true in every inch of him, and no harm can ever come to India through him. We must be careful to avoid any conflict with him. On the contrary, we must help him whenever we can.' " [*Ibid*, pp.109-10]

The Belgaum conference by a resolution accepted the constitution of the Congress " as amended at its last session, though the amendment is highly unsatisfactory."

Gandhiji expressed great pleasure at the reconciliation between the estranged parties. He decribed the coming union of the two parties as a great blessing for the motherland and told the delegates that "if indeed the Nationalist Party returned to the Congress fold with an absolutely honest and selfless spirit, ever thinking of the country and its cause and never thinking of party or personal gain, God would be with them, and the nation could then go forward." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.273]. In his speech at the conference, he said: " It is well that you are joining the Congress. But I would ask you to come in as soldiers, not as lawyers." [Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, p.110]

Two or t hree days later the Nationalist leader of Belgaum, D. V. Belvi had occasion to visit the Collector on a matter of business. "Well," remarked the Collector, "So you invited Barrister Gandhi to your conference, did you? And I have heard that the things he said to you all we re far from pleasant. How sorry you must have been that you invited him." "Not at all," Belvi answered. "Curious, is it not, how little you English know of the Indian character? We have a deep



reverence for Gandhiji. He has every right to give us advice and guidance. We listened most respectfully to what he had to say. You will have proof of our sincere appreciation of him one day." [*Ibid*, p.110]

A Provincial Conference was held at Ahmedabad from 21 to 23 October 1916 at which Jinnah was to preside. He was to be taken from the station in procession. An invitation had also been sent to Tilak which he had accepted. The young workers wanted to take out Tilak also in a procession. The older men at the top were not willing to do so. The youngsters were told that if a procession was organized for Tilak, they must have processions for all the leaders. This was a great disappointment for the young workers who were doing most of the work for the Conference.

When Gandhiji heard that Tilak was not to be given a public welcome, he issued a leaflet under his own signature and distributed it in thousands. It just said : "We are being honoured by the visit of such a great leader as Lokmanya. I am going to the station to receive him. It is the duty of the citizens of Ahmedabad also to be present there to welcome him."

The leaflet had a magical effect. There were big crowds at the railway station and on the roads. Lokmanya was given a magnificent welcome. [*Ibid*, pp.48-49]

Mrs. Annie Besant was a dynamic leader who had worked with Charles Bradlaugh in England. Bradlaugh was deeply interested in India, so much so that he had often been called 'Member for India'. She was the head of the Theosophical Society in India and was deeply religious as well as acutely aware of the exploitation of India by Great Britain.



In 1915 she conceived the idea of starting an active political body, named Home Rule League, to promote active work from day to day for the furtherance of the cause of Home Rule, and to do the follow-up work with regard to the resolutions passed by the Congress. She defined Home Rule as self-rule within the Empire, attained through constitutional means.

The Congress used to meet once a year for three days in those days and there was no proper organization to do the follow-up work in between the Congress sessions. This was obviously unsatisfactory. Mrs. Besant had to convince the Congress leaders that there was need for a new organization for the follow-up work.

Mrs. Besant planned to visit Bombay in September 1915. She had written to some of her followers in Bombay that lectures and appointments for her with leaders of the Congress and the Bombay Presidency Association should be fixed up. A meeting with Dadabhai Naoroji was arranged. She had about an hour and a half's talk with the Grand Old Man of India on the Parsi New Year's Day in September. She took off her shoes outside Dadabhai's room. Writes Jamnadas Dwarkadas in his *Political Memoirs*, "Even in the little things of life as certainly also in the big things, I found Mrs. Besant a greater Hindu than any Hindu I had seen.... She told us later that it was a most successful interview and that he had blessed the formation of the Home Rule League." [Jamnadas Dwarkadas, *Political Memoirs*, pp.82-83]. This news appeared in the press. Dinshaw Wacha was acting for Pherozeshah Mehta, President of the Bombay Presidency Association, who was lying seriously ill. Wacha and many others did not relish the idea of Mrs. Besant starting the Home Rule League. They felt that she was setting up a parallel body to the Congress. This she denied.



Mrs. Besant met the members of the Committee of the Bombay Presidency Association, among whom were Dinshaw Wacha, N. M. Samarth, a leader of ultra-moderate tendencies, and M. A. Jinnah who had been a great favourite with Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta because of his staunch adherence to broad-minded nationalism and was respected by the people. She also met Chimanlal Setalvad, who since 1898 had made a name both in the Bombay Legislative Council and in the Municipal Corporation of Bombay. He remained Chairman of the Schools Committee of the Corporation for a number of years. She tried to meet Sir Pherozeshah Mehta but he was too ill to meet her. She also met several others. Most of them were not in favour of her starting another organization. They said that they proposed amending the constitution of the Congress and they hoped that the Congress would then be able to take up the follow-up work. They, therefore, asked her to wait before starting the Home Rule League.

Mrs. Besant agreed to wait till August 1916. Then, she said, she would start her League without further consultations. The one person she found most sympathetic to her proposal was M. A. Jinnah. After the meeting was over, he had a long talk with her and told her that she represented the views of the young idealists and he would do all he could to ensure for her the support of a large number of Congress leaders. [*Ibid*, p.84]

Mrs. Besant also met Tilak at Poona and had good response from him. He in fact started his Home Rule League before she started her League.

The Congress was to meet in Bombay in December 1915. Much importance was given to building up a suitable atmosphere through intense political activity to be carried on in Bombay before the Congress session. Mrs. Besant's lecture at the Empire Theatre, in the middle of September, on "India after the War" was attended by a crowd beyond the capacity of the theatre.



"What does Chamberlain know of India to be appointed the sole arbiter of the destiny of her great people?" she asked. "An ignorant, know-nothing man, sitting 6000 miles away could hardly be expected to rule this country to the satisfaction of the people of India. England wanted the help of India in prosecuting the war. Was it for the purpose of tightening the bonds of slavery in India which had continued for a long time, or was it for the purpose of freeing the country from the bondage which England had inflicted on her?"

Prime Minister Asquith had asked the people of Great Britain what they would feel if, in the event of their losing the war, Germans, instead of the British, became the rulers of Great Britain, laid down policies and dictated to every man, woman and child in England, crushing them under the heels of their dictatorship. Such a situation, Asquith had said, would be intolerable. Mrs. Besant said that a similar situation had prevailed in India for 150 years, "and we are now finding it to be entirely intolerable... a vigorous political movement should be started so as to enable us to attain the position of a free, self-governing country within a short time." She had made the "demand of Home Rule for this country" so that Indians had an opportunity to breathe the fresh air of freedom and live a life of peace, progress and prosperity. This would enable India's children to contribute their mite to the building of "a new civilization, based on spiritual and eternal values which would usher in an era of peace and brotherhood throughout the world.... India was a giant who had been sleeping for a long time and was now beginning to be wide awake. It was to be wide awake in order that thieves and robbers who had entered the house during the sleep might be driven away for ever." [*Ibid*, pp.85-87]



After Bombay, Mrs. Besant went to Bengal, the U. P., and Bihar, with a view to putting life into the people of those provinces and awakening them to the need for demanding Home Rule instead of piecemeal reforms in various directions.

Before Mrs. Besant left Bombay, Shankerlal Banker and Jamnadas Dwarkadas asked her how they could help keep up the fire kindled by her. In consultation with Indulal Yagnik, Kanaiyalal Munshi, Ratansi D. Morarji and K. T. Shah, they decided to start a weekly in English so as to give expression to the aims and ideals of the younger generation. And so *Young India* was started as a weekly which was later taken over by Gandhiji. [*Ibid*, pp.89-90]

9

Shankerlal Banker had first met Gandhiji in 1914 in London at the reception by the Indian students in Caxton Hall. Shankerlal had gone to London to study chemistry. He was keen to develop leather industry in India to help the depressed classes. He was not drawn to the Ambulance Corps work that Gandhiji desired Indian students in London to take up and so he did not have any real contact then with Gandhiji except that he saw him and heard him. Soon after he returned to India.

Shankerlal and his friends wanted to develop a good library to help students who wished to take up studies for industrial training. He had heard of Gandhiji's work in South Africa. He felt that Sir Ratan Tata could help them to set up such a library and Gandhiji could persuade Tata to do so. He, therefore, went to see Gandhiji in December 1915 along with Devchand Parekh of Bhavnagar who was taking a keen interest in developing chemical industry in India.

Gandhiji had come to attend the special session of the Congress and he was staying in Marwadi Vidyalaya, Bombay. Shankerlal found many guests with their bedding spread out in the main hall of the Marwadi Vidyalaya. Gandhiji was



sitting on his bedding. They went up to him. Gandhiji gave them a patient hearing, but said he could not help them. Shankerlal was disappointed, but he was impressed by Gandhiji's simplicity and warmth of nature. He was to learn later of Gandhiji's ideas of decentralization of industry. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Rashtriya Pravritti* (Gujarati), Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, pp.13-14]

A few months after Shankerlal's return to India in 1914 Jamnadas Dwarkadas came to live on the ground floor of his bungalow on Chowpatty. Jamnadas was then a partner in the paints and dyes business of Pragji Surji. He was a follower of Annie Besant and later became an ardent Home Rule Leaguer.

During the Congress week in December 1915, Nationalist leaders of the Bombay Presidency, the Central Provinces and Berar, met at Tilak's house in Poona and set up a committee of 15 to consider whether a Home Rule League should be formed. The Committee reported early in April 1916 favouring the formation of the Home Rule League as contemplated but recommended that it should be confined to the Bombay Presidency, the Central Provinces and Berar.

The Committee's recommendation was considered during the Belgaum Conference of the Nationalists on 28 April 1916. Accordingly the Home Rule League of Tilak was launched, with J. Baptista as President, N. C. Kelkar as Secretary and D. V. Gokhale as Assistant Secretary. Tilak himself figured as a member of a Committee of 17 persons formed to carry on propaganda for Home Rule.

Tilak started the campaign with a series of speeches delivered at Ahmednagar, Satara and other places, calling upon people to emulate Shivaji and cultivate the virtues of patriotism, courage and self-sacrifice.

The speeches, particularly two of them delivered at Ahmednagar, were considered objectionable by the rulers and Tilak was required, under Section 108



Cr. P . C., to execute a bond for Rs.10,000. Tilak appealed to the High Court, which reversed the decision. [*Source Material*, Vol.III, pp.242 and 689-90]

Annie Besant had been pressing upon the Congress, since eady in 1915, the need for setting up a Home Rule League which would serve as a link between the Congress in India and the British India Congress Committee in London and would also press India's claims in England. The Congress and the Muslim League formed a joint committee to consider the matter but nothing much came of the committee's labours, for the Congress was at the time in the hands of Moderates like Sir Pherozechah Mehta, who were opposed to the Congress adopting any such precipitate course.

It was only after the formation of the Maharashtra Home Rule League that Mrs. Besant decided not to wait any more for the result of the Congress-League joint deliberations on the question. In June 1916 she inaugurated the English branch of her Home Rule League in London. On her return to India she founded the All India Home Rule League in Madras in September 1916. In this way two organizations with the same object and same name began to function under Tilak and Besant. The two, however, worked together in harmony. Tilak's League mostly concentrated its work where the Nationalists had a following - Poona and other Marathi-speaking areas, and C. P. and Berar. Besant's League worked in Gujarati-speaking areas, Sind, Madras and other provinces. Bombay had branches of both Besant and Tilak Leagues. Dr. D. D. Sathe and Dr. Welkar became secretaries of Tilak's League in Bombay. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, pp.15-16]

Jamnadas Dwarkadas became President of Besant's Home Rule League in Bombay. He persuaded Shankerlal Banker to become Secretary of the Bombay branch of the League along with Omar Sobhani. Jamnadas was a generous and



courageous man, writes Shankerlal, with great concern for the poor . Whatever he took up, he threw himself into it whole-heartedly and so he did for the Home Rule League. He was also a good speaker. [*Ibid*, p.16]

Most of those working for Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League in Bombay were well-to-do men. They had not adopted a simple life, but they contributed generously for the national cause and also collected funds from others. Jamnadas and Shankerlal were two major contributors to the funds of the Home Rule League. Many businessmen from the market used to go round collecting funds. They would approach the shop-keepers and ask each one, "You want Swaraj, don't you?" There was an affirmative nod. Then they took out the membership form and asked that it be filled and also asked for donations. In this way membership drive and fund collection made good progress. [*Ibid*, p.15]

The Home Rule League set up branches in many cities and issued a large number of leaflets and pamphlets to educate the people on how the British had been exploiting India.

The Home Rule League educational material was prepared or translated into local languages giving facts and figures to show how the British had impoverished India, and was widely distributed. Meetings were held and addressed by Tilak and Besant and their followers. Five hundred or more branches soon started functioning. The general awakening of the people was impressive.

It would be impossible to overestimate the role played by the Home Rule Leagues in creating political consciousness and consolidating nationalist sentiment, especially in the Maharashtra-Madras region. Newspapers and journals run or controlled by the Home Rulers became influential vehicles of India's demand for swaraj and all of them, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Maharatta*,



The Kesari, The Sandesh, The Message and *Young India* along with Besant's *New India* came under repeated attacks from the Government. [Source Material, Vol.II, p.700]

Gandhiji could not feel any great affinity with either of the two Home Rule organizations. According to Kanji Dwarkadas, brother of Jamnadas Dwarkadas, when in 1915 Annie Besant saw Gandhiji in Bombay, she invited him to join her in starting the Home Rule League. Gandhiji declined, saying that he did not want to "embarrass, harass and annoy the British by a political agitation in India when Great Britain was deeply involved in the war against Germany." He was sure that when the war was over the British Government would show its gratitude to India for its continued support in the war effort by granting political reforms. Mrs. Besant told Gandhiji, "I know the British well. They will never give anything except under pressure. When they need India's friendship we must push forward India's claim for freedom. Strike while the iron is hot."

Gandhiji refused to be persuaded. "I will not help in any agitation against them during the war," he said. [Kanji Dwarkadas, *Gandhiji Through My Diary Leaves*, pp.10-11]

Despite these basic differences of approach with Annie Besant, which were only further confirmed by the misunderstanding between the two at the opening of Benares Hindu University in February 1916, Gandhiji had profound respect for her, because she had contributed so much towards spreading the gospel of self-rule.

On 22 December 1916 in Allahabad, Gandhiji spoke at a meeting of the Muir College Economic Society. The gathering included many prominent professors of economics. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya presided. Gandhiji



confessed at the outset that he knew very little of economics, he had not read Adam Smith, Mill, Marshall, and a host of such other authors. He posed the question: "Does economic progress clash with real progress?" And his answer was " Yes", if by real progress was meant moral progress.

Gandhiji quoted *St. Mark*: " Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." He quoted Wallace to the effect that the rapid growth of wealth and increase of man's power over nature had put too great a strain upon human civilization and given rise to various forms of social immorality.

Gandhiji cited instances of Rome and Egypt. He said that in "most countries of which we have any historic record", attainment of high material affluence was accompanied by a moral decline.

Gandhiji did not think highly of the argument that for the 30 millions of Indians who were stated by Sir William Hunter to be living on one meal a day, material progress would spell moral progress. No one had ever suggested, said Gandhiji, "that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation". But one could not generalize from this and hold that what was true of the 30 million Indians was true for the whole universe. Hard cases made bad law.

Gandhiji further quoted Wallace to the effect that with the advance of wealth, justice had become immoral, deaths from alcoholism and suicide had increased, numbers of premature births and congenital defects had increased and prostitution had become an institution. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.310-16]

The following day, 23 December, at a public meeting held under the presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya, Gandhiji criticised the English system



of education which had been imposed on Indian students. The aim of such education was to secure Government jobs and at the most membership of the Imperial Legislative Council. The history that was taught in Government schools was distorted . Men educated under such a system could not be expected to do any great service to the country. Education through English, along with the adoption of European ideas and European dress, had created a wide gulf between the educated few and the masses. It had created a gulf in the families also, for an English educated person had no communication of feeling with the women in the family, who did not know English .

Gandhiji commended the ancient system of education in India which was based on self-restraint and promoted ethical and spiritual values. These were the bedrock of Indian civilization. [*Ibid*, pp.318-19]

11

The Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress was held on 26 - 30 December under the presidentship of Ambika Charan Majumdar. Three events of importance marked the session. It adopted the famous Congress-League Scheme of Reforms and it saw an end to the split that had been caused at the Surat Congress in 1907 between Moderates and Nationalists. Tilak returned to the Congress fold. It recognized the Home Rule Leagues which had rendered valuable service in awakening the people and popularizing the demand for Swaraj.

The Congress marked a clear victory of the Home Rulers – both organizations acting together - over the Moderates. When the Subject Committee of the Congress was being elected, the Home Rulers insisted that Bombay should be represented on the Committee only by pledged Home Rulers. They opposed Gandhiji, B. G. Horniman and R. P. Paranjpye and defeated them. They determinedly asked for the Home Rule Leagues to be accepted as part and



parcel of the Congress organization. They had their way. The Congress passed a resolution asking the Home Rulers and other political organizations to carry on propaganda in favour of the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms. [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.691]

The Congress-League Scheme of Reforms emanated from what is known as the Lucknow Pact. This pact marked the recognition by the Congress of the principle of separate electorates for Muslims and allocation of seats for them in the Central and Provincial legislatures. The quotas for Muslims recommended were as follows :

In the Imperial Legislative Council one-third of all elected seats; in the provinces: Punjab 50 per cent; the United Provinces 30 per cent; Bengal 40 per cent; Bihar 25 per cent; the Central Provinces 15 per cent ; Madras 15 per cent and Bombay one-third.

The reforms proposed envisaged Provincial Legislative Councils of anything between 50 and 125 members, depending on the size of the Province of whom four-fifths would be elected by popular franchise. Fifty per cent of the members of the Governors' Executive Councils were to be elected members of Provincial Legislative Councils.

At the Centre it was proposed that half the members of the Governor-General's Executive Council would be Indians. They were to be elected by the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council.

The Reforms further proposed that the Council of the Secretary of State for India should be abolished. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.526-31]

There was a sharp difference of opinion on the question of separate electorates at the Congress. The Congress leadership was opposed to separate



electorates though they were ready to concede reservation of seats for Muslims. The Muslim League insisted on separate electorates. M. A. Jinnah, who was an important member of both the Congress and the Muslim League, and the more progressive group in the Congress acknowledging the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak, made a fervent appeal to the Congress for the acceptance of separate electorates as a temporary measure. Writes Jamnadas Dwarkadas: "Jinnah pleaded that by working together the mutual distrust would be removed and the Muslim League would become more willing to give up its demand for separate electorates." [Jamnadas Dwarkadas, *Political Memoirs*, pp.120-24]

Alas, in retrospect it would appear that accepting communal electorates was a serious mistake on the part of the Congress. It gave the communalist elements and the British die-hards an opportunity to play up Hindu-Muslim differences and sowed the seeds for the partition of India three decades later. This possibility should have occurred to the leaders of the Congress who had ample experience of the British policy of Divide and Rule. For instance, in December 1915, the British Police Commissioner of Bombay had engineered a noisy demonstration by communalist Muslims at the Muslim League meeting held at the time of the Bombay Congress session, to which many Congress leaders including Gandhiji and Mrs. Besant had been invited. They had to leave without addressing the gathering. As she left, Mrs. Besant saw the Police Commissioner standing outside the pandal and took him to task for his nefarious role in this matter. [*Ibid*, p.99]

M. A . Jinnah had however later succeeded in holding the League meeting in *camera* and had persuaded the League to pass a resolution similar to the one passed by the Congress. A joint committee was then set up to work out agreed proposals to be adopted at the Lucknow Congress and then presented to the



British Government. These proposals became the basis of the Lucknow Pact. [*Ibid*, p.100]

12

One of the resolutions passed by the Lucknow Congress was on indentured labour. It was moved by Gandhiji. The resolution strongly urged "that indentured emigration should be stopped by prohibiting the recruitment of such labour within the ensuing year," and further that at least one representative Indian be appointed "to take part in the forthcoming inter-departmental conference to be held in London for the consideration of this question." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.320-21]

The hardships of Indian indentured labourers in Fiji and the West Indies had become a matter of serious national concern and public agitation by way of meetings was going on all over the country for ending the system of indenture.

Addressing an anti-indenture meeting in Ahmedabad on 4 February 1917, Gandhiji regretted that even though Lord Hardinge had promised an early end to the indenture system, the planters in Fiji were carrying on as if the system would be kept going for another five years. Lord Chelmsford told the Imperial Legislative Council on 7 February that the system would be abolished shortly. However the British Government had asked the Viceroy to make it clear that the existing system of recruitment must be maintained till a new system had been worked out in conjunction with the Colonial Office and the Crown Colonies. Gandhiji in a statement regretted this attitude of the British Government and declared that the onus of producing an alternative system of recruitment rested with the British Government. He mentioned several Colonies where this system of recruitment had been abolished, such as Natal and Mauritius. They had not insisted on any substitute system. He saw no reason why Fijian and West-Indies planters should be treated differently. [*Ibid*, pp.339-42]



Gandhiji addressed numerous anti-indenture meetings all over the country: in Bombay on 9 February, in Ahmedabad on 17 February, in Surat on 26 February, in Karachi on 2 March, in Calcutta on 6 March, and so on. Everywhere he stressed the morally degrading nature of the indenture system and asked the people to declare that though they had tolerated the system for well over fifty years, they refused to do so any more and that it should be terminated at once, certainly not later than 31 May 1917. [*Ibid*, pp.343, 350 and ff]

13

On 29 December 1916 Gandhiji presided over the Common Script and Common Language Conference held in Lucknow. He stressed the need for an organization of workers to take up the work of popularizing Hindi, the Rashtrabhasha (national language) in South India and other areas where Hindi was not spoken and taught. He cited the instances of the Christian Literature Depot and Bible Society, which took books on Christianity everywhere, had them translated into all the languages and then distributed them even among the aborigines and working people in Africa. The paucity was not of money, only of workers. "However backward Hindi may be as compared to English," he told the audience, "we must advance its status." [*Ibid*, pp.321-22]

On 20 October 1917, in his presidential speech at the Second Gujarat Education Conference held at Broach, Gandhiji made an ardent plea for the substitution of English by the mother tongue as the medium of education. "A language," said he, "mirrors the character of the people who use it. We acquire information about the manners and customs of the Negroes of South Africa by studying their native tongue. A language takes its form from the character and life of those who speak it." He commended the efforts being made towards promotion of the mother tongue in place of English in the northern provinces, in



Madras, in Gujarat, and Maharashtra, where Professor D. K. Karve had been doing noble work. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.11]

Gandhiji wanted English to continue, but only as an optional subject. He was convinced that English could not, and ought not, to become our national language. He enumerated five requirements of a national language:

1. It should be the speech of the largest numbers of Indians;
2. It should be easy for every Indian to learn;
3. It should be capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic and political intercourse throughout India;
4. It should be easy to learn by Government officials; and
5. In choosing such a language, considerations of temporary or passing circumstances should not count.

English did not fulfil any of these requirements, Gandhiji said. Which language fulfilled all the five requirements? One had to admit it was Hindi. He defined Hindi thus: "I call that language Hindi which Hindus and Muslims in the north speak and which is written either in Devanagari or Urdu script." There were some objections to this definition.

It is argued that Hindi and Urdu are two different languages. But this is incorrect. Both Hindus and Muslims speak the same language in north India. The difference has been created by the educated classes. That is, educated Hindus Sanskritize their Hindi with the result that Muslims cannot follow it. Muslims of Lucknow Persianize their Urdu and make it unintelligible to Hindus. To the masses both these languages are foreign and so they have no use for them. I have lived in the north and have mixed freely with both Hindus and Muslims, and, though my knowledge of Hindi is limited, I have never found any difficulty in carrying on communication



through it with them. Therefore, call it Hindi or Urdu as you like, the language of the people in north India is the same thing - basically. Write it in the Urdu script and call it Urdu or write it in the Nagari script and call it Hindi. [*Ibid*, pp.23-24]

The question of education remained one of the chief preoccupations of Gandhiji throughout his life. But in the first year or two after his return from South Africa before politics claimed most of his time, he devoted his maximum energies to education. He saw more and more clearly that if India was to retain her identity and vitality the existing system of education, with its bias for Western values, with English as a compulsory language, and stress on book-learning, would have to give way to a scheme of education which in every respect would be national in character. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.318-19]

In January 1917 Gandhiji drew up a tentative outline of a National Gujarati School. The Government could be petitioned. But the best petition to send to Government and the best way to influence the public, he said, was actual demonstration.

The education scheme formulated was intended to ensure physical, intellectual and religious development of the pupils. It would be a training of the body, the mind and the spirit.

Physical education would involve training in agriculture and hand-weaving and in the use of carpenter's and blacksmith's tools incidental to these occupations. There would also be drill and instruction in home remedies and hygiene. Some elementary knowledge of physiology and botany might be necessary.



Intellectual education would include the study of Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and Sanskrit as compulsory subjects. Urdu, Tamil and Bengali would also be taught.

There would be instruction in arithmetic, algebra and geometry as also in history, geography, elements of astronomy and chemistry.

Gujarati would be the medium of instruction. There would be no examinations, though teachers would hold tests from time to time. [*Ibid*, pp.332-34]

No fees would be charged from the students, all expenses being met from donations. [*Ibid*, pp.332-34]

The National School started functioning in April 1917 in a small way with just twelve students and with a monthly budget of Rs. 500. The responsibility for conducting the school was entrusted to Sankalchand Shah, formerly Professor of Science at Gujarat College. He was assisted by Narhari Parikh, Kaka Kalelkar, Fulchand Shah, Kishorelal Mashruwala and Chhaganlal Gandhi. Girijashankar Shastri gave lessons in Sanskrit. Professor Anandshankar Dhruva supervised the experiment and gave suggestions. All of them pledged themselves exclusively to the work for life on a pittance, just enough to support themselves and their families. Though circumstances did not permit Gandhiji to undertake actual teaching work in the school, its affairs constantly engaged his attention. The curriculum was so mapped as to cover all the essentials of the graduate course in the existing institutions within a period of 13 years. [*Ibid*, pp.462-63]

The school made a promising beginning. On 2 July 1918, Gandhiji informed Dr. Pranjivan Mehta that the boys of the school compared favourably with other boys at the same stage of education, and that "the qualities of fearlessness, etc., which they have acquired are there for all to see. I can see that the school will



require one thousand rupees every month; though just now the expenses are lower." The school now also took day scholars. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.467-68]

14

Annie Besant's activities had been causing a great deal of annoyance to the Government. In 1916 they acted to curb her. On 28 May 1916 the Madras Government, invoking the provisions of the Press Act, demanded security from her journal *New India*.

Gandhiji joined in protesting against the action taken by the rulers. On 24 June at a meeting held in Bombay under the aegis of the Indian Press Association, Gandhiji moved the resolution which affirmed "the existence of a free press to be one of the first essentials of a healthy and progressive State" and demanded "the utmost liberty of expression, subject to the legal restraints of the ordinary law."

Calling the Press Act an outrageous enactment which prevented editors of journals from expressing their real thoughts, Gandhiji asked the authorities not to harass "respectable editors and proprietors". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.281-83]

Gandhiji also raised his voice against the working of the Defence of India Act. On 22 October at the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Ahmedabad, he moved a resolution asking for the "same safeguards as exist in England in relation to the Defence of the Realm Act." He condemned the action taken against Annie Besant, a lady, when the Government had "powers to bring the offending person to justice under the existing laws". [*Ibid*, p.305]

Government's action led to more intensive League propaganda and the people became more enthusiastic.



The British Government could not tolerate the campaign carried on by the two Home Rule Leagues and the popular response to it. They first disallowed Besant's entry into Bombay and next served detention orders on Besant, G. S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia on 15 June 1917. The three were interned at Ooty. This gave a big boost to Besant's popularity. Jinnah, Jahangir Petit, M. R. Jaykar, D. N. Bahadurji, Bhulabhai Desai and several other progressive leaders of the Congress joined the Home Rule League. Jinnah was requested to accept chairmanship of the Bombay branch and he agreed. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, (Gujarati), pp.17-18]

The Bombay branch of the Home Rule League decided to hold a big protest meeting. Gandhiji was staying at Mani Bhavan, Revashankar Jhaveri's house on Laburnum Road. Shankerlal went there and requested him to chair the meeting. Gandhiji was sitting on the floor and his breakfast of dates and nuts was in front of him. He had issued a strong statement against the detention of Besant and her colleagues. But he did not agree to preside over the meeting. [*Ibid*, p.18]

Shankerlal thought that Gandhiji might still be harbouring resentment against Besant for her interrupting his address at Benares and asked Gandhiji to forget the past. Gandhiji assured him that he was not thinking of the Benares incident at all. He had very high regard for Annie Besant as a devoted fighter for freedom. The Government was in the wrong in detaining her. There should be a movement for her release. He had thought, he said, that her disciples like Shankerlal and Jamnadas would be ready to shed their blood. "I am surprised that you just want to hold a protest meeting. What can meetings achieve?" He expected them to do something concrete and more effective.

Shankerlal asked Gandhiji what he expected them to do. "Offer Satyagraha," replied Gandhiji. If a 100 men marched peacefully the thousand



miles to Ooty, it would have some effect. They should get ready to suffer for the cause, he said.

Shankerlal wanted clear instructions. After further discussion, it was decided that all those who were willing to join the campaign should fearlessly carry on the League propaganda and be prepared to face any hardship as a consequence. Gandhiji asked Shankerlal to read about the Satyagraha in South Africa. [*Ibid*, p.20]

Gandhiji later sent Shankerlal a letter elaborating his ideas on Satyagraha. In this letter he wrote, "Satyagraha is the way of non-violence." It was the justified right course at all times and at all places to fight injustice. The use of arms was condemned in every religion and even if some did not do it, they put various limits on such use. But there were "no limits on Satyagraha, or rather none except those placed by the Satyagrahi's capacity for *tapashcharya* or voluntary suffering."

Satyagraha must start spontaneously, without considering the consequences. "A man who believes that Satyagraha may be started only after weighing the chances of defeat and victory and assuring oneself of the certainty of victory, may be a shrewd enough politician or an intelligent man, but he is no satyagrahi." Gandhiji added:

Whether we approve of every or any action of hers [Mrs. Besant's] is another question. I, for one, certainly do not approve of some of them. All the same, her incarceration by the Government is a great mistake and an act of injustice.... The Government has acted according to its lights. What can the people do to express their outraged feelings? Petitions etc. are good enough when one's suffering is bearable. When it is unbearable, there is no remedy but Satyagraha. Only when people find it unbearable



will they, and only those who find it unbearable will, devote their all - body, mind and possessions - to securing release of Annie Bai. This will be a powerful expression of popular feeling.... We do not want to provoke the Government or put difficulties in its way. By resorting to Satyagraha we reveal the intensity of our injured feelings and thereby serve the Government. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.519-20. This letter was published in *Gujarati* on 2 September, 1917]

On 30 June 1917 Gandhiji wrote to J. B. Petit:

I am unable to suggest any other act of universal application with a view to inviting imprisonment, save a vigorous propaganda among the masses, going to the villages, speaking to them. distributing among them leaflets, etc. The descent at the present moment upon the villages by you, Mr. Jinnah and such other leaders cannot but end in arrest.... There are various other methods which I am unwilling to advise until passive resistance in its present form has soaked into us a bit. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.453-54]

Shankarlal took Gandhiji's message to the leaders of Besant's League. They accepted the advice. Tilak's League also joined in this programme. They discussed the matter at a meeting at which N. C. Kelkar was also present. They decided that propaganda should be carried out in such a way that Clauses 124 and 153 of the Sedition Act would not apply to them. When Gandhiji was told about it, he said that they should carry on their propaganda without giving a thought to any clause of the Sedition Act. They should be ready to face any suffering that might come to them as a result. This was agreed to. [Shankarlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, (Gujarati), pp.20-21]



A whirlwind propaganda campaign was started in Bombay and many others enrolled themselves as members of the League. Big meetings were held, Gandhiji spoke paying tributes to Annie Besant. He confined his remarks to points of agreement between her and him. They were both working for Swaraj.

Besant's League organized propaganda in Gujarat. Leaders went to the villages in different districts of Gujarat every week to explain to the people the objects of the League and their duty in face of Besant's detention. Bhulabhai Desai, Jamnadas, Chandrashankar Pandya, Kanaiyalal Munshi, Vibhakar Master, Indulal Yajnik and others took a leading part. Branches of the League were established everywhere and in many places libraries were also set up.

The local leaders in different districts joined in the campaign with enthusiasm. In Surat district Dayaljiibhai and Kalyanjiibhai, in Broach district Haribhai Amin, in Panchmahal Wamanrao Mukadam, in Kheda district Fulchandbhai Shah and Madhavlal Dwivedi and in Ahmedabad district Maganbhai Chaturbhai Patel and Anasuyabehn were in the forefront in setting up branches of the League and organizing work of its branches. Meetings were held everywhere and addressed by the leaders. Large numbers came to hear them. There was no interference by the authorities. They were taken by surprise. [*Ibid*, pp.21-22]

Maharashtra, too, took up the movement in right earnest. The movement spontaneously spread all over the country. In the U. P. Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru and in Madras the elderly leader Sir Subramaniam Aiyar, Kasturi Ranga Aiyar and C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar took the lead. Sir Subramaniam renounced his Knighthood and was the first to sign the pledge of Satyagraha at a meeting. Other provinces followed suit.



On 16 September, Annie Besant and her associates, Arundale and Wadia, of whom Wadia had been interned in Madras since June 15, were released. This gesture of the Government was much appreciated in political circles even as the internments had caused widespread resentment and consequent agitation.

The loud protests all over the country led to the release of Annie Besant and her companions in about three months. It resulted in great joy among Besant's followers and others. Gandhiji's advice to be fearless and carry on public education was seen as a means of reaching their goal. It also resulted in developing deep respect and high regard for Gandhiji in their hearts, writes Shankerlal Banker. They came to have faith in Gandhiji's policy and ways of working. [*Ibid*, pp.22-23]

The leaders of the Home Rule League felt it would be a good idea if Gandhiji joined the League. Shankerlal Banker went to see him at Kochrab Ashram to persuade him to fill the membership form. Gandhiji expressed satisfaction with the work of the League and was most sympathetic to it. But he refused to join the League. "You cannot have two swords in one scabbard," he said. His ideas did not agree with Besant's ideas in all respects, he said, and, therefore it would be difficult for them to work together in one organization. He did not join the League, but he continued to give them sympathetic guidance in important matters whenever they needed it.

On 20 August 1917, there came an announcement from the British Government, made simultaneously in London and Delhi that "His Majesty's Government accept responsible government for India as an integral part of the Empire as the goal of British policy." It was also announced that Secretary of State



for India E. S. Montagu would be visiting the country towards the end of October to study the political situation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.517]

The Congress and the League decided to wait upon Montagu in a joint deputation to urge upon him to consider the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms.

At the behest of Gandhiji, the Gujarat Sabha, of which he was President , decided to present to Montagu a petition signed by the British citizens of Gujarat. The petitioners respectfully prayed that the Secretary of State would be pleased to give full consideration to and accept the Reform proposals jointly worked out by the Congress and the League. [*Ibid*, pp.528-29]

On 13 September 1917 copies of the petition, drafted by Gandhiji, were distributed among volunteers, who were instructed to explain to the people the subject-matter of the petition and take their signatures on it. [*Ibid*, pp.529-30]

On 30 September, Gandhiji wrote to Srinivasa Sastri:

The Sabha's ambition is to secure 100,000 signatures. The Home Rule League is working in Bombay. And I have just received a letter from Mrs. Besant that her workers are doing likewise in Madras. Elaborate instructions have been drafted for the volunteers and the scheme has been fully translated for presentation to the villagers and others whose signatures are asked for. For me the value of it lies in the education that the masses will receive and the opportunity that the educated men and women will have of coming in close touch with the people. [*Ibid*, pp.559-60]

In his presidential speech of 3 November at the first Gujarat Political Conference held at Godhra on 3-5 November, Gandhiji described the Congress-



League Reforms Scheme as a "great step towards Swaraj" in which the Englishmen settled in the country would be partners. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.52]

Though Gandhiji lent support to the idea of Swaraj as understood by most people, he nevertheless made it clear that his own views were not quite in tune with it. He said:

Our agitation is based on the Western model. The Swaraj we desire is of the Western type. As a result of it, India will have to enter into competition with the Western nations. Many believe that there is no escape from this. I do not think so. I cannot forget that India is not Europe, India is not Japan, India is not China. The divine word that 'India alone is the land of *karma* (action), the rest is the land of *bhoga* (enjoyment)', is indelibly imprinted on my mind. I feel that India's mission is different from that of other countries. India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world. There is no parallel in the world for the *tapascharya* that this country has voluntarily gone through. India has little use for steel weapons; it has fought with divine weapons; it can still do so. Other nations have been votaries of brute force. The terrible war going on in Europe furnishes an irrefutable proof of this. India can conquer all by soul-force. History supplies numerous instances to prove that brute force is nothing before soul-force.

Gandhiji continued :

These views of mine notwithstanding, I have joined the Swaraj Movement, for India is being governed at present under a modern system. The Government themselves believe that the 'Parliament' is the best form of that system. Without such a parliament, we should have neither the modern nor the ancient form. Mrs. Besant is only too true when she says



that we shall soon be facing a hunger strike (famine), if we do not have Home Rule. I do not want to go into statistics. The evidence of my eyes is enough for me. Poverty in India is deepening day by day. No other result is possible. A country that exports its raw produce and imports it back as finished goods, a country which, though growing its own cotton, has to pay crores of rupees to outsiders for its cloth, cannot be otherwise than poor.... The nation today is in a helpless condition; it does not possess even the right to err. He who has no right to err can never go forward. The history of the Commons is a history of blunders. Man, says an Arabian proverb, is error personified. The freedom to err and the power to correct errors is one definition of Swaraj. Having a parliament means such Swaraj. [*Ibid*, pp.53-54]

Gandhiji called upon the people to cultivate fitness for Swaraj. This effort must begin with the individual, then the family, then the caste, then the city. Cleanliness of the person and the surroundings, eradication of untouchability, and getting rid of the drink evil were necessary steps to that end and so were cow-protection and swadeshi.

Gandhiji also elaborated his idea of Satyagraha for attainment of the goal of Swaraj :

I come now to the last subject. There are two methods of attaining one's goal. Satyagraha and *duragraha*. In our scriptures, they have been described, respectively, as divine and devilish modes of action. In Satyagraha, there is always unflinching adherence to truth. It is never to be forsaken on any account. Even for the sake of one's country it does not permit resort to falsehood....A Satyagrahi does not abandon his path, even though at times it seems impenetrable and beset with difficulties and



dangers, and a slight departure from that straight path may appear full of promise. Even in these circumstances, his faith shines resplendent like the midday sun and he does not despond. With truth for sword, he needs neither a steel sword nor gunpowder. Even an inveterate enemy he conquers by the force of the soul, which is love....

In the intoxication of power, man fails to see his error. When that happens, a Satyagrahi does not sit still. He suffers. He disobeys the ruler's orders and his laws in a civil manner and willingly submits to the penalties of such disobedience, for instance imprisonment and even gallows. Thus is the soul disciplined. In this, one never finds that one's time has been wasted and if it is subsequently realized that such respectful disobedience was an error, the consequences are suffered merely by the Satyagrahi and his co-workers. In the event, no bitterness develops between the Satyagrahi and those in power, the latter, on the contrary, willingly yield to him. They discover that they cannot command the Satyagrahi's obedience. They cannot make him do anything against his will. And this is the consummation of Swaraj, because it means complete independence. It need not be assumed that such resistance is possible only against civilized rulers. Even a heart of flint will melt in the fire kindled by the power of the soul-force. Even a Nero becomes a lamb when he faces love.... [*Ibid*, pp.63-64]

The Conference passed a resolution, urging the British Government to grant the Scheme of Reforms worked out by the Congress and the League. The resolution was moved by Jinnah, who was induced by Gandhiji to read it out in Gujarati. Gandhiji said, "At no distant date, he (Jinnah) will have to approach Hindus and Muslims, Ghanchis, Golas (lower caste Hindus) and others not



knowing English, for votes. He should, therefore, learn Gujarati if he does not know it.” [*Ibid*, p.68]

But that day, alas, was yet far off. Much suffering, anguish and bloodshed would have to precede the dawn of freedom.



PART II
ADVENT OF SATYAGRAHA



CHAPTER VI: SATYAGRAHA IN CHAMPARAN

1

The Champaran Satyagraha stands out as the first satyagraha conducted by Gandhiji on the soil of India. It established Gandhiji's leadership even though it was a non-political struggle. In this arduous tussle with the European indigo planters his aim was to "promote peace between the planters and the ryots so as to secure to the ryots the freedom and dignity that should belong to all mankind." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII p.424]. It ended in complete success and established a measure of goodwill on all sides.

In Champaran district in the Tirhut division of north Bihar, three-quarters of all land was held by three large estates. These estates did not themselves manage the holdings, but had passed the holding rights on permanent or temporary lease to various *thekedars*, most of them European indigo planters. The hardships imposed on the peasantry in the process of indigo cultivation and the cruelties perpetuated on them had led to much bitterness and discontent and provoked agitations from time to time. From the reports of various settlement officers the administration was aware of the genuineness of the grievances of the peasantry, but it had not provided any meaningful relief.

The exploitation of the ryots by the planters was carried on in varied ways and through various devices.

There was, first, the *tinkathia* system. A peasant had to undertake, through a long-term agreement signed with the planter, to grow indigo for the planter on three *kathas* per *bigha* (*a bigha* has 20 *kathas*) of all land cultivated by him. The choice of the piece of land to be set apart for the purpose rested with the planter. This meant that it would always be the best land.



The planter paid for the indigo grown what was laid down in the agreement - a price which was very low. Moreover, the tenant was hardly ever paid in cash. It. was mostly adjusted against the rent for the land.

A look at the customs and geography of Champaran is relevant at this stage. It. will throw light on the chronic discontent in the district.

Champaran is bounded in the north by Nepal, in the west by Gorakhpur, in the east by Muzaffarpur and in the south by Saran. The district lies in the Himalayan foothills; and a range of mountains called Someshwara runs into it. The largest river is the Gandak, a tributary of the Ganga. Another is the Sikrahana, also known as the minor Gandak.

The staple crop is paddy, for which the soil, especially to the north of the Sikrahana, is well suited. To the south of the river the soil is somewhat sandy, not suitable for paddy cultivation. But it yields good crops of maize, wheat, oats and other such staples. It is also good for indigo cultivation.

Champaran, being part of the Terai, had an enervating climate, with high incidence of malaria. The swamps bred mosquitoes. The water was always deficient in iodine and consequently cases of thyroid malfunction, such as goitre and idiocy which are caused by iodine deficiency, were common. The area of the district was 3,531 sq. miles and the population in 1917 (according to the census of 1911) was 19,08,385. About 2 per cent of the population lived in towns, the rest in the 2,841 villages of the district. The density of population was 540 per square mile. The language was and is Bhojpuri, modified in the south-eastern portion by Maithili usage. Both Bhojpuri and Maithili are dialects of Hindi.

Champaran, a corruption of Champaranya, is connected by legend with numerous episodes which find a mention in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is identified with Videha, the country of King Janaka and the



birth-place of Sita. It is believed that the Ashram of Valmiki was also in this district, and it was there that the *Ramayana* was composed and Sita gave birth to her twin sons Lava and Kush. It is identified as the capital of Virata, where the Pandavas lived in hiding for one year towards the end of their exile. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, Navajivan Publishing House, 1949, p. 7]

During the lifetime of the Buddha, the area that included Champaran was inhabited by the Lichchhavis. This tribe had a republican constitution. To maintain its freedom, it had defied the might of the Magadh empire then ruled by King Ajatashatru. [*Ibid*, pp.8-9]

In the 16th century Sikandar Lodi took possession of Tirhut and Champaran thus became a part of the Muslim empire. [*Ibid*, p.9]

In 1765 Champaran was given in grant by Shah Alam to the East India Company. The course of events took various twists and turns and in 1771 the British handed over to Raja Jugal Kishore of Bettiah two parganas of Majhowa and Simraon. Following the decennial settlement of 1791 these parganas were settled with Jugal Kishore's son Brij Kishore Singh. The Permanent Settlement of 1795 confirmed this. [*Ibid*, pp.9-10]

The district has been known for large landed estates. In 1917 more than three-fourths of its area was held by three large proprietors. The Bettiah estate (area 2,000 square miles), deep in debt to the tune of several lakhs of rupees and unable to repay, had been placed under the management of the Court of Wards in 1898. The Ramnagar estate was also taken under management. The Madhuban estate was the third largest zemindari.

For better management and revenue recovery, these estates resorted to the device of leasing out villages to individuals who managed the affairs for them and collected rent from the tenants. The leases were temporary as well as



permanent. In earlier days the lease-holders, called *thekedars*, were all Indians. Later, with the setting up of indigo factories, as at Bara, Turkaulia, Peepra, Motihari and Rajpur, European planters began to replace Indians. Gradually the number of indigo factories in the district grew to 70. The European owners of the oldest indigo factories held a very large number of villages on lease continuously from early 19th century.

Indigo-growing throughout the 19th and early 20th century became a source of ruthless exploitation, oppression and plunder of the peasantry, both in Bengal and Bihar. Every now and again the agonized cries of the distressed peasantry rent the air, soon to be suppressed by rapacious planters aided by a foreign administration.

In Bengal the discontent of the cultivators became manifest in 1860, when it drew the attention not only of public men and public bodies but also of the administrators. Harishchandra Mukerjee, a pleader, took up the cause of the peasants and the British Indian Association of Calcutta as also Christian missionaries and many others sympathized with the cause. At the instance of William Herschell, Ashley Eden and a few other officials, a Commission of Enquiry was set up under Seton Kerr, Secretary to the Bengal Government. Villagers from Nadia and Jessore were asked to give evidence.

Giving his evidence, E. W. L. Tower, a magistrate, said:

I have seen several ryots sent in to me as a magistrate, who have been speared through the body. I have had ryots before me who have been shot down by Mr. Forde (a planter). I have put on record how others have been first speared and then kidnapped. [*Ibid.* pp.17 -19]

Ashley Eden in his evidence said that "indigo cultivation is in no instance the result of free agency, it is compulsory". He thought the cultivators not only



found unprofitable but actually incurred pecuniary loss and that there was harassing interference to which no free agent would subject himself.

The grievances of the Bengal indigo ryots were many. The contracts they were made to sign were not voluntary, loans of money were forced on them against their will to make them grow indigo when growing other crops was more profitable. The best land was taken by the planters for indigo. Frequently, if such land happened to be under some other crop, the crop had to be destroyed. There was no certainty about the indigo crop and the tenants often found themselves unable to pay back the advances often forced on them. Underlings of factories harassed the cultivators in various ways. Finally, planters and their managers misbehaved with villagers and used physical violence against their families. [*Ibid*, p.19]

The Commission found that all the grievances mentioned by the cultivators had substance. It recommended a higher price for indigo, short terms of contract, and taking of the indigo from the field to the factory by the planter at his own expense. All accounts were to be settled every year. Moreover, the ryots were not to be made to pay for the seed.

The Lieutenant-Governor accepted the recommendations. The result was that in a short time indigo cultivation disappeared from Bengal. Obviously without oppression and exploitation, no profits were possible out of indigo plantation. [*Ibid*, p.20]

2

The peasantry in Champaran had been subject to similar oppression as in Bengal, only on a larger scale and over a much longer period. This continued because there was no strong voice like Harishchandra Mukherjee's to take up their cause.



The indigo cultivation in Champaran was carried on under two systems. Under *zeerut*, there was direct cultivation by planters on land in their possession, and under *Assamiwar* indigo was cultivated by tenants.

By far the most widely prevailing system was the *tinkathia*, which on an average accounted for almost three-quarters of all cultivation. The use, or rather abuse, of this system by planters became the cause of great hardship to the ryots. The price paid was niggardly by any standard and was increased, under considerable pressure from the ryots and the Government, by very slow degrees through the years. Thus in over 40 years from before 1867 to 1909 it was increased from Rs. 6 and 8 annas to Rs. 13 and 8 annas per acre.

The Bengal indigo disturbances of 1860 were followed by similar disturbances in Champaran in 1867. The trouble started with the Lalsaraiya factory. The tenants of village Jaukathia made up their mind not to grow indigo and sowed other crops on the land marked out for indigo. The ryots of other villages followed suit. This act of defiance, which threatened the stoppage of indigo cultivation altogether, alarmed the planters. With help from Government officials, they threatened to institute criminal cases against the ryots in Small Causes Courts obligingly set up by the Government. They claimed damages from the ryots for breach of contract. The ryots, timid by nature as a class, were cowed down.

The Champaran *Gazetteer* of 1867 noted that "there was not a ryot who would not abandon cultivation if he could." [*Ibid*, p.23]

In 1875 the Commissioner of Patna proposed the appointment of a commission to go into the grievances of the cultivators. But the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar, fearing that the appointment of a commission might start an



agitation, ordered, instead, an enquiry by district officials, which proved to be an eye-wash. [*Ibid*, p.25]

Soon afterwards a new Lieutenant-Governor, Ashley Eden, took over. He had earlier served as a magistrate in Bengal and knew all about the oppression of the cultivators. He prevailed upon the planters to raise the price of indigo and do whatever they could to mitigate the hardships of the ryots. The planters set up a Bihar Planters' Association and raised the price of indigo from Rs. 9 to Rs. 10-5 per acre. The Association took several decisions governing the operation of the contracts with tenants to soften the rigours of oppression. One of the decisions was that any ryot who grew indigo on every 3/20 of all land he cultivated, would be exempt from any enhancement in rent.

In 1887 Bihar was afflicted by a severe famine. The district of Champaran was one of the hardest hit. All that the planters could do to help the ryots was to raise the price of indigo from Rs. 10-5 to Rs. 12 per acre. This did not go far and the ryots continued to be restive. [*Ibid*, pp.25-28]

In 1907 some tenants of the Sathi factory in Bettiah sub –division refused to grow indigo, saying it was unprofitable. In a petition to the District Magistrate they submitted that the planters forced them to sow oats in half the area selected for indigo and paid for it the very low price of Rs. 15 per bigha instead of Rs. 45, which was the market price; and that if oats and indigo did not cover the entire area specified, the factory recovered from the tenants paddy at the rate of Rs. 25 per bigha. If this was not tendered on time they were made to pay the price of the paddy at market rate which was Rs. 45. [*Ibid*, pp.29-30]

The District Magistrate ordered an enquiry. The enquiry, conducted by a Sub-Divisional Officer, was again an eye-wash.



The agitation continued. In November 1907 the S.D.M. of Bettiah received a police report that some peasants were dissuading others from sowing indigo. The Magistrate took security from many poor peasants. Some were sent to jail. But in the end the Sathi factory had to give up indigo cultivation. [*Ibid*, p.31]

The factory then sought to transfer the resulting loss on to the ryots. It took to charging from them irrigation dues at the rate of Rs. 3 per bigha and had them execute contracts to this effect. Under the terms of an agreement with the Bettiah administration the planters had undertaken not to charge the peasants for the use of irrigation facilities. Moreover, many tenants never used the water at all, because it did not reach their fields. Nevertheless, as was brought out in the survey conducted in 1913-15, they had to pay this levy. [*Ibid*, p.32]

Many other villages soon followed the example of the tenants of the Sathi factory and stopped growing indigo. Two workers of the area, Gulab Shaikh and Sitalrai, played a prominent part in rallying the peasants. One night in October 1908 Sitalrai and a wealthy Marwari, Radhumal, were arrested. Military police and the Gurkhas were let loose on the villagers and terror followed. *The Statesman* of Calcutta reported that parts of the sub-division had "assumed a perfectly warlike appearance". [*Ibid*, pp.33-34]

Sitalrai was sentenced to 2^{1/2} years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1000. Punitive police was posted in the district, which remained in the area from November 1908 to April 1909. The entire cost of the maintenance of this force, about Rs. 30,000 was realized from the villagers. [*Ibid*, p.36]

On 2 December 1908 a correspondent of *The Statesman* wrote: "The existing trouble is purely agrarian.... It is erroneous to suppose that the agitation has anything to do with the Bengali anarchism." [*Ibid*, p.41]



This correspondent made his own investigations, and cross-examined ryots. One group told him that the Saheb had purchased about Rs. 400 worth of agreement stamps and proceeded to force his tenants to sign agreements. They were compelled to do so by the institution of false charges and imprisonment. [*Ibid*, p.42]

After things had quietened down a little the Government appointed W. R. Gourlay, Director of Agriculture to enquire into the grievances of tenants. This official started work in December 1908 and submitted the results of his enquiry to the Government. Though the report was not published by the Government. the enquiry appears to have been thorough and sympathetic. Much later, while introducing the Champaran Agrarian Bill, Maude told the Bihar and Orissa Council: "The result of that enquiry was a restatement of all the old grievances Mr. Gourlay found that the cultivation of indigo on the *assamiwar* system did not pay the ryot, that the ryot had to give up his best land for indigo, that the cultivation required labour which could be more profitably employed elsewhere, and that genet·ally the system was irksome, and led to oppression by the factory servants." [*Ibid*, p.41]

As follow-up action, Lt.Governor Edward Baker had a series of meetings with the planters in 1909 and 1910 and made them agree to some minor concessions, such as an increase of 12 per cent in the price of indigo and reducing from three *kathas* to two *kathas* per bigha of land for compulsory indigo growing and further that the tenants would not be required to grow any other crop besides indigo for the factories. The. peasants imprisoned during the agitation were also set free. [*Ibid*, p.42]

Even these minor concessions were not put into practice by all the planters. The oppression of ryots continued. In 1911-12 and 1912-13 the ryots



submitted several petitions to the Government and to magistrates and other officials, but no action was taken. Indeed in some cases complaints against planters received from ryots were forwarded by the magistrates to the planters concerned.

3

With the introduction of German synthetic dyes into the market, the situation with regard to indigo production underwent a change and a new dimension was added to the exploitation of the peasantry. As the imported dyes flooded the market, the sale of indigo fell. Soon the planters came to realize that indigo was no longer profitable business. [*Ibid*, pp.45-46]

This made the planters consider ways of making up the loss by transferring it on to the poor ryots. Under the Bengal Tenancy Act, the landlord could not enhance the rent he charged from the ryot by more than 12^{1/2} per cent. There was however a loophole in the law, namely that if the rent payable by a tenant was lower than the rent usually payable in the locality by reason of the tenant's obligation to grow a particular crop on his holding for the benefit of the landlord and if the landlord released the tenant from this obligation, then any contract which resulted in enhancing the rent by more than 12^{1/2} per cent would be valid. [*Ibid*, p.50]

The planters, armed with legal opinion, started enhancing the rent. Irwin of the Motihari factory enhanced the rent in 1911-12. This example was followed by the Turkaulia, Peepra, Jalaha and Shirni factories. The enhancement was anything from 60 to 75 per cent, which the planters said the tenants were "happy to pay for not having to grow indigo".

The peasants contested this. They stated that it was not the cultivators who had sought to be freed from the obligation to grow indigo; it was the planters



who wanted to discontinue indigo farming because it had become, even when labour was free, an uneconomical pursuit for the planters.

The tenants never voluntarily entered into any agreements enhancing the rent payable by them. They were humiliated and beaten into signing these contracts.

Peasants were tied to trees and beaten with leather thongs; factory peons were quartered in the houses of some. Some tenants were tied up and thrown in the hot sun; They were denied the services of barber, washerman, carpenter and blacksmith; false prosecutions in criminal courts were launched against them; grazing-grounds were closed to their cattle. All this was done to force them into signing new contracts enhancing the rent.

During the period 1912-14 as many as 30,710 enhancement agreements were secured by the planters from the ryots by these means. The administration, headed by Lieutenant-Governor Bayley, was impervious to the sufferings of the peasantry at the hands of the planters and was ready to join the planters in oppressing the peasantry. It obligingly opened no less than 17 special registration offices inside the factories to register these agreements. [*Ibid*, pp.53-54]

W. S. Irwin, Manager of Motihari Ltd., admitted later before the Enquiry Commission that his income from the enhancement of rent from 41 villages with 41,005 tenants was Rs. 50,000 per annum. At the time of the enquiry Irwin had thus realized in five years Rs. 2,50,000 from the villagers over and above the normal rent. In the Peepra factory 8,000 tenants were made to sign enhancement contracts. The enhancement was up to 75 per cent.

The peasants raised a clamour against it. In 1914, 700 of them submitted a petition to the Commissioner that the manager had been using force against them to make them sign enhancement agreements. The manager launched



defamation proceedings against 15 leading men. The magistrate awarded to the defendants 6 months rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 24,000. The district Judge Scroope, setting aside the sentence, observed:

The contention is that the wholesale execution of *kabulyats* was brought about by nothing less than an organized system of oppression by the factory servants ... the chief means resorted to were, 1) stoppage of cultivation till the *kabulyats* were executed, 2) bringing in women to register, whose husbands... had run away ... 3) institution of criminal casesIt is impossible to avoid the conclusion that stoppage of cultivation was used by the factory as a means of getting these *kabulyats* executed It is hard to imagine a more unfair stimulus to execute a document....[*Ibid*, pp.55-57]

In the Turkaulia factory nine to ten thousand tenants were brought under enhancement contracts. There were nine civil suits filed by the tenants to get out of the contracts. The district judge, delivering judgment on 15 March 1917, pronounced that in five out of the nine cases the enhancements were illegal, as there had been no obligation on the part of the tenants to grow indigo. This showed that in no less than 60 per cent cases the enhancements were illegal. [*Ibid*, pp.57-58]

The Jalaha factory was managed by one J. Y. Jameson, who was the representative of the Bihar Planters' Association in the Provincial Council. This factory hit upon a device to contract enhancement agreements without running the risk of their being pronounced illegal by the courts. Under the law while a tenant enjoying occupancy rights was not liable to have his rent enhanced by the landlord, except to a limited extent and under certain conditions, for a piece of land newly settled the parties were free to agree on any quantum of rent. So the



factory decided to find a way of depriving the peasants of their occupancy rights. The law itself suggested a way, for it provided that a peasant might of his own free will surrender the land and his right on it to the landlord. The factory therefore told the peasants to surrender their lands and of course used force to make them fall in line.

The management said that such surrender of titles by the tenants was voluntary. A Munsif, pronouncing judgment in a suit, declared:

... The witness ... stated that there were 125 tenants in the village and the surrender was taken in that village in that fateful year.... The tenant Jaldhari surrendered his holding on the 9th April 1913, and... took settlement of those very lands the very next day, i. e. on the 10th April.... He says that the rent of tenants was enhanced on the wish of the tenants in lieu of not growing indigo. So exemption from liability to grow indigo was the real cause of enhancement of rent and the surrender... was a convenient means adopted to achieve that.... [*Ibid*, pp.60-61]

Hunda formed yet another device through which the planters compensated themselves at the cost of the ryots. The planters forced on the tenants factory lands on which they now no longer grew any indigo, and charged them exorbitant rent. In one case it was found that the rent on a holding of 27 bighas was Rs. 59-13-6, while for the same area of *zeerut* land the ryot would have to pay Rs. 679-7-0.

The *tawan*, or the lump sum payment in lieu of obligation to cultivate indigo, was worked out at the rate of Rs. 50 to 60 and in a few cases Rs. 100 per acre. The planters released some 18,000 bighas from indigo cultivation after realizing *tawan* at the rate of Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 per acre, or a total sum of 9 to 10 lakhs of rupees. The tenants of course could not pay such a large sum all at once.



So the planters took whatever they could pay and for the remaining amounts had the cattle and properties of ryots distrained. Some were asked to execute hand-notes and those owing large sums had to execute registered bonds; these were always for 'loans' taken and connected with indigo. [*Ibid*, pp.67-68]

Irwin of the Motihari concern admitted to having received in *tawan* a sum of Rs. 3,20,000 at the rate of Rs. 75 per bigha, after having received enhanced rents (*sarabeshi*) for some years. [*Ibid*, p.68]

The cry of the ryots went unheard.

4

Rajkumar Shukla, an almost illiterate peasant of Champaran, was one of the victims of the planters' tyranny.

He fought many cases and was impoverished by litigation. His hut was burnt down for his refusal to part with the potatoes grown on his own land, to which the white planter had no right. He was beaten up and might have lost his life if he had not gone into hiding. He was so angry that he took a vow not to rest till this injustice and oppression was ended. He quietly went from village to village mobilizing the peasantry to fight against the oppression.

Rajkumar Shukla had heard of Gandhiji's work in South Africa and instinctively felt that he alone could help them and end their misery. Being an orthodox Hindu who would eat food cooked only by himself, he packed some dry *sattu* and managed enough money to buy a ticket to Ahmedabad. When he reached the Ashram, he found that Gandhiji had gone to Poona. He did not have enough money to go there and went back home. He wrote to Gandhiji, who replied that he was going to Calcutta later and asked him to meet him there. The letter reached Shukla late, and when he reached Calcutta, Gandhiji had already



left. But he did not give up. He learnt that the Congress was meeting at Lucknow in December 1916 and Gandhiji would attend it. He decided to go there to meet him.

Brajkishore Prasad, a lawyer who had fought some cases for Shukla in court and had been pressing the case of the Champaran peasantry in the Bihar Legislative Council, was also going there along with other Congress leaders of Bihar. Shukla and Brajkishore Prasad approached Gandhiji and requested him to move at the Congress or speak on a resolution about the Champaran problem. Shukla and the Bihar delegates also suggested that Gandhiji should visit Champaran and see things for himself.

Gandhiji had not even heard of Champaran till then. He expressed his inability to move the resolution or speak on it since he did not know anything about the matter. But he promised to go to Champaran to see things for himself. Rajkumar Shukla asked Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, one of the most highly respected senior Congressmen, and several other leaders to move the resolution. But none of them had time for him. The resolution was at last moved by Brajkishore Babu and was unanimously carried.

Rajkumar Shukla wanted Gandhiji to go with him to Champaran immediately after the Congress. This Gandhiji was unable to do but he promised to go there later. Rajkumar Shukla and some others followed Gandhiji to Kanpur and Shukla again made a trip to the Ashram at Ahmedabad to get from him a firm date. He was told that Gandhiji would be going to Calcutta for the A.I.C.C. meeting early in April, and might go to Champaran from there. Shukla returned home. On getting a telegram from Gandhiji, intimating the date of his visit and the address of his Calcutta host, he joined Gandhiji at Calcutta. He and Gandhiji left Calcutta by train for Patna on 9 April 1917.



They both looked like peasants. When Shukla took him to Rajendra Prasad's house at Patna, on 10 April, his servant thought they were village clients and showed them to the outhouse. Describing his experience at Patna Gandhiji wrote to Maganlal on 10 April:

The man who brought me here does not know anything. He has dumped me in some obscure place. The master of the house is away and the servants take us both to be beggars . They don 't even permit us the use of their latrine. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.360-61]

Rajendra Prasad had gone to the A.I.C.C. meeting at Calcutta and there he had seen Gandhiji. He did not know Gandhiji's programme and from Calcutta he went to Puri. Rajendra Prasad was greatly embarrassed when he later learnt of the treatment meted out to Gandhiji by his servant.

Gandhiji asked Shukla to contact Barrister Mazhrul Haq, whom he had known in London and again met at the time of the Bombay Congress in December 1915. Mazharul Haq came and took him to his place. The same night Gandhiji left for Muzaffarpur with Rajkumar Shukla. He had sent a telegram to J. B. Kripalani, who was a professor in a college there. After his experience at Patna, Gandhiji had taken arrangements in his own hands.

Kripalani's students, on learning that Gandhiji was coming to Muzffarpur, became enthusiastic. They collected all the material for a traditional welcome with *arati* except for a coconut. Kripalani went up a coconut tree in the compound, brought a coconut down and gave it to them. They went to the station with him to give Gandhiji a warm reception. [J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1970, pp. 59-60]



The train reached Muzaffarpur a little before midnight. Kripalani and his students were unable to spot Gandhiji because they were looking for him in the first class compartment. Rajkumar Shukla asked a student who they were looking for. The student ignored the rustic's query. Shukla said: "If you are looking for Karamvir Gandhi he is with me." At this they all stood still. He took Kripalani to Gandhiji, saying "Here is Mahatmaji." It is said that this was the first time the title 'Mahatma' was used for him in India.

Kripalani was the warden of the students' hostel. Along with Gandhiji he got into a carriage which he had borrowed from a zamindar friend travelling by the same train. The students were so enthusiastic that after *arati* they wanted to pull the carriage themselves to take Gandhiji to Kripalani's lodgings for the night. Gandhiji told them not to do so. It was a closed carriage and Gandhiji started telling Kripalani of his experience at Rajendra Prasad's house at Patna. The students ignored Gandhiji's injunction and pulled the carriage to the hostel. Gandhiji protested against this when he found out on arrival and said that if he had known about it he would have walked. [*Ibid*, p.60]

Gandhiji stayed with Kripalani for three days. The principal, an Englishman, on learning of it was furious and said to Kripalani, "You mean to say that notorious Gandhi of South Africa is your guest ?" [*Ibid*, p.61] Kripalani had to shift with his guest to other quarters. He resigned from his job, joined Gandhiji in Champaran and never looked back.

Gandhiji halted at Muzaffarpur because it was the headquarters of the Planters' Association as also of the Commissioner of Tirhut Division. He met James Wilson, Secretary of the Bihar Planters' Association, on 11 April and sought his co-operation and assistance in the enquiry he proposed to undertake. The



response was not encouraging. In the evening some vakils of the town called on him and urged him to proceed to Champaran without delay.

Gandhiji wrote to Morshead, Commissioner of Tirhut Division, informing him of his arrival "on insistent public demand" and asked for an appointment. The meeting was, however, not fruitful. Morshead told Gandhiji that they were enquiring into the matter themselves, "the intervention of a stranger" would be an embarrassment and that there were potentialities of disturbances in Champaran if Gandhiji persisted in his course. He asked Gandhiji for "credentials of an insistent public demand". He added that several planters having gone on war service, it would not be proper to hold an enquiry in their absence.

Gandhiji wrote to the Commissioner again clarifying the object of his visit, which was "to test the accuracy of the statements made to me by various friends regarding indigo matters and to find out for myself whether I can render useful assistance. My mission is that of making peace with honour." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.362-63]. He also enclosed a letter confirming invitation from local leaders, thus establishing his credentials to undertake the enquiry.

Tenants in large numbers had started coming with their tales of woe and with papers and documents in support of their statements. Gandhiji found it difficult to believe all that he was told and remarked again and again: "Could it be true?"

On 15 April Gandhiji wrote to Maganlal Gandhi: "The situation here is more serious than I had imagined. It seems to be worse than in Fiji and Natal." [*Ibid*, p.363]

The more he was dissuaded, the more he felt that he must go to Champaran. He did not know Bhojpuri and his Hindi too was poor at that time. He could not understand the tenants. Dharnidhar Prasad, a lawyer with a



substantial practice and Ramnavmi Prasad, a young lawyer, both of Muzaffarpur, agreed to go with him and help him as interpreters. Babu Brajkishore Prasad had come for a day, but he had to go back. He promised to come back after completing the work he was engaged in.

5

Gandhiji left Muzaffarpur for Motihari, the district headquarters of Champaran on 15 April by the noon train, along with his two interpreters. Before that he had visited some nearby villages and seen the plight of the tenants. At every station all along the three-hour train journey from Muzaffarpur to Motihari, he was besieged by huge crowds of welcoming villagers. At Motihari he went to the residence of Babu Gorakh Prasad, a pleader who had gone to Muzaffarpur to meet him and had invited him to stay at his place at Motihari. Gandhiji accepted his invitation and made Gorakh Babu's house his headquarters.

News had just been received that in a village called Jasaulipatti a respectable farmer, who had an elephant of his own, had been subjected to harassment by the white planter and his men. His house was looted, his plantain trees were destroyed and his fields devastated by letting loose grazing animals into them. He invited Gandhiji to see it all for himself. Gandhiji decided to go there to find out the facts. It was arranged that the following morning, 16 April, Gandhiji and his two interpreters, Ramnavmi Prasad and Dharnidhar Prasad, would leave for the farmer's place at 9 a. m. on an elephant offered by the affected farmer.

The ride was not a comfortable one. It was very hot and dusty. About the middle of the day the party halted at a wayside village, Chandrahia, about nine miles from Motihari. Gandhiji met the villagers and asked them a few questions about the condition of the village. The village was under the Motihari factory. The



majority of men were labourers working in the factory and were completely subdued.

While Gandhiji was still in the village a police sub-inspector in plain clothes came on a bicycle and brought the message that the District Magistrate would like to see Gandhiji. Asked to bring transport, he brought a bullock-cart to take Gandhiji back to Motihari. Gandhiji asked his companions to continue their onward journey to Jasaulipatti and make the enquiry. while he went back to Motihari with the police sub-inspector.

On the way Gandhiji was first transferred to an *ekka*, a one-horse carriage, and then to a *tumtum*, in which a Deputy Superintendent of Police accompanied him. Before they had proceeded far, the police officer served on Gandhiji an order under Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code from the District Magistrate, stating that Gandhiji's presence in the district "will endanger the public peace and may lead to serious loss of life," and Gandhiji must therefore "abstain from remaining in the district". He was "required to leave by the next available train." [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.102]. The penalty for defiance was six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000/-.

Enclosed with the order was the Commissioner's letter to the Magistrate advising issuance of such an order. The Commissioner had written to Heycock, District Magistrate of Champaran, telling him about Gandhiji's impending visit to the district and warning him that the object of the visit was "likely to be agitation rather than genuine search of knowledge". He asked the District Magistrate to "direct Gandhi by an order under Section 144 Criminal P rocedure Code" to leave the district at once.

Immediately on reaching Motihari, without even taking a wash, Gandhiji wrote to the District Magistrate emphatically repudiating the suggestion that "his



object is likely to be agitation" and informing him that "out of a sense of public responsibility I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave this district but if it so please the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.367]

Gandhiji worked the whole night, wrote to Polak, Malaviya, Mazharul Haq and many others. He also prepared a short statement. He not only wrote the letters but also made copies of them. It was an eye-opener for the Bihar vakils and others.

Gandhiji also wrote to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, informing him of his mission, of the expulsion orders served on him and his inability to obey them. "I understand," he added, "because my South African work was considered to be humanitarian that I was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal." The magistrate's order however had cast doubt on his humanitarian motives. "So long as my humanitarian motive is questioned, so long must I remain undeserving of holding the medal. I am therefore asking my people to return the medal to you and I shall feel honoured to receive it back when my motive is no longer questioned." [*Ibid*, p.368]

Describing the condition of the ryots of Champaran, Gandhiji wrote to inform the Viceroy that so far as he had been able to examine the evidence "the planters have successfully used the Civil and Criminal Courts and illegal force to enrich themselves at the expense of the ryots, and that the ryots are living under a reign of terror and that their property, their persons, and their minds are all under the planters' heels." He demanded the setting up of a committee of inquiry. [*Ibid*, pp.368-69]

The same day, 16 April, he wrote to Maganlal Gandhi to send his Gold Medal by registered parcel to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy. [*Ibid*, p.365]



By midnight Dharnidhar Babu and Ramnavmi Babu and party came back. They confirmed the sorry tale of harrassment of the Jassaulipatti farmer, and told Gandhiji of what they had seen. He in tum told them of developments in Motihari. He asked them what they were going to do after he was arrested. Dharnidhar Babu said at first, "We are with you as your interpreters. After you are arrested we will have no work." So they would go back to their own work. "And leave these poor tenants to their fate," said Gandhiji. They thought over the matter and both of them said, " If you like, we shall continue to record the statements of tenants and conduct the enquiry." If they were served orders to leave, they would arrange for someone else to continue the work so that the enquiry would continue for some time. Gandhiji was not entirely pleased, but it was something. He just nodded.

Expecting to be arrested and imprisoned as a consequence of his defiance of the expulsion order, Gandhiji left instructions for workers who would continue the work after his arrest:

- (1) Villages were to be visited systematically and notes of evidence taken;
- (2) Signatures or thumb impressions were to be taken from complainants wherever possible;
- (3) If anyone declined to sign the statement made, the reasons for it were to be noted;
- (4) Evidence of pleaders connected with the matter should be taken;
- (5) If the workers received notices of removal, they were to defy them and quietly go to jail; and
- (6) The ryots must not use violence under any circumstances.

The task of sifting the evidence collected was to be left to Babu Brajkishore Prasad, unless C. F. Andrews, whom he had sent a telegram to come, arrived and



did it. Further action was to be taken under the guidance of a small committee under Madan Mohan Malaviya or Srinivasa Sastri.

H. S. L. Polak was at Allahabad. He and Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul Haq and others were telegraphically informed of the developments. After that they all retired to bed. It was close to morning. Dharnidhar Babu and Ramnavmi Babu lay awake thinking over the day's happenings and of their own duty. [*Ibid*, pp.369-70]

6

The news of action against Gandhiji spread like wildfire and on 17 April thousands of peasants from the surrounding villages swarmed into Motihari. They all wanted to give evidence and have their statements recorded. As Gandhiji had received no summons to appear in court till the end of the day, he decided to proceed to a nearby village next morning to continue his enquiry. He accordingly wrote to the District Magistrate informing him of his intention to leave for Shrirampur (Shrirampur in K . K . Dutta, *History of Freedom Movement in Biltar*, Parsauni, according to Rajendra Prasad) at 3 a.m. on the 18th. Before the visit could come off, orders were received by Gandhiji not to go to any village. Summons to appear in the court at 12 noon on the 18th was also served on him.

On 18 April Gandhiji started walking to the Court House at 10 a.m. Dharnidhar Prasad and Ramnavmi Prasad walked with him. They had not slept the previous night. Gandhiji, a stranger, was going to jail for their people. What was their duty? They told Gandhiji on the way to the Court House that they would follow him to jail. His face beamed. "Then victory is ours," he said.

Although the case was to be heard at 12.30, by 10.30 a.m. thousands of peasants had gathered in the court compound to have a glimpse of Gandhiji. When Gandhiji entered the premises he was followed by a crowd of 2,000. It



became a problem to manage the crowd. The Magistrate asked him to wait in the library. Armed police had to be summoned to control the crowd. The simple village folk were greatly moved to see Gandhiji going through the ordeal for their sake. Many had tears streaming down their eyes. Recording of statements had been suspended for the day.

The Magistrate and the Government Prosecutor had thought that there would be witnesses to be examined and another date would be fixed for the hearing so that the Magistrate would have time to get instructions from his superiors. The Government Prosecutor said he was not ready with his witnesses and wanted an adjournment. Gandhiji said there was no need for it.

In a brief statement he read out to the court, Gandhiji explained the reason "for this very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code." He said it was a question of difference of opinion between him and the administration. While his motive was to render humanitarian service with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters, the administration thought differently. He could not obey the order "without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come." Gandhiji continued:

Amid this conflict of duty, I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration.... It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.... I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in



obedience of the higher law of our being - the law of conscience. [*Ibid*, pp.374-75]

The Magistrate asked him if he was pleading guilty. Gandhiji replied that he had said what he wanted to say. The Magistrate said that it was not a clear plea of guilty and evidence would have to be taken. Gandhiji replied that he did not wish to waste the time of the court. Then he pleaded guilty

The Magistrate was embarrassed. He had not the temerity to sentence Gandhiji, and yet he had to save face. He told Gandhiji that if he agreed to leave the district, promising not to return, the case would be withdrawn. Gandhiji refused to oblige. The Magistrate said that the orders in that case would be passed at 3 p.m.

The Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate separately asked Gandhiji to see them before he left the court, which he did. The Superintendent of Police had been in South Africa. He said he would help Gandhiji by putting him in touch with the planters and the officers. The Magistrate requested Gandhiji to refrain from visiting the villages for three days. Gandhiji agreed.

At 3 p.m. the Magistrate postponed passing orders in the case to 21 April. He offered to release Gandhiji for the duration if he furnished bail of Rs. 100/-. Gandhiji said he had no bailor. The Magistrate nevertheless set him free on personal recognizance. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp.116-17]

At Patna a meeting of Congress leaders was held on 17 April on getting Gandhiji's telegram. They decided to help and support Gandhiji in his work in Champaran. Polak was arriving by the evening train. Rajendra Prasad and some others decided to leave with him for Motihari the next morning. Brajkishore Prasad was also coming from Calcutta by the same train.



By the time Gandhiji and party returned from the court, Henry Polak, Mazharul Haq, Rajendra Prasad, Brajkishore Prasad, Anugraha Narayan Sinha and Shambhusharan Singh had arrived from Patna. They discussed the future course of action in the event of Gandhiji being sent to jail. Dharnidhar Prasad and Ramnavmi Prasad had already announced their intention to follow Gandhiji to jail. It was decided that following Gandhiji's imprisonment Mazharul Haq and Brajkishore Prasad should take on the leadership of the mission. When they were imprisoned, Dharnidhar Prasad and Ramnavmi Prasad should follow them. Upon their arrest Rajendra Prasad, Anugraha Narayan and Shambhusharan should follow in that order.

On the evening of 18 April at a meeting of the Bihar Provincial Association held under the presidentship of Rai Krishna Sahai Bahadur at Patna, it was decided to render all possible assistance to Gandhiji in his work and also to send telegrams of protest to the Government.

7

From very early on 19 April huge crowds of peasants began arriving at the house of Gorakh Prasad in Motihari. Recording of statements was resumed. Gandhiji himself took a share in recording the statements and examining those recorded by others. He instructed the workers to cross-examine witnesses closely. The work went on apace. More volunteers joined them. Soon it was realized that Gorakh Prasad's house was not big enough to accommodate them. Besides, it was realized that the work was time-consuming and would not be finished soon. It was therefore decided to rent alternative accommodation. With the help of a person of influence, suitable accommodation was found. They were to shift there the same evening.



During the day they were all kept busy recording statements. Some of them thought that as it was already 9 p.m., they would move the next day. Gandhiji felt that if they did not move that day, it would be a bad beginning. They would have broken their very first resolve. They must shift the same day.

From where were they to get men to carry their luggage at that hour? Gandhiji picked up his own bedding and a small tin box containing dates and groundnuts that formed his diet and started walking to the house which was not very far. Others had to follow him. They found that the house had not been properly cleaned up. Gandhiji took up a broom and started cleaning it. Others joined him. This was their first lesson in the new way of working and living. They had many more lessons to learn.

Rajendra Prasad, then a young lawyer in Gandhiji's party, who was to become the first President of free India, records that most of them were orthodox Hindus who would not eat food cooked by anyone except a Brahmin or a member of their own caste. They had servants to do the work of cleaning, cooking and washing and most of them had their personal servants as well. Gandhiji asked them if all those servants were necessary and made them realize the need to live a simple life. The servants were dispensed with, except for one who washed the cooking vessels. They all began to give a hand in the preparation and distribution of food. The caste barriers broke down in the process. They began to wash their own clothes and their plates after meals. Cooking too was simplified. Food was cooked without spices except for salt and turmeric. It was healthy and nourishing.

The village folks who came to record their statements were amused and amazed to see the big vakils washing their own plates, drawing water from the well for their bath and washing their clothes. They helped them by drawing water



from the well. The change was good for the volunteers. It prepared them for subsequent prison terms in the course of India's freedom struggle.

On 20 April the recording of statements and cross-examination of witnesses continued at the same breakneck speed. There was such a stream of ryots wanting to make statements that the workers were kept busy from sunrise to sunset. Some policemen would come and sit with the tenants. One of the vakils did not like it. He was recording the statements on the verandah. He got up and went inside the room to do the recording. The policemen followed him there. He was annoyed. The matter was reported to Gandhiji, who advised them not to take any notice of the policemen and carry on their work. The tenants should be able to say what they wished to say in the presence of the policemen. They must shed fear, he advised.

The crowds coming in to make statements grew larger. They needed more help for recording the statements. On the evening of 21 April a number of pleaders arrived from Muzaffarpur and Chhapra to join in the work. They were all made to sit on the ground on small mats, with small desks in front of them if possible, to do their work. The tenants sat in front of them on the bare ground.

Gandhiji got up early. They were all up soon after that. There were no community prayers in those days. They folded their bedding, put it in the proper place, had their bath and breakfast and set to work by 6.30 a.m. They worked till 11.30 a.m., then had lunch and rest till 1 and again worked till 6.30 p.m. Then they joined Gandhiji in the evening walk and had talks with him. It was all a process of education.

Polak and Andrews also had come. Polak went back. Andrews had to leave for Fiji, to keep to an earlier schedule. The Champaran workers wanted him to stay on. He said he would if Mohan said so. Gandhiji told Rajendra Babu that he



was not going to ask Andrews to stay on, because their desire to have him with them was born out of fear and lack of self-confidence. They felt that as an Englishman he would be able to deal with the English officers more effectively. Gandhiji said he did not like it and was therefore sending Andrews away. They must develop confidence in their own capacity to deal with problems and the situation as it developed. So Andrews left but Mazharul Haq arrived to fill his place.

On 21 April Gandhiji saw Heycock at the latter's request. He was told that on instructions from the Lt. Governor, the case against him was being withdrawn and that he was free to carry on his investigation in which he would receive all assistance from the local officials. This was the first victory. It gave heart to the workers and the people of Champaran and added to their self-confidence.

R. R. Diwakar has recorded that the peasants were wild with enthusiasm. Wherever Gandhiji went he was welcomed and taken in a procession.... "Wherever he went and whatever he did, Gandhiji did openly and informed the planters as well as the government." [R. R. Diwakar, *Satyagraha in Action*, p.52]. Gandhiji's truthfulness ruled out all secrecy.

8

On 22 April Gandhiji left for Bettiah accompanied by Brajkishore Prasad (who knew a great deal about Champaran problems and had raised the matter more than once in the Council), Ramnavmi Prasad and a few others. Again there were crowds at wayside stations. When the train reached Bettiah at 4.30 in the afternoon, the crowd was so large that the train had to be stopped at some distance from the platform. As Gandhiji alighted from his third-class compartment, ten of twelve thousand throats shouted "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai* !" People detached the horses from the carriage arranged for Gandhiji in order



themselves to pull it. Gandhiji sternly forbade this. He was then taken to Hazari Mal's Dharmashala, which became his headquarters for the duration of his stay at Bettiah. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp.124-25]

For helping him to carry on his investigation in Bettiah Gandhiji has recorded his appreciation of the dedicated work of Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad and their associates Shambhu Babu, Anugraha Babu, Dharnidhar Babu, Ramnavmi Babu and other vakils. Among the workers was also J. B. Kripalani who "though a Sindhi was more Bihari than a born Bihari." Mazharul Haq also paid occasional visits.

At Bettiah Gandhiji lost no time in seeing the local S.D.M. and planters' representatives. The work of recording statements was taken up and vigorously pursued. Crowds of ryots kept streaming in to give evidence.

On 23 April Gandhiji visited Rajkumar Shukla's house and spoke to members of his family. On 24 April, accompanied by Brajkishore Prasad, Gandhiji left for a neighbouring village Laukeria. He made detailed enquires about the condition of the villagers. They related their grievances. Before putting down the statements of the villagers Brajkishore Prasad minutely cross-examined them. The S.D.M. stopped by for a short while to observe while this work was in progress and was satisfied with the procedure. The party stayed the night in the village and Gandhiji paid a visit to the Byreah factory and saw H. Gale, the manager. The following day, instead of taking a horse-cart, Gandhiji walked all the way back to Bettiah. This caused a swelling in one of his feet. [*Ibid*, pp.125-26]

Unmindful of the pain, Gandhiji paid a visit the following day to Sindhachhapra village under the Kuria factory, a short distance from Bettiah. Policemen followed him. He again made detailed enquiries about indigo cultivation. He saw indigo being grown all round the homesteads. He had



statements of the villagers recorded. The living conditions of the peasants were miserable. [*Ibid*, p.128]

On 27 April, again accompanied by Brajkishore Prasad and others, Gandhiji proceeded to visit the villages under the Belwa factory. The party left Bettiah at 4 a.m. in the morning on foot for Narkatiaganj station, arriving there two hours later. From here onwards Vindhyabasini Prasad of Gorakhpur and two others joined the party. At 9 a.m. the party reached Murli Bharhawa, Rajkumar Shukla's village. Rajendra Prasad writes that Shukla showed to Gandhiji how his house had been plundered by the hirelings of the planters only a month earlier. Earthen containers of grain had been overturned, plantain trees had been cut down. The fields, which had been grazed over by the order of the factory manager, now only had stalks and stems. [*Ibid*, p.127]. In this connection Rajkumar Shukla made the following statement to the Agrarian Enquiry Committee :

As I had stated facts about the *panikharcha* and other kinds of oppression before the Provincial Conference and the Congress and as some tenants had stopped paying *panikharcha* by my example, Mr. Ammon made up his mind to have my house and property looted. I was then at Murli Bharahwa. When I learnt this on the previous day, I sent my family at night to Harpur which is at a distance of a mile. But I could not remove the paddy, etc. On the next morning at about 9 a.m. Mr. Ammon, Sital Rai Jamadar and other servants of the factory came to my house with a large number of men and Mr. Ammon ordered the loot. Just a little before this when I saw him coming and finding no means of escape I concealed myself to save my life in a stack of *Kharai*. Mr. Ammon went away after giving the orders. Then his servants looted and took away my paddy and other property from granaries and earthen granaries and pulled



down my house and took away the door posts and door leaves. My property worth Rs. 2500 was looted and whatever crop was standing in the fields was caused to be grazed for several days by cattle which were collected, and those who owed me debts were told not to pay them. Peons were posted and I was prevented from visiting the village for about two months. I went to Motihari and related all the facts regarding the loot to the Collector. He told me to go to court. I again stated all the facts to him in court and prayed that he should himself go and inspect the place. But the Collector told me to file an application and did not agree to go there himself. I replied that I had to suffer imprisonment for 21 days for having once submitted a petition and memorial and that I did not know what I would have to suffer if I submitted another petition. I did not agree to file a petition for this reason and continued requesting the Collector that he should himself pay a visit and inspect the place and if my statement was proved to be false to bring me back bound down. But the Collector did nothing. Such is the condition of Champaran. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol.I, pp.214-15]

Gandhiji was much distressed by what he saw. He comforted Shukla and his family.

During the day, statements of ryots were recorded. Hundreds came forward to give evidence. Gandhiji then went and saw A. C. Ammon, manager of the Belwa factory. Having spent the night at Amolwa, the party returned to Bettiah on the morning of 28 April.

Gandhiji made notes and sent them to editors of some of the leading newspaperfs with a request that these were not to be used till he asked them to do so.



Gandhiji's trial had attracted wide publicity. He did not want his Champaran mission to be given a political flavour by an over-enthusiastic support of the Congress and newspapers in general. He believed that a humanitarian cause would be damaged if it received a political colouring. He also believed that "disinterested service in any sphere (of national life) would help the country politically." [J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, p.65]. It may be noted that the Champaran struggle was not carried out by the Congress though many Congressmen took part in it.

9

In spite of the official assurances of cooperation, the administration was not at all kindly disposed towards Gandhiji and his mission. On 28 April, W. H. Lewis, S.D.M. of Bettiah, wrote to District Magistrate Heycock that in the estimation of the ryots Gandhiji was superseding local authority and that he was regarded by the planters with great suspicion as their natural enemy. Gandhiji used to show all his letters to the officials before posting them. The S.D.M. also sent the letter for perusal to Gandhiji before despatching it. Gandhiji assured him that his mission was "to invoke the help of local authority in their aid," that there certainly was no interference on his part with the authority of the S.D.M. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.379]

On 29 April the day was spent in the recording of statements. On the 30th morning Gandhiji visited the Sathi factory and saw its manager, C. Still, as also the manager of the Parsa factory, Gordon Canning, who happened to be present there. Gandhiji met many of the ryots of the factory and recorded their statements. He returned to Bettiah by the evening train. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.130]



On the evening of May 1 Gandhiji, accompanied by Brajkishore Prasad , took the train to Motihari where planters had arranged to meet him the following day. His meeting with the planters had no concrete result. Before he returned to Bettiah on 3 May Gandhiji saw the District Magistrate and the Settlement Officer.

As might be imagined, Gandhiji's investigations and his mixing with the ryots had become a cause of much annoyance to the planters and they tried their hardest to stop him. On 28 April, H. E. Cox, Secretary of the Bihar Planters' Association, wrote to the Commissioner, Tirhut Division, protesting most strongly against Gandhiji being permitted to tour the district. Gandhiji's mission, he said, though ostensibly an enquiry, was "developing into an agitation to stir up the ryots and agricultural labourers against the planters and the landlords". He suggested that Gandhiji's movement was "part of some far larger political movement" than the redress of the ryots' grievances. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, p.218]

Cox wrote again to the Commissioner on 30 April, reiterating his plea that Gandhiji's activities should be stopped. He said Gandhiji had been making an exhaustive enquiry and accumulating a great deal of evidence and the planters held that the enquiry was "irresponsible". He argued that the system as it existed was vital to the planters' existence. Further that the planters claimed the right to control the labour and the carts in the villages under them and they should be left alone to fix their own rates. [*Ibid*, pp.218-19]

The European Defence Association of Calcutta, at the request of its Muzaffarpur branch, also sent representation to the Government asking for stoppage of Gandhiji's enquiry. [*Ibid*, pp.219-20]

On 5 May, the Directors of the Bihar Planters' Association passed a resolution protesting against the manner of the enquiry.



The officials fully backed the planters in their vilification campaign against Gandhiji. They particularly objected to the presence of the vakil volunteers helping Gandhiji. The S.D.M. expressed the fear of a conflagration taking place as the ryots had grown bolder and had "formed a highly exaggerated notion of the results of the mission".

The upshot of all this clamour was that on 6 May Gandhiji received intimation that W. Maude, Vice-President of the Governor's Executive Council, would like to see him at Patna on 10 May to talk things over.

Gandhiji accordingly left Bettiah for Patna on 9 May. All along the way there were crowds to greet him at every station with cries of "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai* !" When the train reached Patna at 7 a.m. it was raining hard. Nevertheless thousands of people were present to greet Gandhiji on his arrival. He stayed overnight with Mazharul Haq.

Preparatory to Gandhiji's meeting with Maude, Heycock, District Magistrate of Champaran, Lewis, the S.D.M. of Bettiah, and Whitty, the manager of Bettiah estate, had already seen the Executive Councillor and presented their case to him.

Maude suggested to Gandhiji that the enquiry "might now usefully be closed entirely... and that if the enquiry could not be stopped, Mr. Gandhi should withdraw the pleader friends from the district." He suggested that Gandhiji might send the Government a report of his enquiry. The Government, he said, had faith in him but not in local lawyers. Gandhiji stated that the enquiry could not be entirely stopped, nor could he dispense with the help of pleader friends. But he agreed to send the Government a preliminary report of his enquiry. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.132]



On 11 May Gandhiji returned to Bettiah and sat down to draft his report. On 13 May he had it despatched to the Government, with copies to the district officials, to planters and to the manager, Bettiah estate.

The immediately relevant part of the report said :

I beg to state that nearly four thousand ryots have been examined and their statements taken after careful cross-examination. Several villages have been visited and many judgments of courts studied. And the enquiry is, in my opinion, capable of sustaining the following conclusions :

Factories or concerns in the district of Champaran may be divided into two classes: (1) those that have never had indigo plantations, and (2) those that have.

(1) The concerns which have never grown indigo have exacted *abwabs* known by various local names equal in amount at least to the rent paid by the ryots. This exaction, although it has been held to be illegal, has not altogether stopped.

(2) The indigo-growing factories have grown indigo either under the *tinkathia* system or *khuski*. The former has been most prevalent and has caused the greatest hardship. The type has varied with the progress of time. Starting with indigo, it has taken in its sweep all kinds of crops. It may now be defined as an obligation presumed to attach to the ryot's holding whereby the ryot has to grow a crop on 3/20 of the holding at the will of the landlord for a stated consideration. There appears to be no legal warrant for it. The ryots have always fought against it and have only yielded to force. They have not received adequate consideration for the services.



When, however, owing to the introduction of synthetic indigo the price of the local product fell, the planters desired to cancel the indigo *sattas*. They therefore devised means of saddling the losses upon the ryots. In leasehold lands they made the ryots pay *tawan*, i.e. damages, to the extent of Rs. 100/- per bigha in consideration of their waiving their right to indigo cultivation. This, the ryots claim, was done under coercion. Where the ryots could not find cash, handnotes and mortgage bonds were made for payment in instalments bearing interest at 12 per cent per annum. In these, the balance due has not been described as *tawan*, but it has been fictitiously treated as an advance to the ryot for some purpose of his own.

In *mukarrari* lands, the damage has taken the shape of *sharabbeshi sattas*, meaning enhancement of rent in lieu of indigo cultivation. The enhancement according to the survey report has in the case of 5,955 tenancies amounted to Rs. 31,062, the pre-enhancement figure being Rs. 53,365. The total number of tenancies affected is much larger. The ryots claim that these *sattas* were taken from them under coercion. It is inconceivable that the ryots would agree to an enormous perpetual increase in their rents against freedom from liability to grow indigo for a temporary period which freedom they were strenuously fighting to secure and hourly expecting.

Where *tawan* has not been exacted, the factories have forced the ryots to grow oats, sugarcane, or such other crops under *tinkathia* system.

Under the *tinkathia* system, the ryot has been obliged to give his best land for the landlord's crops, in some cases the land in front of his house has been so used. He has been obliged to give his best time and energy also to it, so that very little time has been left to him for growing his own crops - his means of livelihood.



Cart-hire *sattas* have been forcibly taken from the ryots for supplying carts to the factories on hire insufficient even to cover the actual outlay.

Inadequate wages have been paid to the ryots whose labour has been impressed, and even boys of tender age have been made to work against their will.

Ploughs of the ryots have been impressed and detained by the factories for days together for ploughing factory lands for a trifling consideration and at a time when they required them for cultivating their own lands.

Dasturi has been taken by the notoriously ill-paid factory *amlas* out of the wages received by the labourers, often amounting to fifth of their daily wage, and also out of the hire paid for carts and ploughs.

In some villages, the Chamars have been forced to give up to the factories the hides of dead cattle belonging to the ryots. Against the carcasses the Chamars used to supply the ryots with shoes and leather straps for ploughs and their women used to render services to the latter's families at child-birth. Now they have ceased to render these valuable services. Some factories have for the collection of such hides opened godowns .

Illegal fines - often heavy amounts - have been imposed by factories upon ryots who have proved unbending.

Among the other (according to the evidence before me) methods adopted to bend the ryots to their will, the planters have impounded the ryots' cattle, posted peons on their houses, withdrawn from them barbers', dhobis', carpenters' and smiths' services; have prevented the use of village wells and pasture lands... and resorted to actual physical force and wrongful confinements. The planters have successfully used the institutions of the country to enforce



their will against the ryots and have not hesitated to supplement them by taking the law in their own hands. [*Ibid*, pp.134-41; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII pp.386-90]

11

On receipt of Gandhiji's report the Government asked the local authorities and the planters for their comments. W. H. Lewis, S.D.M. Bettiah, said in his report of 1 June that while in the *thekedaris* under the Bettiah Estate, the levy of *abwabs* had ceased, throughout the northern strip of the Sub-division in the *thekedaris* falling under the Ramnagar Estate, "*salami* and *abwabs* are taken with as great freedom as ever." The usual average of *salami*, which was an illegal exaction, was Rs. 3 per *bigha* and was realized with the regularity of rent. As for *tinkathia*, which prevailed all over the district, the ryots regarded it "as a payment in land and labour" to the factory. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, pp.542-43]

J . A. Sweeney, the Settlement Officer of the area, in his report of 2 July, while blaming Indian zamindars for all kinds of abuses, endeavoured wholly to exculpate the European planters. He stated that the legal margin of 10 per cent allowed them under the terms of lease was "entirely insufficient" and consequently they had to find additional sources of income, such as profits from *tinkathia*, *zeerat* and *abwab* and money-lending. In the absence of these "additional sources," went on the Settlement Officer, "it would be impossible for the *thekedars* to live". The average planter, besides, had "sincere affection for his tenantry". They got from him "rough and ready justice more suitable to their needs than the elaborate procedure of the courts". [*Ibid*, pp.542-43]

The planters, in the meanwhile, had redoubled their efforts to torpedo Gandhiji's enquiry. They stage-managed incidents of violence and incendiarism and blamed them on the tenants, roused to such acts by the presence of Gandhiji



and his party in their midst. On 11 May API circulated a report that a portion of the Olaha factory had been burnt down by the tenants. Gandhiji wrote to the District Magistrate on 14 May, enquiring about the "damage caused by the fire, the nature of the outwork burnt... and whether any connection has been shown between my presence in Champaran and the fire." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.395]. The District Magistrate in answer said the value of the buildings burnt down was estimated to be Rs. 20,000. He added : "The fact that the buildings were burnt down shortly after you came to the district ... may possibly account for the rumours of all kinds...." [*Ibid*, p.396]

That it was the planten who were arranging these acts of arson to malign Gandhiji was established soon afterwards. On 18 May, a fire broke out in an outhouse of the Dhokraha factory and the tenants came running to Gandhiji to tell him that it was the handiwork of the factory staff who wanted to use it as an excuse further to oppress the ryots. Indeed some time afterwards the person who had been hired to do the deed confessed to Rajendra Prasad that the plan had been to set fire to the factory at midnight and then to summon a large body of armed police and to have the whole village looted. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.147]

The Indian language newspapers and periodicals were quick to take notice of the disreputable methods being resorted to by the planters to put obstacles in the way of Gandhiji's enquiry. Support was being given to them by the European Defence Association. *Dainik Bharat Mitra*, *Hindi Bangwasi* and *Pataliputra* of Patna, and *Mithila Mihir* of Darbhanga condemned, in a most forthright manner, the attempts of the planters to sabotage Gandhiji's enquiry. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Calcutta Samachar* and *Express* too questioned the veracity of the



reports put out by the planters. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, pp.230-31]

On 20 May, Gandhiji protested to Heycock, the District Magistrate, about the attempts of the factories to prevent the ryots from giving evidence by using all kinds of pinpricks. He said he could understand the feelings of those who were "called upon to contemplate the prospect of having to forgo huge incomes" they had been in the habit of receiving and he would not mind "any legitimate effort on their part to hold on to what they have considered as their right". But what was happening did not fall under that category. He warned that intimidation of the peasantry by the planters could only mean more trouble all round. "I have no desire to seek legal relief," said Gandhiji, "but I ask you to use such administrative influence as you can to preserve the friendly spirit which has hitherto prevailed between the *kothis* and my friends and myself." [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp.150-54]

The planters also tried to throw dust into the eyes of Gandhiji and mislead the investigators. One A. K. Holtum, manager of the Dhokraha factory, a short distance from Bettiah, invited Gandhiji to see things for himself. It was arranged for Gandhiji to visit a place called Sarisawa on 16 May to meet Holtum's tenantry, when Lewis, the S.D.M., would also be present.

Gandhiji and party, including J. B. Kripalani, Rajendra Prasad, Prabhudas Gandhi and Rajkumar Shukla, arrived at the place at 8 a.m. and found a crowd of 300 peasants waiting for them. Shortly afterwards Holtum and Lewis also arrived. Holtum produced an old man who he said was respected by the entire village, as a witness. When he was asked if he had any complaints, he said, "No sir, we are all very happy under this master." Grumblings were heard at this from the crowd of peasants, and someone shouted: "Are you not a shamed to lie, old



fellow? You are nearing the end of your days. Why do you want to carry this load of sin (by telling lies)?" Another elderly man pushed himself forward and told Gandhiji: "Only a short while ago the Saheb had my house plundered. You may come and see." He turned towards the S.D.M. and said: "When I made a complaint to him he rushed at me with a cane." [Vindhyachal Prasad Gupta, *Champaran aur Neel Ke Dhabbe*, (Diary of Rajkumar Shukla, Hindi), pp.52-53]

Lewis went red in the face and said : "He is lying." "No, you are lying," the peasant shot back. At this, the S.D.M. got into his car and left.

Holtum said: "I could have made a great deal more money by having my *zeerat* lands cultivated myself. But I had bits of it settled with my tenants on *hoonda*. I did so for their benefit."

"We don't want your land, " shouted the peasants. "Keep it and make profit from it."

Holtum insisted that the peasants had taken the *zeerat* lands on *hoonda* voluntarily.

What had happened was that Holtum, instead of having the peasants sign enhancement agreements in lieu of indigo cultivation, had forced on the tenantry his *zeerat* lands on rents enough to cover the losses from non-cultivation of indigo. Gandhiji observed from an examination of records that while the rent from 27 bighas of *kasht* land was Rs. 59-13-6-, (Rupees fifty-nine, annas thirteen and six pies) the rent realized by Holtum from 27 bighas of *zeerat* land was Rs. 659-7-0. The average per *bigha* charged came to Rs. 24-5-3 as against Rs. 1-8-0 per bigha for *kasht* land.



Gandhiji asked the peasants if they wanted to abandon the *zeerat* at once, and although they had paid rent for the full agricultural year, over 175 gave their names then and there. Within three days the number had gone up to 500.

In a letter to Holttum giving the above information, Gandhiji also told him that the ryots had complained that he had imposed fines on recalcitrant ryots, which on occasion were as high as Rs. 25 and that he had been charging them for permission to rebuild their houses. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.401-02]

12

Following his interview with Maude, Gandhiji modified the procedure of the enquiry. Instead of having general statements from the ryots, of which some 4,000 had already been recorded, the grievances that these highlighted were tabulated under different heads and the ryots were asked questions specific to these heads. This, Rajendra Prasad says, considerably lightened the work of the volunteers and added to efficiency. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.141]

Gandhiji also prepared confidential notes on the situation in Champaran for the guidance of workers and newspapers and journals. In one such note of 21 May, Gandhiji referred to the demand of the planters for the appointment of a commission of inquiry and expressed the view that such a commission could do no good except "supplant and extinguish the activities of the mission (of Gandhiji)." The grievances were already known. The appointment of a commission could be accepted only if the continuing wrongs were remedied first. These were (i) *abwabs* or illegal cesses (ii) realization of enhanced rent in lieu of indigo cultivation by way of *sarabeshi* or in lump sum as *tawan*, (iii) *tinkathia* in various forms, (iv) imposition of fines, and (v) forced labour .

The commission, if appointed, should only enquire into (1) the condition of tenure of the planter, (2) possibility of securing for the ryots the refund of



illegal cesses collected, (3) condition under which labour was received by the landlords, (4) sufficiency or otherwise of the wages paid, and (5) causes of the poverty of the peasantry. The Press and the public must insist, said Gandhiji, on the immediate redressal of wrongs. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.407-08]

As the enquiry progressed the planters accelerated their activity to put a spanner into it and even to have the mission forcibly removed. They increased their violence against the ryots who went to Gandhiji to make statements. W. S. Irwin, a leading planter of Motihari, uprooted crops of the ryots who had made statements, had them whipped and shut up in a *murgikhana* (poultry pen) and then fined them. [*Ibid*, p.422]. The European Defence Association and the Anglo-Indian Press, especially the *Pioneer*, came out strongly in their support. The European Defence Association passed a resolution on 31 May 1917 saying that the presence of Gandhiji's mission had been "accompanied by unrest and crime", that it was "likely to be disastrous to the welfare of the Europeans in Champaran, and demanded the removal of Gandhiji and his assistants from Champaran at once. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, p.242]

W. S. Irwin, writing in the *Pioneer* on 23 May, threatened that "unless Government can see its way to protecting them (the planters) they will inavoidably be forced into taking the steps necessary for their own protection." [*Ibid*, p.245]

The Commissioner of Trihut Division in his report to the Government in May 1917 admitted "the bitter truth that the tenants of Champaran are ill-treated" and emphasized the impact Gandhiji's presence had made on the peasantry. "More than one tenant told me," he wrote, "that Gandhi is God for Champaran. Another compared him with Ramachandra who had come to rescue them from the planter *rakshasas* (demons)". He summarized Gandhiji's demands



as the abolition of *tinkathia*, abolition of forced labour and stopping the Bettiah raj from leasing out its villages to the planters, and said it was a tremendous task. He apprehended "a serious breach of peace". [*Ibid*, pp.239-42]

On 29 May 1917 Gandhiji was invited by the Government for talks at Ranchi. A meeting had been fixed for him with the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Edward Gait, for June 4. The volunteers received the news with some consternation, for it had hardly been three weeks when Gandhiji had placed his views in the matter before Maude, and reactions of officials to Gandhiji's preliminary report were still awaited. It was apprehended the Government might be contemplating Gandhiji's arrest under pressure from the planters and contingency plans were accordingly chalked out to meet the eventuality. Devadas Gandhi, Gandhiji's youngest son, was sent for from Sabarmati and Kasturba Gandhi from Calcutta where she had gone to be with her eldest son Harilal and his family. A telegram was sent to Malaviya to pay a visit to Patna for talks with Gandhiji. He accordingly arrived there on 2 June. Gandhiji, accompanied by Brajkishore Prasad, also reached Patna on 2 June. In the consultations that followed it was decided that in case Gandhiji was arrested, either Mazharul Haq or Madan Mohan Malaviya should take charge of the work in Champaran. Pandit Malaviya then returned to Allahabad while Gandhiji and Brajkishore Prasad left for Ranchi for the interview with the Lieutenant-Governor.

Gandhiji's meetings with the Lieutenant-Governor and members of the Executive Council lasted from 4 to 6 June. The Lieutenant-Governor informed Gandhiji that in view of the fact that "the ryots were getting in an excited state, it was necessary in some way to put an end to a situation which was rapidly becoming a dangerous one," the Government had decided to appoint a



Committee to go into the matter. The personnel of the Committee would be (1) Sir Frank George Sly, President, (2) Mr. Rainy, Deputy Secretary, (3) Mr. Adami, Legal Remembrancer, (4) Mr. D. Reid, representative of the planters, (5) Raja Harihar Prasad Narayan Singh representative of the zamindars and (6) Gandhiji, representing the ryots.

The appointment of the last three would of course be subject to their consent and the Lieutenant-Governor asked Gandhiji if he would be willing to serve on the Committee. Gandhiji agreed to serve provided he was free to give his own evidence before the Committee and also produce witnesses to be examined. The Government saw no objection to this.

The terms of reference of the Committee were:

To enquire into relations between landlords and tenants in the Champaran district as also into all disputes arising out of the manufacture and cultivation of indigo. The Committee to examine the material already available, supplementing it by such further enquiry, local and otherwise, as they consider desirable. They should report their conclusions to Government, if possible, by the 15th October, and state the measures they recommend in order to remove any abuse or grievance which they might find to exist.

Gandhiji asked if these terms of reference would cover the *sarabeshi sattas*. He was assured they would.

The Lieutenant-Governor had been under great pressure from the Europeans in general and the planters in particular to have Gandhiji removed from the scene, and he accordingly proposed to Gandhiji, now that he had agreed to the appointment of the Government Enquiry Committee, to stop his own



enquiry and abstain from taking any statements and visiting any *dehat* (village).

Gandhiji said he could not altogether desert the ryots and leave the district but he would not go beyond Bettiah and Motihari.

Gandhiji proposed to the Government that pending the appointment and deliberations of the Committee, orders should be issued stopping the levy of illegal *abwabs* and the impressment of labour, carts and ploughs by the planters. The Lieutenant Governor showed his inability to accede to the request since taking such a step would "prejudge" the issue and cause offence to the planters. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp. 436-38 and 444-45]

On 7 June Gandhiji informed the Chief Secretary that he would serve on the Committee. The taking of statements was then stopped in Bettiah on 9 June and in Motihari on 12 June. The headquarters of the mission were also removed to Motihari.

The Champaran Agrarian Enquiry Committee was constituted by a Government of Bihar resolution of June 10. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.165]

On 17 June Gandhiji left for Ahmedabad on a short visit, to attend to the affairs of the National School and other matters. He returned to Motihari on 28 June.

With the recording of statements having been stopped, Gandhiji's team of volunteers could now give their attention to the study and analysis of the voluminous data collected. They had by now in their possession statements from more than 8,000 ryots from 850 villages. The statements concerned as many as 60 factories. There were besides a large number of official documents and



decisions of courts. All this needed to be scrutinized and a selection made of documents to be presented to the Enquiry Committee.

14

The Committee after a preliminary meeting at Ranchi on 11 July, commenced public sittings at Bettiah and Motihari from 17 July. It already had before it statements and memoranda from the Bihar Planters' Association, from 25 ryots, from the Manager of Bettiah Estate, from the Settlement Officer, from the S.D.M. Bettiah, from the Commissioner, Tirhut Division, and from the Bihar Landholders' Association.

At eight public sittings it held at Bettiah and Molihari between 17 and 30 July, the Committee examined 19 witnesses. These included four Government officials, namely, Sweeny, the Settlement Officer, Lewis, the S.D.M., Bettiah, Whitty, Manager, Bettiah Estate, and W. B. Heycock, the Collector, Champaran three representatives of the ryots, including Rajkumar Shukla, various managers of factories such as W. J. Ross of the Malahia factory, H. Gale of the Byreah factory, C. Still of the Sathi factory, A. C. Ammon of the Belwa factory, E. H. Hudson of the Rajpore factory, W. S. Irwin of the Molihari factory and Granville and Broucke of the Madhubani factory.

The members of the Committee also visited a number of factories and villages under them, examined the records and accounts of the factories and made enquiries from the large numbers of ryots assembled to meet the Committee. The Government had also made available to the Committee official records relating to the history, economic condition and former agrarian disputes of Champaran district. J. V. Jameson, the representative of the Bihar Planters' Association, was examined twice - on 26 July and 24 August. [*Ibid*, pp. 173-76]



On days not given over to the examination of witnesses or visits to factories, the Committee had closed-door sittings to consider the evidence collected. In the course of some of these sittings Gandhiji was able to persuade the managers of Molihari, Peeprah and Turkaulia concerns to reduce the amount of *sarabeshi* by 20 to 26 per cent and a formal agreement to this effect was signed by Gandhiji and the managers of the three factories concerned on 29 September 1917. In the case of two other concerns, namely Jallaha and Sirni, involved in *sarabeshi*, the Committee made the recommendation that the amount should be reduced by 26 per cent." [*Ibid*, pp.176-80]

The Committee submitted its report to the Government on 4 October. The Report* substantiated the points made by Gandhiji in his preliminary report on 13 May on the iniquitous and oppressive nature of the system under which indigo was grown. Some of the points responsible for the worst features of the system, as noted by the Committee, were:

First, that the price paid to the cultivator was fixed and remained unchanged over the years. Also, the price was fixed on the area and was not related to the crop. This led to two defects : the planters selected the best land for the indigo and the employees of the factory came to exercise petty tyranny over the peasantry.

Another important objection to the system was that growing of indigo was connected with a sense of obligation.

The Committee found, therefore, that the *tinkathia* system was unpopular and unprofitable and recommended that that system of growing indigo in Champaran should be altogether abolished.

The Committee further recommended that indigo should be grown under the *khushki* system, which should observe the following conditions: (1) The



tenant must be free to enter or not into agreements; (2) the plot selected must be entirely at the option of ryot; (3) the price must be fixed by agreement and on a purely commercial basis; (4) the price must be determined on the basis of the weight of the crop; and (5) any contract must be for a short period in no case exceeding three years.

On *sarabeshi* levied in lieu of obligation to grow indigo, the Committee welcomed the agreement entered into by Gandhiji with the Turkaulia, Motihari and Peeprah concerns.

On *tawan* or lump sum payment charged by factories from ryots, the Committee found that it was wholly unjustified in temporarily leased villages and recommended that in such cases the Bettiah Estate should refuse to renew the leases. In *mokarrari* villages, where it had been taken, the Committee recommended a refund, ranging from 10 per cent to 25 per cent.

As regards *abwabs*, the Committee pointed out that these were illegal but noted that they were systematically levied in the Ramnagar Estate, especially by European *thekedars* who never grew indigo. Besides, the landlords' servants levied a commission on payments made known as *dasturi*, which was equally illegal.

The Committee recommended that the Government should inform all concerned by a proclamation that both *abwab* and *dasturi* were illegal and that the Collector should of his own motion enquire into and punish such exactions.

The Committee also upheld the rights of the tenants in the matter of the hides of dead cattle, kerosene, cutting of trees, grazing of cattle, etc.

As to the impressment of labour, carts, etc., the Committee held that any labour provided to the landlord must be on a purely voluntary basis and must be



paid for at the market rate. About the cart *satta*, the Committee objected to the long periods, sometimes 20 years, to which they were extended. It recommended that the period of such agreements should not exceed three years.

The Committee similarly held the fines imposed by the planters on the ryots clearly illegal and asked that they be stopped.

The Government, by an Order-in-Council issued on 6 October accepted the recommendations of the Committee.

* For full text of this, see C.W.M.G., Vol. XIII, Appendix XI.

15

No sooner was the Committee's report published than the planters headed by W. S. Irwin launched on a campaign against its recommendations.

Writing to *The Englishman* and *The Statesman* on 7 October, Irwin asserted that he had agreed to a reduction in the *sarabeshi*, only "on the condition that *tawan* would be left untouched," and proceeded to "revoke, repudiate and withdraw the concession of 25 per cent of *sarabeshi*."

This of course was a gross misrepresentation of facts and the Government categorically repudiated the charge. Norman, manager of the Peeprah factory and Reid, who was the planters' representative on the Committee, also contradicted Irwin.

The planters' annoyance at the recommendation of the Committee came out strongly in the sustained campaign that was got going in the Press on their behalf. An anonymous writer predicted, in *The Statesman* of 8 November, more serious results ensuing than Sir E. Gait anticipated and warned that "he and his



colleagues and the members of the so-called Commission should be held responsible for any bloodshed that may ensue." [*Ibid*, pp.183-88]

On 20 November 1917, W. Maude, Member of the Executive Council, introduced the Champaran Agrarian Bill, 1917, in the Legislative Council. The Bill which incorporated the recommendations of the Champaran Agrarian Enquiry Committee, was vehemently opposed by the representatives of the planters in the Legislative Council. On 5 January 1918 the Bihar Planters' Association submitted a memorandum to the Government arguing that the Agrarian Bill was both unnecessary and undesirable, inasmuch as it sought to invalidate existing contracts and "abolish without compensation a system which has been in existence for over a hundred years." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.545-47]

The report of the Enquiry Committee was submitted for consideration of the Council on 4 March 1918. Soon afterwards the Bill became law.

The most striking features of the Champaran Agrarian Act were:

1. the abolition of *tinkathia*;
2. reduction of *sarabeshi* by 20 per cent in Turkaulia and 26 per cent in other factories;
3. freedom of tenants' holdings from obligation to grow indigo and liberty to grow indigo on voluntary basis;
4. arrangement to prevent litigation in respect of the matters covered by the Act.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Enquiry Committee, as accepted by the Government, 25 per cent of the *tawan* realized by the factories in Bettiah Estate was refunded to tenants. This sum amounted to Rs. 1,60,301-9-



9. [Dr. K. K. Datta, *History of the Satyagraha Movement in Bihar*, pp.264-65; Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp.191-92]

Kripalani who was with Gandhiji in Champaran wrote that what Gandhiji achieved by his Satyagraha was the result of a combination of various circumstances. These generally favoured greater justice between man and man and group and group. It was also true that if the first small step had not been taken by Gandhiji, the other forces that brought about the final result might have remained dormant for a long time. [J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought*, p.69]

Gandhiji always tried to give credit to the other party wherever he could. He wrote:

Sir Edward Gait had a large share in getting the Committee to make a unanimous report and in getting the Agrarian Bill passed in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. Had he not adopted a firm attitude and had he not brought all his tact to bear on the subject, the report would not have been unanimous, and the Agrarian Act would not have been passed. The planters wielded extraordinary power. They offered strenuous opposition to the Bill in spite of the report, but Sir Edward Gait remained firm up to the last.... The *tinkathia* system, which had been in existence for about a century, was thus abolished, and with it the planters' raj came to an end. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXXIX, pp.337-38]

But putting an end to the system of exploitation that was the chief and immediate cause of the misery of the Champaran peasantry did not exhaust the scope of Gandhiji's activities in the district. Gandhiji saw, as soon as he set foot in Champaran, that if the condition of the peasantry was to be improved a great deal of work at the village level would need to be accomplished. He wrote: "As I



gained more experience of Bihar I became convinced that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education. The ryots' ignorance was pathetic." [*Ibid*, p. 333]

Speaking at Muzaffarpur on 11 November, Gandhiji said:

The people of Champaran have secured local self-government of a sort. How it is to be used is the problem now. Babu Brajkishore and others have jointly decided to open schools all over the place and educate the people in general knowledge, especially in the rules of hygiene. The intention is to give instruction in letters to boys and girls and teach them as much hygiene as they need to keep themselves clean and tidy, and teach adults how to safeguard public health and keep clean the roads, disused (and used) wells, latrines, etc. With this object, a school is to be opened in a place called Chaka on the auspicious day of Tuesday. There is an urgent need of volunteers for this work. Any educated friends who so desire may come forward. Those who do, will be examined and such of them as are found fit will be taken up. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.77-78]

In consultation with his co-workers, Gandhiji decided to open primary schools in a few villages in the first instance. On 14 November, soon after his return from a short visit to Gujarat, Gandhiji opened the first of these schools at Bharharwa Lakhamen, a village in the Bettiah Estate, some 20 miles from Motihari. The school was put in charge of Baban Gokhale and his wife Avantikabai. The second school was opened on 20 November at Bhitiharva, lying some 40 miles to the north of Bettiah in the Himalayan foothills. "Mr. Soman," wrote Gandhiji to J. L. Merriman, "a public worker from Belgaum and a B.A., LL.B., has been left in charge and he will be assisted by Mr Balkrishna, a young man from Gujarat. Mrs. Gandhi will join them on the 24th." Gandhiji also informed



Merriman that Dr. H. S. Dev of the Servants of India Society had also arrived and would "chiefly supervise the medical branch of the work." [*Ibid*, pp.95-96]. This was fortunate for the people. On 10 December, Gandhiji wrote to Merriman: "Dr. Dev tells me that in Bhitiharwa and the surrounding villages, nearly 50 per cent of the population is suffering from a fever which often proves fatal.... Our workers are rendering all the assistance they can." [*Ibid*, p.105]

The third school was opened on 17 January 1918 at Madhubani in the house of G. D. Birla. Resident at the School were Narhari Parikh and his wife Manibehn Parikh, Mahadev Desai and his wife Durga Desai and Anandibai of the Women's University, Poona. Vishnu Sitaram Ranadive and J. B . Kripalani also worked in this school for some time. Dharnidhar Prasad stayed in Madhubani with his wife and children, working for the school. [K. K. Datta, *History of the Satyagraha Movement in Bihar*, p .66]

The volunteers did commendable work through these schools. At the Barharwa school run by Baban Gokhale and his wife 140 children and 40 women and girls were given not only literary instruction but also training in sanitation and hygiene. They were taught how to keep their wells and village roads clean. On 6 December 1917 Baban Gokhale wrote to Gandhiji: "We have been able to put almost all the wells in the village in order, by removing the drains which, being so close to the wells, were polluting the drinking water.... We are now after them for committing nuisance quite close to their houses. This we propose to effect through an elderly Mohammedan preaching against it ... we propose to adopt a similar course for the Hindus.... In the meantime we have managed to convince the people that there is no loss of prestige in at least covering the faeces with earth by doing it ourselves for them." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV p.538]



The Bhitiharwa school, being located in a place with a harsh climate, did not have a very large attendance, the number of pupils never exceeding 40. But Dr. Dev did very good work in teaching the people sanitation. One night the thatched huts housing the school caught fire, or were set fire to by planters' men as was generally believed. Dr. Dev, Soman and Appaji look upon themselves to erect a *pucca* building at the site. Working day and night, carrying bricks and mortar, they succeeded in doing so.

When the first batch of volunteers left, they were replaced by Narayan Tambaji Katgode, better known as Pundalik, and Eknath Vasudev Kshire. Pundalik was shortly afterwards ordered out by the Bihar Government and Shankarrao Dev replaced him. He was at Bhitiharwa school for several months. [Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp.199-200]

The Madhubani school also did commendable work. It had about 100 boys and 40 girls. The girls were looked after by Anandibai. When the original batch of volunteers had to leave, Shyamdev Narayan and Kshire took their places. The expenditure on the school was borne wholly by G. D. Birla. 88 *Ibid*, p.22

Although promotion of literacy, hygiene and sanitation in the villages was work of pure service, not related to any sort of political agitation, and although Gandhiji kept the authorities fully informed of every step he took and every school he founded and even sought the cooperation and support of officials in the task, the administration remained suspicious of his motives. W. Maude, in a note on 27 November recorded: "The only effective action that I can see is to get Mr. Gandhi promise to leave the distdct absolutely alone for six months or a year at least. If he really does that, there is some chance of things setting down If we appeal to Mr. Gandhi to give the district a chance and he refuses or does not



do so, how far will the Government of India back us up if we have to resort to compulsion?" [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.535]

The following is the list of volunteers, all from outside Bihar, who carried on the work of education and sanitation in the villages of Champaran:

1.	Dr. Hari Shrikrishna Dev, L.M.S.	Dhulia
2.	Sjt. Baban Gopal Gokhale	Bombay
3.	Sjt. Mahadev Haribhai Desai	Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad
4.	Sjt. Narhari Dwarkadas Parikh	do
5.	Sjt. Brijlal Bhimji Rupani	do
6.	Sjt. Chhotalal Jain	do
7.	Sjt. Devadas Gandhi	do
8.	Sjt. Surendra ji	do
9.	Sjt. Balkrishna Yogeshwar Purohit	do
10.	Sjt. Sadashive Lakshman Soman, B.A., LL.B.	Belgaum
11.	Sjt. Narayan Tambaji Katgode <i>alias</i> Pundalikji	do
12.	Sjt. Vishnu Sitaram Randive <i>alias</i> Appaji	Dhulia
13.	Sjt. Eknath Vasudev Kshire	do
14.	Sjt. Pranlal Prabhuram Yogi	Lilia, Bhavnagar
15.	Shankarrao Dev, B.A.	Poona [Rajendra Prasad, <i>Satyagraha in Champaran</i> , p.219]

Among the women were Mrs. Narhari Parikh, Durgabehn Desai, Avantika Gokhale and Kasturba.

It was remarkable how Gandhiji made use of semi-literate women like Kasturba, Manibehn Parikh and Durgabehn Desai to run schools and dispensaries in Champaran. He narrated to us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp how he trained his volunteers, and posted them. illnesses were mainly fever due to malaria, gastro-intestinal disturbances and aches and pains. So he taught his volunteers simple rules of health and hygiene, dietetics and the importance of



fasting or restricting intake of food when one was sick along with the value of drinking plenty of water. He just gave three drugs to them, quinine, castor-oil and aspirin and told them when to use them and how much was to be given to an adult and to a child. To this the volunteers, especially the women, added careful nursing care, education of the family and of the patient. It was a boon for the simple villagers who had been used to suffering in silence and dying without treatment.



CHAPTER VII: THE PLAGUE, THE ASHRAM AND THE KHEDA SATYAGRAHA

1

The twelve months or so from April 1917 to mid-1918 saw the application of satyagraha by Gandhiji in three different engagements : with the landlords in Champaran, with the capitalists in Ahmedabad and with the Government in Kheda. The Champaran Satyagraha was of course an important episode in Gandhiji's life, but the mill-workers' strike in Ahmedabad and the Kheda Satyagraha were not less important.

All the three were more or less concurrent. The Champaran problem, although it had been simmering for a long time, could claim Gandhiji's attention only in April 1917; the labour trouble in Ahmedabad came to a head following the withdrawal of the plague bonus by the employers in August 1917; while the agrarian trouble in Kheda, resulting from the ravages of the monsoon in 1917, made itself manifest at the end of the year.

All the three campaigns, none of them political in the strict sense of the term, were conducted with precisely defined objectives in view. They constitute classical demonstrations of satyagraha in different situations and against different adversaries. All the three ended successfully. Through these campaigns India was introduced to mass satyagraha as an effective instrument for fighting against injustice and oppression and for securing rights without resorting to violence under any condition. The campaigns were effective demonstrations that the poor, the weak and the dispossessed could stand up to defy the might of powerful indigo planters in Bihar, the mighty mill-owners of Ahmedabad and the Government officials in Kheda.



The Champaran Satyagraha had its victory with the appointment of the Champaran Enquiry Committee by the Governor on 10 June 1917. Gandhiji went to his Ashram a week later for a short visit. He was back in Champaran on 28 June to attend to the work of the Enquiry Committee.

2

The Plague

A distressing dimension was added to Gandhiji's concerns and his activities in the service of the poor, during the whole of this time, by the recrudescence of the plague that had come with the outbreak of the war. "In 1914," Gandhiji noted, "cholera, fevers and plague together claimed 4,639,663 victims." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.123] This, to be sure, was not an entirely unforeseen visitation of the disease. Having for the first time appeared in Bombay in 1896, [C.W.M.G., Vol.V, p.115], the plague continued to rage all over India off and on during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Only its virulence varied.

In 1905, for instance, while Gandhiji was grappling with the outbreak of the disease in the Johannesburg Location and elsewhere in South Africa, he showed great concern over the toll of lives the plague had been taking in India. [C.W.M.G., Vol.IV, p.397 and ff].

Gandhiji noted that plague was increasing in India and cited figures of those dead - in 1901: 2,72,000; in 1902: 500,000; in 1903: 800,000. "This year," he wrote in 1905, "the attack has been so virulent that the number might easily shoot up to a million. The average number of deaths per month this year comes to about 120,000. If mortality continues at this rate and goes on increasing from year to year, it will be little wonder if the whole of India becomes depopulated within 15 years." [*Ibid*, p.461]. A cable Gandhiji reported having received from India



in 1907 said that "within six weeks the plague took a toll of 451,892 lives."
[C.W.M.G., Vol.VI, p.493]

The outbreak of the disease in 1916-17 that devastated Gujarat had a bearing both on the Kheda struggle and the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike.

In December 1917, when Gandhiji paid a short visit to Kheda, he found himself face to face with the disease. He immediately wrote out a set of instructions for the volunteers engaged in the nursing and care of the plague victims. In summary the instructions ran:

How to prevent it ?

1. If one's blood is pure, it has the power of destroying every type of disease.
2. If the body is kept healthy through pure blood, it will be well protected even in an epidemic.
3. For maintaining purity of blood, one must eat simple food, in limited quantity and at fixed hours. Any diet containing excessive fat or sugar or cooked with spices must be avoided.... It is an excellent practice always to drink water that has been boiled and strained through thick cloth. Every man or woman should have as much exercise daily as may be got by working for two hours.
4. The doors and windows, the ceiling, the floor, the staircase - in short, every part of the house.... should be washed properly and then allowed to dry. Cobwebs, dust, straw and rubbish of every description should every day be swept out of the house.... Doctors say that plague spreads through fleas. In a well-swept house with plenty of air and light, fleas will hardly ever enter. They say, too, that the disease spreads through rats It is because of our laziness that rats make their holes in our



houses. Keeping a cat in the house will prevent it from being infested with rats.

5. But the most important cause of illness in India is the defective and extremely harmful methods we follow for answering calls of nature. A large number of people do this in the open. The excreta are not covered over with earth or otherwise, and this leads to the breeding of millions of flies every day.... We must cover the excreta with earth as people in other countries do.
6. The air gets polluted by reason of people urinating or spitting or throwing litter and other rubbish anywhere on the roads.... Millions of people in this country walk barefoot.... They have to walk on filth. Our roads, our streets or the verandahs of our houses should be so clean that one would not hesitate to sit down or even sleep on them.

Management

7. Whenever a case of the plague is detected, one must search out rats and, if one finds any dead ones, they must be removed with a pair of tongs to a distant place and burnt... or buried deep in a pit.... The place where a dead rat is found should be covered with live ashes, the room swept clean and fumigated with neem leaves.... Having cleaned up the house... we should leave it empty and, if possible, live in tents or huts We should avoid contact with other people in the town.
8. In any town where a case of plague has occurred, the other families should immediately inspect their own houses . . . for rats.
9. Nothing should be done to put the patient into a fright. No one except the person nursing him should be allowed to go near him. If there is a public hospital, he should be removed there. All food should be



discontinued.... He should be placed in a tub filled with cold water for two minutes or, if he prefers, for five minutes. If he feels thirsty, he may be given as much as he needs water that has been boiled, cooled and filtered.... If he survives, the next day... he may be given lime juice or orange juice to drink.... If there is a tumour, it should be treated with hot water poultice.

10. The man attending on the patient should keep away from others.... To ensure his own safety he should reduce his food to a minimum and... should take an enema to clear the intestines.
11. The patient's clothes should not be washed in a river or at any other place where others' clothes are washed.... If they are very dirty they should be burnt..... The bedding, etc. should not be used by anyone else.... If one can afford it one should have it burnt." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.100-03]

One cannot but be impressed by Gandhiji's knowledge of basic principles of health. Emphasis on sanitation, pure water intake, proper nutrition, isolation of patients and proper disposal of dead rats is scientific. There is some confusion between cholera and the plague when it comes to washing of the patients' clothes, etc. But the advice is sound.

The Ashram

All the time Gandhiji was in Champaran the Ashram was never out of his mind. He paid flying visits there whenever he could. The Ashram was still at Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad, when Gandhiji went to Calcutta early in April 1917 and from there to Champaran.



The plague had become endemic in Gujarat. When it broke out in Kochrab, Gandhiji saw the danger to the safety of the Ashram children. It was impossible to keep the Ashram inmates immune from the effects of the surrounding insanitation, however scrupulously the Ashram inmates might observe the rules of hygiene. Nor could they serve the village in any way at that time. They desired to take the Ashram to a safe distance both from the town and from the village, and yet not too far away. They were, moreover, determined to have their own place some day. The plague was a notice to quit Kochrab.

Punjabhai Hirachand, a merchant in Ahmedabad, had come into close contact with the Ashram and had taken to serving the Ashram inmates in various ways in a selfless spirit. He had wide experience of Ahmedabad and he volunteered to procure suitable land for the Ashram. Gandhiji went with him to the north and south of Kochrab to look around and then asked him to find a piece of land three or four miles to the north. Punjabhai hit upon a site on the western bank of the river Sabarmati. Its vicinity to the Sabarmati Central Jail was a special attraction for Gandhiji, as jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of satyagrahis. Moreover, the sites selected for jails generally had clean surroundings.

In about eight days the sale was executed. There was no building on the land and no trees. But its being situated on the river bank and its solitude were great advantages. They decided to shift and live in tents to start with. A tin shed was put up for a kitchen. [*Autobiography*, p.429]

In 1917 during the rains they shifted to the new site.

The Ashram had been slowly growing. There were over 40 men, women and children having their meals in the common kitchen. The decision to move was made by Gandhiji. Its execution was left to Maganlal Gandhi.



There were difficulties. The rains were impending and provisions had to be brought from the city four miles away. There were snakes and scorpions around. It was no small risk to live with little children under such conditions. The general rule was not to kill snakes, though the Ashram inmates had not quite shed the fear of these reptiles. Fortunately there was no casualty at Sabermati or before that at Phoenix or at Tolstoy Farm.

Writes Gandhiji in his autobiography:

I see, with the eye of faith, in this circumstance the hand of the God of mercy. Human language can but imperfectly describe God's ways. I am sensible of the fact that they are indescribable and inscrutable. But if mortal man will dare to describe them, he has no better medium than his own inarticulate speech. Even if it be a superstition to believe that complete immunity from harm for twenty-five years in spite of a fairly regular practice of non-killing is not a fortuitous accident but a grace of God, I should still hug that superstition. [*Ibid*, p.430]

Gandhiji was in the thick of the mill-workers' strike when pucca construction was started in the Ashram the following year. He needed money for the construction as well as for general expenses in the Ashram and accordingly approached friends and well-wishers for assistance. In a circular letter dated 3 July 1917 he wrote:

I have been conducting the Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad now for the last two years. The object of the Ashram is to bring together men, women and children whose aim, or whose parents' aim for their children, is national service for life. The Ashram at present contains, after much weeding out, 30 inmates including men, women and children. So long as its activity was confined to self-training, its expenses were met from



support given by friends without the necessity of a formal appeal being made to them . The expenses including those of a considerable number of temporary visitors have amounted to Rs.400 per month on an average.

But its activity has gradually widened and includes (1) weaving by means of handlooms, (2) an experiment in evolving a national type of education, and (3) spread of Hindi as a common medium for educated Indians.

These activities mean much greater expenditure of money than has come to me as above stated. For developing them, a permanent habitation on a fairly large plot of land is a necessity. Out of funds already in my possession over fifty *bighas* of land has been purchased on the banks of Sabarmati on a healthy site some distance from the Central Jail. It affords an easy access to the college students who have in ever increasing numbers been making use of the Ashram library, which contains a fair volume of selected literature and newspapers and magazines, the latter being kindly supplied free of charge by the respective publishers. According to a rough estimate made by Mr. Amritlal Thakkar of the Servants of India Society, who is drawing up the plans, the cost of the buildings will be Rs. 100,000. The educational experiment is costing Rs. 500, the handloom industry Rs.100 per month. The Hindi propaganda for the ensuing year will cost Rs. 200 per month. The educational and Hindi expenditures are a progressive charge. To these may be added my own travelling expenses[of] Rs. 100 per month in connection with one public activity or another. These last are easily met. Thus the whole figure comes to capital expenditure of Rs. 100,000 and Rs. 1,300, say Rs. 1,500, allowing



extra Rs. 200 per month for progressive expenditure, making Rs. 18,000 for the next twelve month.

I shall attempt only the briefest description of the activities mentioned above.

The handloom weaving is in a dying condition. Everyone admits that whatever may be the future of the mill industry, the handlooms ought not to be allowed to perish. Dr. Mann [of Poona Agricultural College; author of *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village*] in his recent pamphlet says that probably one of the causes of the growing poverty observed by him in particular villages was the destruction of handlooms which complemented agricultural occupation. The object of the Ashram, therefore, is for every inmate to learn hand-weaving and thus study at first hand the secrets and defects of the art and then find out the means of saving the industry. Every inmate, though none belongs to the weaving class, now knows something of the art. The Ashram is already supporting weaving families numbering 17 souls and one family having learnt the art at the Ashram has set up independently and is trying to support itself from the business. Seven looms are working at the Ashram. It has involved a capital expenditure of Rs. 3,000. It ought soon to be self-supporting. Nearly Rs. 500 worth of stuff has already been sold by the Ashram, and many who have hitherto used the shoddy mill-made stuff, whether foreign or home-made, are using the durable Ashram-made cloth. This enterprise is expected in 10 years' time to resuscitate hundreds of weavers who have for the moment abandoned their trade in hopeless despair.

The system of education at present in vogue is, it is held, wholly unsuited to India's needs, is a bad copy of the Western model and it has by



reason of the medium of instruction being a foreign language sapped the energy of the youths who have passed through our schools and colleges and has produced an army of clerks and office-seekers. It has dried up all originality, impoverished the vernaculars and has deprived the masses of the benefit of higher knowledge which would otherwise have percolated to them through the intercourse of educated classes with them. The system has resulted in creating a gulf between educated India and the masses. It has stimulated the brain but starved the spirit for want of a religious basis for education and emaciated the body for want of training in handicrafts. It has criminally neglected the greatest need of India in that there is no agricultural training worth the name provided in the course. The experiment now being carried on at the Ashram seeks to avoid all the defects above noted. The medium of instruction is the provincial vernacular. Hindi is taught as a common medium and handloom weaving and agriculture are taught from the very commencement. Pupils are taught to look up to these as a means of livelihood and the knowledge of letters as a training for the head and the heart and as a means of national service.

The curriculum has been mapped so as to cover all the essentials of the graduate course in the existing institutions within a period of 13 years. The experiment is in the hands of Professor Shah, late of the Gujarat College. Mr. Shah was associated with Professor Gajjar for 10 years. He is assisted by Mr. Narhari Parikh. B.A .. LL.B. Mr. Fulchand Shah, B.A., Mr. Dattareya Kalelkar, B.A., Mr. Chhaganlal Gandhi and Mr. Kishorelal Mashruwala, B.A.,LL.B. All but the last named have pledged themselves exclusively to the work for life on a pittance enough to support them and



their families. Mr. Kishorelal has given his services free for one year, having means of his own, and will, if he finds the work congenial at the end of the year, cast in his lot with the rest.

The experiment is confined to about 12 lads including two girls belonging to the Ashram or being children of the teachers. It is being supervised by Professor Anandshankar Dhruva, Vice-Principal of the Gujarat College. I build the highest hopes upon it. My faith in it is unquenchable. It may fail but if it does, the fault must not be in the system but with us the workers. If it succeeds, voluntary institutions after its model can be multiplied and the Government called upon to adopt it.

That Hindi ought at the earliest moment to displace English seems to be a self-demonstrated proposition. Hindi can not only become the common medium between the educated classes but it opens the door to the hearts of the masses in a way which no other vernacular does and English certainly never can. Madras alone presents a difficulty but I have sufficient faith in the spirituality and the imaginative faculty of the southerners to know that it will not be long before they take up Hindi as the common medium. No presidency in India has the same aptitude for learning languages that Madras has. That is my South African experience. Although the preponderating element there is Dravidian, the Tamils and the Telugus picked up Hindi instead of the Hindustani-speaking races picking up Tamil or Telugu.

It is then for these experiments that I ask for your pecuniary support. I hope you will send me what you can, if you at all agree with any of the activities. You may earmark your donation if you wish.



A trust will be created of the land and buildings. Accurate account of the expenditure in the various branches is being kept and an abstract will be rendered to the donors.

I do not want if I can help it as yet to make an appeal through the Press. The activities have not advanced far enough to warrant such an appeal. But I do not hesitate to approach with confidence those who know me personally either to assist me themselves or advise their friends to do so. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, pp.460-63]

The Kheda Satyagraha

The monsoon of 1917 proved a disaster for the peasants of Kheda district, which normally boasted of prosperous agriculture. The excessive rains (70 inches instead of the usual 30 inches) washed away the first sowing and the rains continued without break until October, thus allowing no time for a second sowing. Even the fodder crops were damaged. The peasants' expectation of a good *rabi* crop was frustrated because plague-stricken rats and pests had spoiled these crops as well. Response from the Government in the shape of relief measures was slow in coming, owing perhaps to the fact that it was an unusual phenomenon of 'wet famine' and not drought. The Revenue Officers showed no leniency and used coercive methods to realize revenue and *taqavi* dues from a peasantry most of whom were unable to pay it.

Towards the close of 1917 the Gujarat Sabha received reports of these grievances of the Kheda peasants. But before the Sabha could formally take any action, Mohanlal Pandya of Kathlal village took up the cudgels on behalf of the farmers. At his instance the cultivators of Kathlal submitted an application to the Government on 15 November 1917. The application, which accurately described



the situation throughout the district, urged the Government to postpone the collection of land revenue because of the loss suffered by the peasants. It was argued that excessive damage to the crops had been caused by heavy monsoons, resulting in a crop yield of less than four annas in the rupee. Many such applications were sent to the Government. The Home Rule League branches of Nadiad and Kathlal sent separate applications signed by thousands of their members. The Government replied that the Collector had full authority to deal with the matter; they must approach the Collector. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. I, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951, p.50]

Land revenue collections were due to begin in Kapadvanj and Thasra talukas on 5 December 1917. A deputation waited upon the Collector on 27 November. Nothing emerged out of the interview.

At a meeting in Nadiad on 25 November it was decided to request the members elected by Gujarat to the Legislatures, Gokuldas Parekh and Vithalbhai Patel, to take up this question and secure relief for the hard-pressed agriculturists. [*Ibid*, p.51]

On 11 December Messrs Parekh and Patel accordingly proceeded to Thasra, one of the talukas hardest hit and in the greatest distress which was aggravated by the general poverty of the people. They visited numerous villages in the taluka, inspected fields and spoke to the agriculturists in their homes.

On 15 December, the last day for the payment of the first instalment of the assessment, they took the opportunity to see the Collector, who was then camping in the taluka and presented to him a memorandum suggesting remission of land revenue in the case of agriculturists paying less than Rs. 30 and especially those belonging to backward classes, and postponement of collection for a year in the case of the rest.



The Collector was polite but said that he was bound by the rules governing remission and suspension of revenue assessment and could not concede the request. He had already issued instructions to the Mamlatdars that resort to coercive procedures should for the time being be postponed. He further told the deputationists that the anna valuation was to be based on a 12-anna crop and not on a 16-anna crop. This meant that a 75 per cent crop yield would be treated as a 100 per cent yield and estimates of crops in different villages would thus automatically become inflated. This was rather surprising.

The Collector, however, said the Government was not interested in overestimating the crops.

Patel and Parekh informed the Collector that though he had not issued any instructions as regards valuation, his subordinate officials had asked the *talatis* (field revenue officers) to overestimate the valuation.

They requested the Collector to suspend execution of his final orders for 15 days. The Collector refused to give any general undertaking in this respect. [*The Bombay Chronicle*, 25 December 1917]

On 22 December the Collector announced his decision that land revenue collection from 104 villages out of the 600 affected, paying 7.4 per cent of the total land revenue, would be postponed. [Narhari, D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.53]

The pressure from the *talatis* on the poor peasants for the recovery in the remaining 496 villages was increasing. The *talatis* used a language of the foulest kind, and the presence of women did not deter them from using grossly abusive terms. Thakkar Bapa in a letter addressed to *The Times of India* wrote:

Another grave complaint of the people is that under pressure from the taluka revenue officers, the crop estimate figures prepared by the



talatis are unduly high. Where the crop was less than 25 per cent, it has been estimated to be 26, 32 and sometimes even 50 per cent.... It is proved that one agriculturist had to sell his land; another had to borrow money at 75 per cent interest; six Harijan cultivators were made to hold their toes for two hours and were released only when they promised to pay up their land revenue dues. These men were obliged to borrow money at 37½ per cent interest.... Not merely is the land revenue for the current year being recovered, but even *taqavi*, which was given in 1912, is being collected! One Muslim cultivator was compelled to marry off his 10-year old daughter so as to borrow Rs. 15 from his son-in-law in order to pay up his revenue dues. [*Ibid*, pp.52-53]

Narhari Parikh writes:

With a view to creating a split among the villagers, the Mamlatdar issued a circular on the 8th January 1918 to the effect that in Kathlal only half the land revenue and *taqavi* would be collected. But even so, the people could not be tempted into paying it.

The enquiries, both by the Gujarat Sabha and the Servants of India Society, confirmed that crop failure had been substantial. The Gujarat Sabha wrote on 1 January 1918 to the Bombay Government, urging exemption of revenue in some cases and postponement in others. [*Ibid*, p.54]

Gandhiji was President of the Gujarat Sabha. On 7 January 1918, while on a visit to Ahmedabad, he held consultations with the members of the Sabha and advised them to ask the people to suspend payment of land revenue until a reply was received from the Government of Bombay to their applications. He also advised them to arrange for its representatives to meet personally F. G. Pratt, the Commissioner of the Northern Division, and explain to him the whole situation.



A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sabha was called by VaUabhbhai Patel at his house to consider Gandhiji's advice. Narhari Parikh records that Gandhiji was particularly insistent that as a step of this nature was novel and unprecedented, the Sabha should ask the agriculturists to adopt it only if it was supported unanimously by all the members of the Committee. After much deliberation everybody agreed, with one abstention.

The Gujarat Sabha then passed two resolutions. One requested the Government to postpone the recovery of land revenue. The other advised the people to suspend payment of revenue dues. [*Ibid*, p.55]

Acting on Gandhiji's advice the secretaries of the Gujarat Sabha, Krishnalal Desai and G. V. Mavalankar, on 10 January 1918 met Commissioner Pratt. Pratt had refused to meet other members of the Sabha's deputation. The Commissioner took objection to the Sabha publishing a notice which urged the farmers to suspend payment of land revenue, saying "... The significance of this notice is that you want in effect to hand over the responsibility for estimating the out-turn of the crop to the cultivator, however unsuited and unreliable a person he may be...." [*Ibid*, pp.57-58]. He asked them to give fuller consideration to the implications of their action and to inform him of their final decision by the next day, failing which he would write to the Government "recommending that your Sabha should be declared illegal." [*Ibid*, p.58]

At an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gujarat Sabha the same day, it was resolved that "it is neither unreasonable nor illegal to postpone payment of land revenue in respect of land in which the out-turn of the crop has been less than 25 per cent....No other advice could be more appropriate." [*Ibid*, p.58]



When Gandhiji was informed of the Commissioner's attitude he advised the Sabha to inform the Commissioner in writing about the harassment of the peasants by village officers and hardships inflicted on them in the course of the land revenue recovery work. He wrote to them to "protest politely but firmly against the insulting behaviour of the Commissioner.... A strong movement must immediately be started for ensuring the postponement of land revenue collection and suspension of the recovery work. This is the only correct reply to the arrogance of the Commissioner and the threat he has issued." [*Ibid*, p.58]

Parekh and Vithalbhai were doing what they could at the Bombay Secretariat. They met the Revenue Member, Carmichael, and requested him to make an independent inquiry regarding the value of the crops. They also requested him to postpone the enforcement of the Collector's orders until such time as they could raise this issue in the coming session of the Legislature. The Revenue Member expressed his inability to accede to their request. [*Ibid*, p.59]

On 14 January the Collector denounced the intervention of the Sabha and told the peasants to pay up their land revenue and *taqavi* as ordered, threatening "stringent legal measures" should they fail to do so. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.155]

The Government of Bombay approved the action of the Collector. In a statement issued on 16 January it said that the Collector had given relief to deserving persons after a careful enquiry, that the Collector's final orders had been issued before the Sabha's notice was distributed among the cultivators and so the activities of the Sabha were illegal and mischievous. It also accused the Sabha of "carpetbaggery", for its headquarters were in Ahmedabad and none of its members belonged to Kheda district. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.60]



Meanwhile the Government of Bombay's Special Department reported to S. R . Hignell, Secretary, Home Department, on 31 January 1918: "The agitation in the Kaira district continues and it appears to have taken the form of persuading the people not to pay their land revenue. The payments of the first instalment though fairly good were much below the average." [N.A.I. Home Poll. Deposit, May 1918]

When Gandhiji, who had gone back to Champaran, was told of the attitude of the Government towards the Gujarat Sabha, he telegraphed to the Sabha from Motihari that "agriculturists who have to borrow or to sell their cattle in order to pay land revenue should not do so.... The Government may do what it likes." [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.58]

In its reply to the Government the Sabha explained that Parekh and Patel, after meeting the Collector on 15 December 1917 had sent a statement of crop estimates from every taluka to him on the 19th and within three days of that he had published his orders! A close and careful enquiry of the crop yield in 600 villages was obviously not possible in three days. The Collector had not given careful consideration to the statement sent by them before issuing the orders.

The letter added:

... The Gujarat Sabha represents the whole of Gujarat, and many residents of Kheda district are its members.... It is not desirous of inciting the agriculturists of Kheda district, but only to assist them in their time of difficulty. To say that a piece of advice which is given to the agriculturists in regard to their purely agricultural difficulties has any political basis is very strange, and it is a cruel joke to turn down a request merely by calling the district rich and fertile. In the last 40 years there has been a decline in



its population by 11 per cent. Is that an index of the increase in fertility and prosperity of the area? [*Ibid*, p.61]

5

Gandhiji came back to Gujarat and seeing the increasing harassment of the peasantry and sensing the unbending stand taken by the Government, made up his mind to take charge of the movement. Addressing a Bombay gathering on 4 February 1918. He said:

... The appointment of an independent inquiry committee was the obvious answer.... The Government and officers have no right to take what they like from the people.... My advice [to the peasants] as that you should practise non-violent non-cooperation.... I wish to prove to the British Government and to the world that it is with the help of this weapon that we hope to secure justice. [*Ibid*, p.62]

On 5 February a deputation of the Gujarat Sabha, headed by Gandhiji and including Vithalbhai Patel, Dinshaw Wacha and Gokuldas Parekh, waited on the Governor. They pleaded with him that an independent commission be appointed to study the crop situation and look into the complaints of harshness on the part of the local revenue officials. Gandhiji suggested that Messrs Parekh and Patel be included on the Committee, and that either Dr. Harold Mann or Ewbank be appointed chairman. [C.W.M.G., Supplementary Vol.I, p.124]. The authorities turned down the request. The revenue member noted in the file on 9 April:

We should only be justified in taking action if we had reason to believe that the situation resembled in its general features those which characterized Champaran last year. I have every reason to believe that this is not the case. Lord Willingdon has personally met both Messrs Parekh and Patel (the first irresponsible meddlers) and Mr. Devdhar.... Mr. Gandhi



is this time on a thoroughly bad wicket. [N.A.I., Home Poll. Deposit, May 1918]

On 7 February and again on 10 February Gandhiji drew the attention of the Commissioner to the notices served by the officials in Kapadvanj threatening confiscation of land if assessment was not paid before a certain date, and pointed out that such measures could only leave bitterness behind. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.185]

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gujarat Sabha decided to carry out Gandhiji's instructions to institute an enquiry into crop estimates of every village in the district. The idea of satyagraha had not won over many members of the Gujarat Sabha, and Gandhiji started work on his own responsibility so that the Sabha as an institution might not be involved. He invited the interested members of the Sabha to join him in the work. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.164]

Gandhiji decided to enquire personally into the extent of crop failure. Writing about his intention to Pratt on 16 February, he said : "Whilst it is true that the evidence hitherto produced as to failure of crops to such an extent as to warrant suspension under the revenue rules, has not been conclusive, it is not possible for me, without conducting a personal investigation, to declare that the popular belief in [regard to] such failure is wrong.... I am anxious, if I can do so, to assure that I have absolutely no desire to encourage or produce a useless agitation and that I am proceeding to Kaira purely and simply in search of truth." [C.W.M.G., Supplementary, Vol.I, p.128]

Accordingly Gandhiji arrived at Nadiad with a band of 20 workers, and camped in the Orphanage. In a week's time reports in regard to 425 out of 600



villages had become available. Gandhiji himself investigated conditions in 30 villages to check the accuracy of the reports.

On 26 February Gandhiji sent his report to the district authorities. He observed that several thousand cultivators had under pressure paid the first instalment and some had paid both instalments. To do this many had to sell their cattle. He enclosed a list of villages where the yield had been less than 25 per cent and requested postponement of revenue recovery from those villages. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.215-16]

Gandhiji's method of assessment was challenged by the authorities. One of the villages investigated was Vadtal, a prosperous village where normally they grew two crops. Gandhiji's finding was that the crop yield of the village did not exceed one-eighth and asked the Collector to verify. The Collector did the checking without Gandhiji being present and declared that the yield had been 48 per cent. Previously the official assessment had placed it at 75 per cent.

Gandhiji's method of calculating crop yield was not accepted by the Collector, who wrote on 7 March:

According to your calculations if the first crop in a field had failed completely and a second crop grows in that field with a yield of 60 per cent., you regard the yield from the field as 30 per cent. If that method were accepted the cultivator would claim to have half the land revenue postponed. If a second crop is taken from the same field for the purpose of a crop estimate, it would be wrong to add the yield of the two crops and then divide it by 2. The right course is to regard the yield of the two crops as the yield of one, since the extra benefit received from the second crop does not make the cultivator liable for additional land revenue. The second crop is always more valuable than the first, and the expense is less. There



is usually very little or no expenditure on bullocks or implements or ploughing. Only some slight expenditure has to be incurred on other miscellaneous items, so that practically the whole of the second crop must be regarded as net profit. There is another defect in your calculation of crop by each field. It is impossible to check the state of the crop of each cultivator and to estimate its yield. One must take a view of the state of the crop of the whole village. I must further point out that ordinarily very little second crop is grown in this district, but this year there is every possibility of a bigger second crop. If we take account of the loss suffered by the first crop owing to excessive rain, we must set off against it the benefit gained thereby for the second crop. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, pp.66-67]

He made no reference to the fact that the rabi crops were marred by the plague.

Gandhiji completely disagreed with the Collector's stand. On 9 March he wrote to the Collector:

If 90 fields of every 100 grow only a *kharif* crop and have no rabi and if the rabi crop, where grown, be 16 annas, it would be a false average *annawari* for the 100 fields if the rabi crop for the purpose of *annawari* is a negligible quantity. The staple crops are undoubtedly *kharif* crops.... Indeed my observations supported by my follow-workers now cover nearly 350 villages and they lead me to think that the cultivators pay their assessment from the *kharif* crops and not out of the rabi.... The season and crop report for the year 1914-15 shows that the rabi crop was only a twelfth and for 1915-16 only twentieth of all the other crops.



...And if you accept my submission that only the staple crops should be valued, retention of your *annawari* in respect of them bring the average to less than 6.... The *annawari* for this village arrived at by this process is 2.7. I adhere to my suggestion that the rabi crop including the other standing crop can be easily utilized for testing the accuracy of the figures given by the cultivators.

(a) In my opinion by a variety of ways your minimum *annawari* for Wadthal has been successfully challenged and it is less than 4 annas....

(b) If however my suggestion as to *annawari* be not accepted I pray that the Government may be pleased to grant half-suspension all round. [C.W.M.G., Suppl. Vol.I, pp.134-39].

The relief was refused.

The local revenue officers forcibly extracted signatures from the peasants on statements which said that the crop yield was sufficient to permit revenue payment. Taking exception to these tactics Gandhiji wrote to the Commissioner, who wrote: "I see that there is so much difference of opinion between you and the Collector that there is no hope of an agreement." Upholding the Collector's view he described the attitude of the peasants "opposing the law" as "just insolence". [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.67]

There seemed no end to this argument. However, Gandhiji was anxious to avoid a struggle if he could. On 20 March, he made a last minute appeal to Pratt: "I do want to make a final appeal to you. Is it impossible to announce a general suspension of the collection of the second instalment, practically for the whole district., coupled with a declaration to the effect that the Government would still expect holders of *sanadia* land to pay the dues in full? This would avoid a ferment...." [C.W.M.G., Suppl. Vol.I, p.141]



Pratt answering the same day turned down the appeal.

6

On 22 March Gandhiji formally inaugurated the Satyagraha. At a largely attended meeting of the cultivators at Nadiad on that day, he advised them to tell the Government that if their request for postponement of recovery of assessment was not accepted they would not pay land revenue and would be prepared to take the consequences. Some argued that that would be treason or rebellion. It was nothing of the kind, Gandhiji told them, "It means suffering for ourselves, no treason... to refuse a thing firmly and plainly in the name of Truth - that is Satyagraha." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p. 277]

Gandhiji warned the audience that they would have to face great sufferings. The Government might (1) recover the assessment by selling their cattle and their immovable property, (2) impose fines, (3) confiscate jagirs, (4) even put people in jail on the ground that they were defiant. [Ibid, p.277]

The word 'defiant' had been used by the Government. But Satyagraha was not defiance, Gandhiji explained, it was an act of bravery. "It is very difficult," he went on, "to take the pledge of satyagraha; it is still more difficult to carry out one. I cannot bear to think of anyone breaking a pledge once taken, forsaking his God. It would cause me very great pain, indeed, if you took a pledge which you did not intend to keep. In the intensity of my suffering I may take an extreme step. I may have to fast.... In satyagraha a pledge is the most valuable thing of all.... A pledge taken in God's name must never be broken. I would not hesitate to sacrifice my life if that might ensure that thousands would keep their pledge.... I have only one request: suffer everything and honour the pledge; ... refuse to pay the revenue and prove to Government thereby that you are prepared for sacrifices." [Ibid, p.278]



Gandhiji then asked the people to sign the pledge which read:

Our village has had crops under four annas. We therefore requested the Government to postpone collection to the next year, but they did not do so. We the undersigned therefore solemnly declare that we shall not pay the assessment for the year whether it be wholly or in part; we shall leave it to the Government to take any legal steps they choose to enforce recovery of the same and we shall undergo all the sufferings that this may involve. We shall also allow our lands to be confiscated should they do so. But we shall not by voluntary payment allow ourselves to be regarded as liars and thus lose our self-respect. If the Government would graciously postpone for all the remaining villages collection of the balance of revenue, we, who can afford it, would be prepared to pay up revenue, whether it be in full or in part.... [*Ibid*, p. 279]

Some 200 people signed the pledge at the meeting itself. In the course of the following days a good many more people took the pledge. [*Ibid*, p. 279fn]

From 28 March to 31 March Gandhiji had to visit Indore in connection with the work of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. When he returned on 1 April, he found that punitive measures on a large scale had been put into operation for the realization of land revenue dues. He wrote to the Commissioner :

I observe that the crops of this Division [Limbasi] have been placed under distraint. This seems to me a cruel procedure. Again complaints are being made that violence is being used against the people in other parts. [C.W.M.G., Suppl.Vol.I, p.142]

Gandhiji also wrote to the Collector:



I must say that the notice distraining the whole of the crops is a cruel proceeding. The villages are sending a petition seeking relief. I am anxious that this should be and remain a fair fight. [*Ibid*, p.143]

Gandhiji also brought to the notice of the authorities the fact that in several villages, as in Agarpura, Od and Nasar, cattle had been distrained and in one case a milch buffalo had been removed. In some cases the officials had entered the kitchens of the cultivators with shoes on. [*Ibid*, pp.144-45]. Gandhiji then met the Collector and was able to reach with that official "a reasonable solution regarding Limbasi". But, he wrote to Pratt, he was anxious that an equally reasonable solution might be reached on the general question. [*Ibid*, p.142]

Gandhiji advised the cultivators that they should disregard the confiscation notices and go on cultivating their fields.

During the months that followed till the end of the Satyagraha on 6 June, Gandhiji spent most of his time in Kheda, having set up a Satyagraha camp at Nadiad. He toured the villages, gathering detailed information as to the extent of the devastation suffered by the crops and the high-handedness and cruelty of the officials and brought these to the notice of the authorities both at the district and provincial levels in exhaustively documented communications. He addressed meetings of villagers and had circulars distributed through which he sought to educate the cultivators about their rights and exhorted them to remain steadfast. He also issued Press statements. In one such statement on 28 March he said:

So far as I am aware, the Government have been pleased to grant full suspension with regard to one village out of nearly 600, and half suspension in the case of 103 villages.... The Government contend that in a vast majority of villages crops have been over six annas. The only question therefore at issue is whether the crops have been under four



annas or six annas, as the case may be, or over the latter figure. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.288]

The Government valuation, Gandhiji pointed out, was made by *talatis*, "as a class obsequious, unscrupulous and tyrannical". He said he had himself carried on a full enquiry "with the assistance of over 20 capable, experienced and impartial men of influence and status" in the course of which he had personally visited over 50 villages, met as many people as he could, and, after a searching cross-examination of the villagers come to the conclusion that their crops were under four annas. He cited the instance of Vadtal, "a well known and ordinarily prosperous village of the district," where on his suggestion the Collector had had an enquiry carried out. The Collector had arrived at a valuation of seven annas, whereas according to the agriculturists it could only be under four annas.

The Revenue Code, Gandhiji continued, gave the officials unlimited powers, such as 1. right of summary execution; 2. right of exacting a quarter of the assessment as punishment; 3. right of confiscation of land and the right of keeping a man under *hajat* (in a lock up). "Exercise of these powers in a case like the one before us, in which the ryots are fighting for a principle and the authorities for prestige, would be a prostitution of justice, a disavowal of all fair play." [*Ibid*, p.291]

Gandhiji called upon the Press and the public to come to the assistance of the suffering people of Kheda. He reminded the public that unprecedentedly severe plague had decimated the population of Kheda; people were living outside their homes in specially prepared thatched cottages at considerable expense and the prices were ruling high. "It is not money they want so much as the voice of a strong, unanimous and emphatic public opinion, he said. [*Ibid*, pp.291-92]



The Government appeared to be determined to suppress the movement. The Bombay Police Commissioner, in his weekly report on 1 April 1918, wrote that in the circumstances prevailing in India the movement was disloyal "and one that should be nipped in the bud without any loss of time, otherwise the contagion will spread to other districts and Government will find themselves in a very awkward position. The manner in which *The Bombay Chronicle* is booming the agitation is also regarded as most objectionable."

The Commissioner proceeded :

The anti-assessment campaign is waxing stronger.... Hood went yesterday to Naika and Nawagam but not a single man would pay up. He has issued a large number of forfeiture notices on the leaders.... In the meanwhile I have taken steps to expedite the collection work as much as possible and have told the Mamlatdars to attend to this, leaving all other work. [N.A.I. Home Poll. Deposit, May 1918]

Although the Servants of India Society had earlier indentified itself with the cause of the Kheda peasantry and indeed Messrs Devadhar, Amritlal Thakkar and N. M. Joshi had conducted their own investigations into the extent of crop failure and pleaded with the authorities for relief, by and large the leadership of the Society could not see eye to eye with Gandhiji and the Gujarat Sabha on the question of civil disobedience and publicly gave expression to their opposition to the movement. *The Indian Social Reformer*, while supporting the case for remission of revenue in individual cases, editorialized on 7 April 1918:

We are bound to say at the same time that we think it most unfortunate that this movement of what is known as "passive resistance" should have been launched at Kaira. If the people are to be advised, whenever they think that the officials are in error, to abstain from obeying



the law, all hope of improvement of an existing system by constitutional means should be abandoned.

Similarly, when Gandhiji invited V. S. Srinivasa Sastri to attend a public meeting to be held in Bombay in support of the Kheda movement, Sastri answered:

Frankly I am not satisfied on the expediency of passive resistance in the Kaira affair, even allowing that the rights of the case were with the ryots.... I am grieved to hesitate instead of springing to your side at your call. But I know, at the same time, you would not wish me in the circumstances to do what I cannot heartily approve. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.302]

7

Gandhiji toured the villages incessantly, addressing meetings day after day. Some of the places covered were Kathana (1 April), Limbasi (2 April), Karamsad (4 April), Vadtal (5 April), Uttarsanda (6 April), Navagam (7 April), Borsad (8 April), Alkacha (10 April), Sinhuji (10 April), Vadod (11 April), Nadiad (17 April), Ras (18 April), Rajaj (22 April), Sunav (22 April), Dhundakuva (13 May), Sandesar (16 May), and Khandhali (27 May).

Everywhere Gandhiji called upon the agriculturists to remain true to their pledge of not paying the assessment, whatever the hardships. They must cultivate fearlessness, which consisted in a man bearing sword-cuts without flinching. Uncompromising insistence on truth was their weapon.

As the struggle continued official pressures increased. Seizure of crops, auctioning of cattle and forfeiture of land became more common. Threat of dire consequences was held out to those refusing to pay. On 12 April, at a meeting of the cultivators held at Ahmedabad, Commissioner Pratt told them that revenue



assessment was solely a Government charge, outside the purview even of Civil Courts and that therefore the agriculturists had no legal right to demand postponement of the assessment. They must pay heed to his words because what he said represented the position of the Governor. They must not consider themselves bound by the pledge not to pay land revenue. Mr. Gandhi was a holy man but he knew nothing of revenue matters. [*Ibid*, Appendix –XIII]

Answering Pratt Gandhiji wrote to *The Bombay Chronicle* on 15 April:

The ryots do not need to be literate to appreciate their rights and their duties. They have but to realize their invulnerable power and no Government, however strong, can stand against their will. The Kheda ryots are solving an Imperial problem of the first magnitude in India. They will show that it is impossible to govern men without their consent.... Today the Civil Service is a rule of fear. The Kheda ryot is fighting for the rule of love.

Referring to the threat of confiscations held out by Pratt, Gandhiji continued : "I hold that it is the sacred duty of every loyal citizen to fight unto death against such a spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny." [*Ibid*, p.339]

As official high-handedness mounted, it became more and more difficult for people to control their resentment and complaints began to be heard about the harassment of revenue staff by sections of villagers. Gandhiji sternly warned the people against any kind of indecency being shown to officials. On 17 April, he laid down the following guidelines for the satyagrahis:

1. The Volunteers must remember that, as this is a Satyagraha campaign, they must abide by Truth under all circumstances.



2. In Satyagraha, there can be no room for rancour; which means that a satyagrahi should utter no harsh word about anyone, from a *ravana* to the Governor himself; if someone does so, it is the Volunteer's duty to stop him.
3. Rudeness has no place in Satyagraha. Perfect courtesy must be shown even to those who may look upon us as their enemies and the villagers must be taught to do the same. Rudeness may harm our cause and the struggle may be unduly prolonged. The Volunteers should give the most serious attention to this matter and think out in their minds as many examples as possible of the advantages accruing from courtesy and disadvantages resulting from rudeness and explain them to the people.
4. The Volunteers must remember that this is a holy war. We embarked upon it because, had we not, we would have failed in our *dharma*. And so all the rules which are essential for living a religious life must be observed here too.
5. We are opposing the intoxication of power, that is, the blind application of law, and not authority as such. The difference must never be lost sight of. It is, therefore, our duty to help the officers in their other work.
6. We are to apply here the same principles that we follow in a domestic quarrel. We should think of the Government and the people as constituting a large family and act accordingly.
7. We are not to boycott or treat with scorn those who hold views different from ours. It must be our resolve to win them over by courteous behaviour.



8. We must not try to be clever. We must always be frank and straightforward.
9. When they stay in villages, the Volunteers should demand the fewest services from the village folk. Wherever it is possible to reach a place on foot, they should avoid using a vehicle. We must insist on being served the simplest food. Restraining them from preparing dainties will add grace to the service we render.
10. As they move about in villages, the Volunteers should observe the economic condition of the people and the deficiencies in their education and try, in their spare time, to make them good.
11. If they can, they should create opportunities when they may teach the village children.
12. If they notice any violation of the rules of good health, they should draw the villagers' attention to the fact.
13. If at any place, they find people engaged in quarrelling among themselves, the Volunteers should try to save them from their quarrels.
14. They should read out to the people, when the latter are free, books which promote Satyagraha. They must read out stories of Prahlad, Harishchandra and others. The people should also be made familiar with instances of pure Satyagraha to be found in the West and in Islamic literature
15. At no time and under no circumstances is the use of the arms permitted in Satyagraha. It should never be forgotten that in this struggle the highest type of non-violence is to be maintained.



Satyagraha means fighting oppression through voluntary suffering. There can be no question here of making anyone else suffer. Satyagraha is always successful, it can never meet with defeat; let every Volunteer understand this himself and then explain it to the people. [*Ibid*, pp.350-51]

On 23 April a large public meeting was held in Bombay to support the Kheda Satyagraha. Gandhiji explained to the audience that what was involved in the campaign was "something more than money - any wealthy magnate of Bombay could easily have paid them the amount".

Gandhiji said:

In this struggle, I wish to establish the principle that the Government cannot decide on collection of land revenue without consulting the people. Merely saying that the land revenue code is bad will not bring us relief. There is only one way to save ourselves from our suffering, and that is by suffering voluntarily to end our miseries once for all. [*Ibid*, p.370]

Asking for support and active help of public workers in the cause, Gandhiji said :

My experience in Kheda and Champaran teaches me this one lesson, that, if the leaders move among the people, live with them, eat and drink with them, a momentous change will come about in two years. Make a deep study of this struggle; understand the worth of the people of Kheda.... We shall not be arrogant in seeking justice. We seek it by awakening the Government to a sense of truth. The people will keep on fighting till they have secured justice. [*Ibid*, p.371]



The meeting passed a resolution, moved by Tilak, expressing sympathy with the cultivators and demanding from the Government either suspension of revenue assessment or the institution of an impartial enquiry into their grievances. [*Ibid*, p.371]

On 24 April the Government in a press note sought to prove that Gandhiji's method of enquiry had been 'Utopian ' and had exaggerated the amount of damage to the crops. They cited in their support the enquiry conducted by Devadhar and two others of the Servants of India Society. Gandhiji replying on 6 May cited statistics about the case of Limbasi, mentioned in the Government's Press note, and proved that the *annawari* arrived at by the officials was wrong.

Refuting the claim that there was no distress in Kheda, Gandhiji wrote:

If distress means starvation, I admit that the Kheda people are not starving. But if sale of goods to pay assessment or to buy grain for food be an indication of distress, there is enough of it in the district. I am prepared to show that hundreds have paid their assessment either by incurring debts or by selling their trees, cattle or other valuables. The cultivators ... are under threat to lose their lands worth three crores of rupees for an assessment of four lakhs of rupees. [*Ibid*, p.391]

8

The agriculturists of Kheda carried on the fight with grit and determination that earned them the admiration of the whole country. The officials now saw that their spirit could not be broken.

Moreover, this conflict had come at a very inconvenient time for the rulers. At a moment when they required all their resources to mobilize the country for the war which had reached a critical stage, they could ill afford to keep the friction



alive, especially as they needed Gandhiji to help them. In the letter to the Viceroy of 29 April, Gandhiji, touching upon the Satyagraha, wrote:

You have appealed to us to sink domestic differences. If the appeal involves the toleration of tyranny and wrong-doing on the part of the officials, I am powerless to respond. I shall resist again organized tyranny, to the uttermost.... In Champaran by resisting an age-old tyranny, I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British justice. In Kheda, a population that was cursing the Government now feels that it, and not the Government, is the power when it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents..... If I could popularize the use of soul-force, which is but another name for love force in the place of brute force, I know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering and present it for acceptance to those who care. [*Ibid*, p.379]

On 3 June 1918 at a meeting of agriculturists of Uttarsanda, in the presence of Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel, an order issued by the *mamlatdar* was read out, which said that the well-to-do agriculturists should pay up their dues and that the poor *khatedars* would be given a suspension of the assessment till the following year.

Gandhiji told the meeting that the order reflected the result of consultations the Collector had had with him and asked those able to pay not to withhold payment any more. He asked the agriculturists to make a list of those who were so poor that in order to pay the revenue they would have to borrow money or sell their wives' ornaments, their buffaloes and other property.



Gandhiji wrote to the Collector that the order in question should be published and made applicable to the whole district. The Collector agreed. [*Ibid*, p.415]

On 6 June in a letter addressed to the people of Kheda Gandhiji announced the end of the Satyagraha started on 22 March.

However Gandhiji noted with sorrow that it had been an end without grace on the part of the authorities. It lacked dignity. For the order had not been passed with generosity or with heart in it. According to the Collector the order had been issued to the *mamlatdars* as early as on 25 April and again brought to their attention on 22 May.

Gandhiji asked:

If this was so, why were these orders not published to the people? If they had known them on 25 April, what sufferings would they not have been saved from? Wherever the assessment was uncollected the people lived with their lives in their hands. They have lived away from their houses to avoid attachments. They have not had enough food. The women have suffered what they ought not to have. At times they have been obliged to put up with insults from insolent circle inspectors, and to helplessly watch their milch buffaloes being taken away from them. [*Ibid*, pp.418-19]

"However," Gandhiji continued, "though the official attitude had been unsatisfactory, the prayer of the agriculturists had been granted", and it was their duty to accept it with thankfulness. There was only 8 per cent of the assessment remaining unpaid. Those who could afford should pay without causing the Government the slightest trouble and thus show that where there was no conflict between the dictates of conscience and those of man-made law, they would obey



the law of the land. A satyagrahi sometimes appeared momentarily to disobey laws and the constituted authority only to prove in the end his regard for both.

"The people of Kheda," said the letter dated 6 June 1918 signed by Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel, "have truly served their own cause, as well as the cause of swaraj and the Empire." [*Ibid*, pp.418-19]



CHAPTER VIII: AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

1

The Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike and Gandhiji's intervention in it came while the trouble in Kheda, which led to his organizing Satyagraha there, was going on. It necessitated Gandhiji's remaining in Ahmedabad almost continuously from 6 February to 20 March 1918 except for a break of five days. The strike was called off as a result of a settlement on 20 March and the mill-hands went back to work. On 22 March the Kheda Satyagraha was started with the signing of the Satyagraha pledge at a mass meeting in Nadiad. Gandhiji's involvement in the strike had been due to his close relationship with Ambalal Sarabhai and his sister Anasuyabehn, who had devoted herself to the welfare of labour.

By the time Gandhiji came to settle in Ahmedabad the city had already grown to become the second largest textile centre of India. From one single spinning mill in 1861 set up by Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, the Ahmedabad textile industry had progressed to 51 mills with 100,000 spindles and 20,000 looms and was one of the most important centres of textile production. It employed a sizeable labour force. The mill-hands along with their dependants made up almost 10 per cent of the city's population of two and a half to three lakhs. K . L. Gillion, who made a study of Ahmedabad's history, writes:

By 1919 a majority of the population of the city was directly or indirectly dependent on the mill industry. Most of the mill workers were low-caste Dheds, Dharalas and Vaghris, drawn from within a radius of 50 miles of the city, though some had come from distant places such as Rajasthan. A fifth of them were born in the city itself, including many Muslims and Kanbis (Patidars) who had traditionally been associated with



textile production in the city. The workers in the weaving department of the mills were usually of higher caste than the spinners.

Generally the Ahmedabad labour force was more settled than that of Bombay and other large Indian industrial centres. Once they came to the city most stayed permanently and brought their families too. This large, settled and - until the First World War - unorganized industrial proletariat was a new and potentially most important force in the life of Ahmedabad. [K. L. Gillion "Gujarat in 1919" in R. Kumar, (Ed.) *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.128]

The mills were operated on the "management agency system". This consisted in individuals or groups running the mills on a commission basis for the owners, the ownership being shared not only among shareholders but also among many small depositors, who provided as much as 85 per cent of the capital in some of the mills. In course of time some managing agents and their families ended up by buying all the shares and deposits in their mills and became the real mill-owners, with a right not only to the commission but also to the dividend. [Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., New York, 1969, pp.63-64]

One of such mill-owner families, which figured most prominently in the labour dispute was of the Sarabhais', then headed by Ambalal. He was the anonymous donor who had helped Gandhiji out in 1916, when the Ashram had been faced with financial difficulty following the boycott of the Ashram by some Ahmedabad Hindus because of the admission of a Harijan family into the Ashram. Ambalal Sarabhai was a man of courage and determination and stood for freedom of choice. This he showed by marrying Sarladevi in 1913, who was, according to a story, the younger sister of the girl the family wanted him to marry.



She had a dark complexion but Ambalal chose her in preference to the fairer elder sister. Sadadevi came from a different caste and in those days caste was very important. When the couple drove home after the wedding, they had to take a circuitous route to escape being stoned by the populace. Gandhiji settled in Ahmedabad in 1915 and soon became a close friend and guide of the Sarabhai family. [*Ibid*, pp.297-98]

While Ambalal Sarabhai stood for the mill-owners in the Ahmedabad mill-hands' dispute, his sister Anasuyabehn represented the workers. The brother and sister had been orphaned when Anasuyabehn was barely 10 and Ambalal 7 years of age. She looked after the brother till she was married by her uncle to the boy, hardly a year older, to whom she had been betrothed. Her husband was not a particularly bright student and kept failing in his examinations. As it would not have been thought proper for her as a Hindu wife to overtake her husband in studies, she gave up her studies. Even after her marriage she spent a great deal of time in the parental house. She had dropped out from school, but she would sit and listen to what the tutor taught her brother and in this way continued her studies. At her husband's house, she soon saw that she would not be able to adjust and live with the man she was married to. Finally she told her husband that she intended to abjure married life. He became abusive. Ambalal came and took her back with him.

Anasuyabehn kept house for her brother till his marriage in 1913 and then proceeded to England to study medicine. But the pursuit of this discipline involved dissection which she could not bring herself to undertake. She therefore gave up the idea of becoming a doctor and transferred her interest to the study of social work. In doing social work in England, she worked with people in "filthy



quarters, dirty children, uncared-for patients, and all manner of depraved individuals."

On returning to India Anasuyabehn plunged into the service of the mill-hands. As early as March 1914, she started a school for the workers' children with two shifts. Night classes were also started for adults and the children who worked during the day. Labour welfare work occasionally brought her in confrontation with her brother who pursued the interests of the mill-owners.

Anasuyabehn found that the conditions of employment in the mills were totally unhygienic, unhealthy and immoral. She gave particular attention to women labourers who worked harder and earned less than men.

Working conditions of industrial labour in those days were universally bad and wages were unsatisfactory. Adult workers had a 12 hour working day and children 9 to 12 years old worked for six to nine hours. Notwithstanding the Factory Act and various labour laws for their protection, many children worked in the mills under different names in the two shifts. The adults, which term included children above 12 years of age, all worked for 12 hours a day and some warpers worked for 36 hours at a stretch with only a few short breaks. Their eyes were always blood-shot.

Anasuyabehn quickly saw that she could not pursue social work among the mill-hands without becoming a labour leader. Her heart bled to see babies asleep between machines and breathing air full of dust and cotton fluff. She began to take up the workers' cause with factory inspectors and with the management of mills. When in 1917 Gandhiji was engaged in the Champaran Satyagraha, Anasuyabehn had already established herself as the leader of the Ahmedabad working class. [*Ibid*, pp.300-03]



The plague took a virulent form in Ahmedabad in 1917. Hundreds died every month. In November 1917 there were 550 deaths and 600 new cases were reported. Hospital facilities were hopelessly inadequate and only some 30,000 persons could be induced to accept inoculation. Schools, colleges and most public institutions were shut down. Employees began to flee the city. The mill-owners, however, decided to keep the mills running and offered a special plague bonus amounting to 70% of their wages or more to induce the workers not to leave the city. This was continued for some time after the epidemic was over. [*Ibid*, pp.323-24]

The ravages of the plague and the scarcities that came in the wake of the war made the life of the workers quite unbearable. In 1918 there was a general rise in prices. Foodstuffs, cloth, kerosene and other necessities were in short supply. The distribution of grain was controlled and inevitably there were abuses associated with the administration of controls. [K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919" in R. Kumar (Ed.) *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.131-32]

The workers were now threatened with a wage cut in the form of withdrawal of the plague bonus. They were upset and Anasuyabehn sympathized with them.

There was a small class of workers, the warpers, numbering some 500, who had not been offered any plague bonus, for it was thought that they were too settled in their ways to consider leaving the city and there was no need to pay them. They soon raised their voice, demanding a 25 per cent dearness allowance. Anasuyabehn took up their cause with the mill-owners and with her brother.

Gandhiji was approached on behalf of Anasuyabehn and he wrote to Ambalal Sarabhai on 2 December 1917:



... I think you should satisfy the weavers for the sake of Shrimali Anasuyabai at any rate. There is no reason to believe that if you satisfy these , you will have others clamouring. Even if that should happen, you can do what you think fit then. Why should not the mill-owners feel happy paying a little more to the workers? There is only one royal road to remove their discontent: entering their lives and binding them with the silken thread of love.... How could a brother be the cause of suffering to a sister? And, that too, a sister like Anasuyabehn? I have found that she has a soul which is absolutely pure. It would be nothing strange if you took her word to be law. You are thus under a double obligation: to please the workers and earn a sister's blessings. My presumption, too, is doubly serious; in a single letter I have meddled in your business and your family affairs. Do forgive me. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.115]

Gandhiji, interrupting his work in Champaran, paid a visit to Bombay on 4 and 5 February 1918 in connection with the situation developing in Kheda. Ambalal Sarabhai met him there and apprised him of the labour dispute brewing in the textile mills . Gandhiji was not altogether unacquainted with the ins and outs of the question . On Ambalal requesting him to intervene in the dispute and prevent a strike from taking place, he readily agreed.

Gandhiji immediately proceeded to Ahmedabad and set to work collecting facts and figures as to the causes of the dispute. He met representatives of the workers and agents of the mill-owners and familiarized himself with the positions of the two sides.

Gandhiji discovered that the immediate cause of the discontent among the workers was the decision of the employers to stop payment of the plague bonus, which was being paid to the mill-hands since the outbreak of the plague in August



1917. It then made up 70 to 80 per cent of their wages. Workers argued that the cost of living had risen so steeply owing to the shortages and high prices of food clothing, kerosene and other necessities that the abrupt stoppage of the plague bonus would make their condition quite unbearable. Every day workers' deputations went to Anasuyabehn and pleaded with her to take up their case. They demanded a wage increase of at least 50 per cent if the plague bonus was withdrawn.

Addressing a meeting of the workers on 8 February, Gandhiji said they could not all at once demand a wage increase of 50 to 60 per cent, that they should put their case before the employers with due firmness but do nothing that would increase bitterness. If their demands were reasonable they were sure to be conceded, for, after all, the mill-owners too were Indians. [*Ibid*, pp.185-86]

The Government authorities too were uneasy and feared that in the event of a confrontation between employers and mill-hands, the city might be plunged into unrest. Accordingly the Collector of Ahmedabad wrote to Gandhiji on 11 February:

There is likelihood of a serious situation arising between the mill-owners and the workers on the question of bonus. The mill-owners threaten to lock-out the workers, which will naturally cause great distress and hardship. I am, therefore, very anxious to understand the real situation. I am informed that mill-owners will, if at all, heed only your advice; you are also sympathetic to them and you are the only person who can explain their case to me. I shall be thankful, therefore, if you can make it convenient to meet me for about an hour tomorrow. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, Navajivan Publication, Ahmedabad, 1951 p.5]



Gandhiji met the Collector, the mill agents and the workers. He appealed to be optimistic because the President of the Mill-owners' Association, Sheth Mangaldas Parekh, was favourably disposed towards the workers. Along with a few others, he was even prepared to continue the plague bonus rather than have a strike or a lock-out on his hands.

The mill-owners who resisted the workers' demand and were prepared to take a stiff stand were represented by Ambalal Sarabhai. With him Gandhiji was on the friendliest of terms.

There were other factors too to complicate the issue. The authorities were, for instance, informed by the secret service that it would suit the employers to close down the mills just then because coal was in short supply as a consequence of wartime transportation difficulties. [Erik H. Erikson *Gandhi's Truth*, pp.327-28]

Gandhiji succeeded in persuading the mill-owners and the workers to refer the dispute to Arbitration Board. This was accordingly set up on 14 February with Ambalal Sarabhai, Jagabhai Dalpatbhai and Sheth Chandulal representing the mill-owners, Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankerlal Banker representing the workers, and the Collector acting as the umpire.

Gandhiji had to leave for Kheda at this stage. The workers did not have much faith in the Arbitration Board. Many of them thought it was merely a manoeuvre on the part of the mill-owners. So some workers in a few mills chose to go on a strike. The mill-owners, picking on this as an excuse, decided to withdraw from the arbitration and declare simultaneous lock-out in all the mills.

Anasuyabehn sent news of this turn in the situation to Gandhiji, while he was at Nadiad on 16 February. He rushed back to Ahmedabad and took the



workers to task for having gone on a strike when the matter had been placed in the hands of an Arbitration Board. The workers were ready to go back to work. He also wrote to Gordhandas Patel, Secretary of the Mill-owners' Association, on 21 February:

I think the principle of arbitration is of far-reaching consequence and it is not at all desirable that the mill-hands should lose faith in it. I find it impossible, therefore, to run away from this duty which has come to me unsought. Shankerlal Banker and Vallabhbhai Patel agree with me. It is not desirable, from the workers' point of view and yours, in fact from that of all of us, that they remain without work, in a state of uncertainty. Banker has collected figures of what the Bombay mills pay. I shall be obliged if you send me, without delay, a statement of the wages paid by the local mills. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.211]

But it was already too late to save the situation. The employers had wanted an excuse to close the mills. This was provided by the strike by some workers. They adopted a rigid stance. What followed is best described by Gandhiji in the very first leaflet he distributed among the workers on 26 February:

The employers, however, thought that the workers were in the wrong in striking before the Award was given by the arbitrators and that, therefore, they would be justified in cancelling their resolution regarding arbitration and this they did.

The mill-owners simultaneously passed a resolution to the effect that workers be paid a 20 per cent hike on their due wages and be discharged if they were not content with a 20 per cent increase. The weavers were not satisfied and accepted discharge, and the lock-out by the employers commenced. But the arbitrators for the workers felt it their



responsibility to tell the workers, under the circumstances, what increase they could properly demand. But before doing so they consulted among themselves and, after giving full consideration to the interests of both the mill-owners and the workers and to all other circumstances, decided that an increase of 35 per cent was justified. [*Ibid*, pp.214-15]

The lock-out in the mills was declared from 22 February. The warpers formed a union of their own and the mill-owners formed their own association. The workers declared a strike from 26 February.

Gandhiji made the workers take a pledge:

(1) that they would not resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the july wages was secured, and

(2) that they would not, during the period of the lock-out, cause any disturbance or resort to violence or indulge in looting, nor damage any property of the employers or abuse anyone, but would remain peaceful.

He thus gave the struggle a moral dimension.

Workers now took to gathering every evening under a *babul* tree on the banks of the Sabarmati, where Gandhiji addressed them, giving them strength to continue the struggle till victory was won. On the fifth day of the lock-out, on 26 February, speaking at one such gathering he said:

Some of you probably think that everything will be all right after a week or two of suffering. I repeat that though we may hope that our struggle will end early, we must stand firm even if that hope is not realized and must not resume work even if we have to die. Workers have no money but they possess a wealth superior to money - they have their hands, their courage and their fear of God. [*Ibid*, p.217]



Gandhiji decided that in order the better to lead the workers, the volunteers guiding them in their struggle must enter more closely into their lives. Accordingly Anasuyabehn Sarabhai, Shankerlal Banker and Chhaganlal Gandhi were asked to visit the workers in their homes morning and evening every day, to gather such information as the income of each family, the number of family members and the state of their health and to advise the workers on how best they could improve their condition. They must share the joys and sorrows of the workers and identify themselves with them. They should also keep the workers informed on the day-to-day developments in regard to the strike and educate them in the principles involved in the struggle.

These morning and evening visits were of immense value. They enabled the workers' advisers to feel the pulse of the entire labour community of Ahmedabad and keep abreast of the changes in the workers' moods. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, pp.8-9]

It was also decided to "issue instructive leaflets every day with a view to fixing firmly in their minds the principles and significance of the struggle, and to supply them with simple but elevating literature which would conduce to their mental and intellectual development." [*Ibid*, p.8]. These leaflets were drafted by Gandhiji and were issued in the name of Anasuyabehn.

In the course of the 25 days of lock-out and strike from 22 February to 19 March, no less than seventeen of such leaflets were issued. In leaflet 2, issued on 27 February, Gandhiji called upon the workers to develop "certain qualities of character without which we would be at the mercy of others." These were:

1. The workers should be truthful and firm. A truthful man is never defeated.



2. They should cultivate courage and must not be scared of losing their jobs.
3. They should have a sense of justice and not demand wages higher than they deserve.
4. They should not bear ill-will for the employers nor harbour any grudge against them.
5. Workers must realize that the struggle must involve suffering. But happiness follows suffering voluntarily undertaken. Ultimately the workers' suffering must move the employers.
6. The workers must remain peaceful and have faith in God. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.219-20]

Addressing the workers on the same day, Gandhiji told them:

Stand by your unwritten and unspoken pledge and success is yours. If you had accepted defeat from the beginning, I would not have come to you nor would have Anasuyabehn; but you decided to put up a fight. The news has spread all over India. In due course the world will know that Ahmedabad workers have taken a pledge, with God as their witness, that they will not resume work until they have achieved their object. In future your children will look at this tree and say that their fathers took a solemn pledge under it.... You may have to starve to death. Even so... stand by your pledge faithfully and continue the struggle. [*Ibid*, p.222]

Leaflet 3 of the following day, 28 February, took this education a little further. In it Gandhiji exhorted the workers to overcome their weaknesses and learn to make use of their idle hours. First the don'ts:

1. The workers should not waste time in gambling.



2. They should not spend it sleeping during the day.
3. They should not keep talking all the time of employers and the lock-out.
4. They should not frequent tea-stalls and spend their time gossiping and eating and drinking.
5. They must not go to the mills while the lock-out continued.

As to what the workers should do :

1. They should make use of their enforced holiday and keep their dwellings and surroundings clean.
2. Those who are literate should increase their knowledge by further reading. They should also teach those who are illiterate.
3. Those who possess any skills such as tailoring, cabinet-making or wood-carving and engraving, can seek work for themselves. If they fail to find work they may approach their advisers.
4. Workers should try and learn some subsidiary occupation besides the one from which they earn their livelihood. [*Ibid*, p.224]

In the ninth day's leaflet, No. 4 , of 1 March, Gandhiji told the workers how he and other leaders of the workers proposed to help them. The following is the operative part of the leaflet:

First, what the advisers of the workers cannot do.

1. We shall not help the workers in doing anything which is wrong.
2. We shall have to abandon the workers and cease helping them if they do anything wrong or make inflated demand or commit violence.



3. We can never wish ill to the employers; in all that we do we are bound to consider their interests. We shall promote the workers' interest while duly safeguarding the employers'.

What the advisers would do:

1. We are with the workers so long as they conduct themselves well, as they have done so far.
2. We shall do all we can to obtain for them 35 per cent increase in wages.
3. We are, as yet, only entreating the employers. We have not tried so far to win public sympathy or educate public opinion. But we shall be prepared, if the situation demands it, to acquaint the whole of India with the workers' plight and hope that we shall succeed in obtaining public sympathy for our cause.
4. We shall not rest till the workers get what they are entitled to.
5. We are making an effort to inform ourselves of the condition of the workers in its economic, moral and educational aspects. We shall show the workers how they may improve their economic condition; we shall strive to raise their moral level; we shall think out and teach them ways and means of living in cleanliness and we shall work for the intellectual improvement of such of them as live in ignorance.
6. *We shall not ourselves eat or dress without providing food and clothing to such of the workers as are reduced to destitution in the course of the struggle.* [Emphasis supplied.]
7. We shall nurse the sick among them and get for them the services of *vaid*s and doctors. [*Ibid*, pp.227-28]



It was becoming apparent that the mill-owners had set themselves against granting the wage increase demanded. Mahadev Desai thus analysed the situation:

... it appeared that the non-acceptance of the workers' demand by the employers was not due to their inability to pay 35 per cent but to sheer obstinacy. They had adopted this perverse attitude fearing that if once the workers succeeded, they would be a source of constant nuisance and the advisers of labour would get a permanent footing. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p.14]

On 1 March Gandhiji wrote to Ambalal Sarabhai:

If you succeed, the poor, already suppressed, will be suppressed still more, will be more abject than ever and the impression will have been confirmed that money can subdue everyone.... Is it your desire that the arrogance of money should increase? Or that the workers be reduced to utter submission?.... Do you not see that in your failure lies your success? ... Do you not see that your success will have serious consequences for the whole society? Your efforts are in the nature of *duragraha*. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.229-30]

Leaflet 5, issued on 2 March, was addressed not so much to the workers as to the employers. It said:

The employers feel that conceding the workers' demand will strengthen their advisers' influence on them. If the advisers are right in their stand, if they are devoted to the cause, the workers will never leave them whether they are defeated or victorious, and be it noted that the advisers also will not abandon the workers. Those who have dedicated themselves to service of others will not forsake it even if they have to incur



the displeasure of those whom they oppose.... Strive as they may, the employers will never succeed in dividing the advisers from the workers.
[*Ibid*, p. 231]

In Leaflet 6, of 3 March, Gandhiji contrasted the Indian and Western ideas of justice in relations between employers and employees. Whereas in ancient India these relations were "based primarily on considerations of mutual regard, propriety, decorum and affection" the Western way was quite the opposite.

When workers make a demand merely because they think themselves strong enough to do so, regardless of the employers' condition, they will have succumbed to the modern, Satanic idea of justice. The employers, in refusing to consider the workers' demands, have accepted this Satanic principle of justice, may be unintentionally or in ignorance. The employers ganging up against the workers is like raising an army of elephants against ants. If they had any regard for *dharma*, the employers would hesitate to oppose the workers. You will never find in ancient India that a situation in which the workers starved was regarded as the employers' opportunity. [*Ibid*, pp.232-33]

Leaflets 7, 8 and 9, of 4, 5 and 6 March, dwelt on the heroism shown by Indian satyagrahis in South Africa and the spirit of chivalry shown by them when in January 1914 they suspended their Satyagraha because just then European workers in the South African railways had gone on a strike to secure an increase in wages. The Indians refused to join them because it would have caused embarrassment to the Government. As satyagrahis they could not take advantage of the difficulties of the opponent. The leaflets also eulogized the martyrdom of Hurbat Singh, an old man of 70, Valliamma, a young girl of 17, Narayanaswamy and Nagappen, who all underwent suffering for the cause of



their countrymen and finally sacrificed their lives. Then there were satyagrahis such as A. M. Cachalia, Imam Saheb A . K . Bawazeer and Dadamia Kaji who endured extreme rigours in jail and remained undaunted.

Gandhiji appealed to the workers not to meet anger with anger. Even though the employers had been saying unworthy things and twisted and exaggerated things in their own leaflets, the workers must not let themselves be misled or provoked by such statements. [*Ibid*, pp.255-40]

The daily leaflets issued in Anasuyabehn's name were not only distributed among the workers but were also read out and discussed at the evening gatherings of the workers that were regularly held under the *babul* tree on the banks of the Sabarmati. Gandhiji would come and speak to them. Mahadev Desai has described these meetings:

Every day in the evening the workers congregated in large numbers at about 4.30 p.m. under the *babul* tree. They did not hesitate to come from long distances. They read with enthusiasm the leaflets issued from day to day and read them out to their illiterate friends. They cheerfully greeted Gandhiji, Anasuyabehn, Banker and their other advisers. They made way for them in the midst of a crowd of thousands. They maintained perfect silence during Gandhiji's discourse and reading of the leaflet. They declared their pledge at the end of the meeting in such a charming manner that the number of outsiders who came to see these meetings began to increase day by day. Those old or young who attended these meetings can never forget them. The output of fresh songs and verses composed for the occasion every day by the workers, the majority of whom were illiterate, was indeed surprising.... Sentences like the following are even now not forgotten: 'Be not afraid for we have a divine helper.'



'If we are to die of starvation, let us die, but it is proper that we do not give up our resolve. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, pp.16-17]

The employers on their part were not idle. They were doing their best to sow confusion in the ranks of the workers and to demoralize them. The workers' hardships were increasing. Leaflet 10 of 7 March dwelt exclusively on the deteriorating economic condition of the workers:

... Some say that they have no food, others that they cannot even pay rent. The houses of most of the workers are found to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. They are without proper ventilation. The structures are very old. The surroundings are filthy. The clothes of the workers are dirty.... The workers' children just play about in the streets. They go without schooling. Some of the workers even send their tender-aged children to work for money. Such extreme poverty is a painful thing indeed. But a 35 per cent increase will not by itself cure it. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.242-43]

Tracing the source of this grinding poverty of the workers partly to usurious rates of interest charged from them, the leaflet went on:

This amounts to 75 per cent interest. Even 12 or 16 per cent interest is considered exorbitant; how then can a man pay 75 per cent interest and survive at all? Then what shall we say of a man who pays four annas a month on a rupee? Such a person pays an amount equal to the principal in four months. This amounts to 300 per cent interest. People who pay interest at such rates are always in debt and are never able to extricate themselves.... The best way out of this situation is to start co-operative credit societies of workers. [*Ibid*, pp.242-43]



As the lock-out continued to make the life of the workers harder and harder, pressure from the mill-owners, by way of threats and inducements, increased. They let it be known that the lock-out might be lifted any day for the workers willing to accept a 20 per cent increase in wages. They knew that in the predicament in which the workers were placed, a 20 per cent increase was not something they could lightly reject. They promised a money reward to any worker who could persuade five other workers to return with him to the mill. There were also hints that the extra 15 per cent would be granted soon after resumption of work or paid indirectly in the form of grains and foodstuffs. [Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, p.347]

"But what is the workers' duty?" asked Gandhiji in Leaflet 11 of 11 March:

They have taken an oath not to accept anything less than 35 per cent. Placed in this predicament, unless a 35 per cent increase is granted, the workers cannot return to work except by violating their pledge, their honour and their manliness....

Tomorrow ... we are to meet at 7.30 in the morning at the usual place. The best way not to be tempted by the employers reopening the mills is to attend the meeting as usual at 7.30 in the morning For those who know their strength there can be no enforced unemployment.... The industrious has no reason to worry even for a moment. Let everyone be at the usual place in time on Tuesday and there you will learn better yet how in dependent you really are. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.246-47]

While Gandhiji exhorted the workers not to weaken and go back upon their pledge, he at the same time wrote to Mangaldas Parekh:

Why make it a point of prestige not to give 35 per cent because the workers have asked for it? Why is it taken for granted that I can get the



workers to accept anything I want? I claim that the workers are under my control because of the means I have adopted. Shall I now see to it that they break their pledge? If I do so, why should they not sever my head from my shoulders? [*Ibid*, p.248]

On 12 March the Mill-owners made their move. They lifted the lock-out and declared that the workers who accepted the offered 20 per cent wage increase would be taken back. The resolution passed by the Mill-owners' Association noted that many workers wanted to go back to work but were not able to do so because of the lock-out . Gandhiji could not believe this. In Leaflet 12 of 12 March he said:

Either their information is true or the presence of the workers in the daily meetings and the oath they have taken are a fact. The workers bore all these things (the hardships to be faced) in mind before taking the pledge and now they cannot resume work without securing a 35 per cent increase, whatever the inducement held out and whatever the suffering they may have to go through.... Eventually, even the employers will not gain by taking work from workers who are too weak to keep their oath. [*Ibid*, p.249]

The mill-owners complained that workers wishing to go back to work were being physically prevented by other workers from doing so. Gandhiji wrote to Ambalal Sarabhai:

I have always given instructions not to use force to prevent any workers from going to his mill. I have certainly no desire that a labourer should be forced against his will to keep away from it. I am even ready, myself, to escort any worker who says he wants to attend the mill. [*Ibid*, p.250]



He lost no time in reprimanding the workers, if such there be who used force against those who wished to go back to work. In Leaflet 13 of 13 March he warned:

-Workers should remember our pledge that, if they bring pressure to bear on their fellows and use threats to stop them from going to work, we shall not find it possible to help them. In this struggle he alone will win who keeps his pledge. No one can be forced to do this. It is essentially a voluntary matter.... Let every worker therefore bear in mind that he is not to use pressure on others in any form or manner. [*Ibid*, p.251]

Many activists among the workers, being simple-minded, were, Mahadev Desai reports, offended by Gandhiji's remarks and stopped using any kind of moral pressure or persuasion to keep up the morale of striking workers. As a result the despondency among the workers increased. They began saying to themselves: "Nothing will come of this oath. The pledge is useless. We are facing starvation. We are unable to do any labour. What suffering do those who advise us undergo? We are the ones who suffer." [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p.24]

On 14 March when Chhaganlal Gandhi paid a visit to the Jugaldas Chawl to exhort the workers to attend the morning meeting, he was met with derisive laughter: "What is it to Anasuyabehn and Gandhiji? They come and go in their car. They eat sumptuous food, while we suffer death agonies. Attending meetings does not keep us from starving." The bitter words reached Gandhiji and pierced his heart. [*Ibid*, pp.24-25]

The following morning when Gandhiji went to the meeting, he saw there, as he himself put it, "a thousand dejected faces with disappointment writ thereon, instead of five to ten thousand who used to assemble daily, beaming



with determination." Gandhiji felt God was testing his faith. Referring to the incident at the Jugaldas Chawl he said:

I felt that the reprimand of the workers was justified. I believe in the Divine order and, therefore, believe that a man is bound to keep to his oath at whatever cost..... I felt that it was a golden opportunity for me that my faith was being tested. I at once got up and announced to the persons present there: 'I cannot tolerate for a minute that you break your pledge. I shall not take any food nor use a car till you get 35 per cent increase or all of you die in the fight for it.' [*Ibid*, p.25]

Gandhiji saw that the oath was losing its force with the workers. Some of them were ready to break their pledge out of fear of what they thought would be starvation. It is intolerable that ten thousand men should give up their oath.... 'Starve but keep your oath' was Gandhiji's message to them. He at any rate must live up to it. That he could do only if he himself was prepared to die fasting.

The audience was stunned at Gandhiji's announcement that he was undertaking a fast. People began crying. With tears streaming down their eyes; they got up one after another declaring that they would keep their pledge at any cost. They pleaded with Gandhiji to give up his terrible resolve.

Workers from the Jugaldas Chawl, who had used taunting words about him, came to Gandhiji and expressed their regret and promised that they would not fall from their pledge, however long the struggle might last. They said they would even give up jobs at the mills and find other work. They pleaded with Gandhiji not to fast. They also pleaded with Anasuyabehn who too had announced her resolve to fast. Some of them threatened that they would commit suicide if she carried out her resolve to fast. In the end Anasuyabehn agreed not to proceed with the fast. [*Ibid*, pp.25-26]



Leaflet 14 issued on 15 March, the day when Gandhiji began his fast, dealt chiefly with the value and dignity of labour:

A worker who is ashamed of working has no right to eat. If, therefore, the workers desire to fulfil their pledge in this great struggle, they should learn to do some work or other. Those who collect funds and, remaining idle maintain themselves out of them, do not deserve to win.... If a worker does not work, he is like sugar which has lost its sweetness. If the sea-water lost its salt, where would we get our salt from?.... For the sake of truth Harishchandra sold himself, why should workers not suffer hardships for upholding their pledge?... For the sake of their honour, Imam Hassan and Hussain suffered greatly. Should we not be prepared even to die for our honour?... Today the employers believe that the workers will not do any manual labour and so are bound to succumb soon. If workers depend on others' money for their maintenance, mill-owners will think that the source is bound to be exhausted sooner or later, and so will not take the workers seriously.... We shall be free the sooner by enduring greater suffering just now. If we flinch from suffering, the struggle is bound to be protracted.... If despite persuasion anyone resumes work, that is no reason for us to lose heart. Even if only one person holds out, we shall never forsake him. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.254-55]

By noon, Mahadev Desai reports,

Crowds of them gathered at the Ashram and requested Gandhiji in plaintive words to give up his oath to fast. Some workers asked for work enthusiastically, some promised to work and give their wages to those who did not or could not work.... Even Shankerlal Banker, who had never known physical labour, in the heat of the sun carried bricks and sand for three or



four days along with the workers.... Anasuyabehn also joined in the work. Men, women and even children in the Ashram participated in this with great enthusiasm.

The leaflet 15 of 16 March explained the significance of the fast undertaken by Gandhiji. It said:

The first thing to remember is that this (fast) is not intended to influence the employers. If the fast were conceived in that spirit, it would harm our struggle and bring us dishonour. We want justice from the employers, not pity for us. If there is to be any pity, let it be for the workers.... But we shall be ridiculed if we accept 35 per cent granted out of pity for Gandhiji.... We shall be sorry to the extent the employers are influenced by this action...."

There was only one way in which Gandhiji could effectively teach the people to submit to the hardships of physical labour and this was that he himself should suffer. "A fast, he thought, would serve many purposes and so commenced one. He would break it only when the workers got 35 per cent or if they simply repudiated their pledge," [*Ibid*, pp.258-59], writes Mahadev Desai.

For the purpose of the fast Gandhiji went back to stay at the Ashram after the meeting on 15 March. And since he had also taken the vow not to use the car, which had been the subject of comment at the Jugaldas Chawl, he walked all the way to the Ashram with a number of workers following him.

The mill-owners had not counted on Gandhiji going on a fast. They felt pained, Ambalal Sarabhai the most. Many of them considered the fast a device to coerce them into conceding the workers' demand. Mahadev Desai writes:



Ambalal, who had till now by his firm attitude sustained the other employers, was greatly pained by Gandhiji's act. He came and sat by Gandhiji for hours requesting him to give up his fast. On the third day many other employers joined him in this request.... Some mill-owners told Gandhiji: 'We will give 35 per cent increase to workers this time *for your sake*.' Gandhiji flatly turned down the offer and said: 'Do not give 35 per cent out of pity for me, but do so to respect the workers' pledge and to give them justice.' [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, pp.30-31]

This was a possibility Gandhiji had already visualized and which had made him feel uncomfortable. Unburdening himself in the after-prayer discourse at the Ashram he said:

I am aware that it (his fast) carries a taint. It is likely that, because of my vow, the mill-owners may be moved by consideration for me and come to grant the workers the 35 per cent increase. My desire is that they should grant the demand only if they see its justice and not out of charity. But the natural result would be that they would do so out of charity and to that extent this pledge is one which cannot but fill me with shame. I weighed the two things, however, against each other : my sense of shame and the mill-hands' pledge. The balance tilted in favour of the latter and I resolved, for the sake of the mill-hands, to take no thought of my shame. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.263]

It was pointed out to Gandhiji that the mill-owners had also made a resolve that they would not grant the workers more than a 20 per cent increase and thus they would also be guilty of violating a pledge if they agreed to pay a 35 per cent wage increase. On 17 March, the third day of Gandhiji's fast, Ambalal Sarabhai came up with a formula which would meet the workers' demand and also satisfy



the honour of the mill-owners. It was this: that on the first day after the strike the workers would be paid a 35 per cent wage increase. That would satisfy their honour. On the second day they would be paid an increase of 20 per cent. That would satisfy the honour of the mill-owners. Thereafter the wage would be what an arbitrator, to be appointed, might decide.

Gandhiji did not feel too happy with the proposal, particularly the bit about the mill-owners' vow to pay the workers no more than 20 per cent raise. He felt that the mill-owners had no right to take such a vow. On the other hand he was aware of the coercive effect his fast would be having on the mill-owners. He, therefore, fell in with the proposal. On the morning of 18 March a settlement was arrived at on these lines.

A little while before the conclusion of the settlement on 18 March Gandhiji addressed the inmates of the Ashram:

Most probably we shall have a settlement today before 10.... Deny it as emphatically as I may, the people cannot but feel that the mill-owners have acted under pressure of my fast and the world at large will not believe what I say. My weak condition left the mill-owners no freedom. It is against the principle of justice to get anything in writing from a person, or make him agree to any condition or obtain anything whatever under duress. A satyagrahi will never do so. I have had, therefore, to give in on this matter. A man overpowered by a sense of shame, how much, after all, can he do? [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.265-66]

There was the usual daily meeting of the mill-hands under the *babul* tree. Many notable persons of the city also made it a point to attend the meeting and



Commissioner Pratt was a special invitee. Gandhiji arrived at 11 a.m. Gandhiji, addressing the meeting, explained the terms of the settlement:

On the first day, an increase of 35 per cent will be given in keeping with our pledge; on the second day, we get 20 per cent in keeping with the mill-owners'. From the third day till the date of the arbitrator's award, an increase of 27½ per cent will be paid and subsequently, if the arbitrator decides on 35 per cent, the mill-owners will give us 7½ per cent more and, if he decides on 20 per cent, we shall refund 7½ per cent. [*Ibid*, p.267]

The workers received the settlement with great acclamation. Commissioner Pratt could not contain his feelings of joy and made a short speech expressing his satisfaction on the outcome of the struggle. He said:

It pleases me very much there is a settlement between you. I am thoroughly convinced that so long as you follow Gandhi Saheb's advice and do what he tells you, you will fare well and secure justice. You have to remember that Gandhi Saheb and his associates - both men and women - have suffered much, taken a great deal of trouble and shown love and compassion for you. You should remember that always. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p.35]

Gandhiji then broke his fast.

In the evening, the workers gathered together in the compound of Ambalal Sarabhai's house. There the mill-owners distributed sweets among them. Gandhiji was present. Ambalal Sarabhai, welcoming the settlement and the prospect of the mills again being opened after 22 days of closure, remarked: " I do not want to say anything more than that if the workers revere Gandhi Saheb, the mill-owners do no less . On the contrary they revere him even more. I hope that mutual goodwill among us will remain for all time."



Gandhiji observed:

It appears to me that as days pass by not only Ahmedabad but India will be proud of this twenty-two days' struggle, and India will come to believe that where a struggle can be conducted in this manner we can hope for much. This struggle has been conducted without any hostility. I have never come across such a fight. I have known many such settlements directly or indirectly, but I have not seen a single struggle where there was so little animosity or bitterness exhibited as in this fight. I hope that you will maintain the peace observed during the strike. [*Ibid*, pp.35-36]

The last leaflet issued in the course of the strike was No. 17 of 19 March. It described the settlement as a victory for both parties. It gave the further information that the mills would open from the morning of 20 March and that Prof. Anandshankar Bapubhai Dhruv had been appointed Arbitrator and requested to give his award within three months.

The leaflet further dealt with the demand raised by a section of the workers that they should be paid for the period of the lock-out :

We must say that we are not entitled to ask for this. Since we did not accept the 20 per cent increase, either a strike or a lock-out became necessary. In suffering for twenty-two days, we did what was merely our duty and was in our own interest. We have had our reward for that suffering, namely, this settlement. How can we now ask for wages for the period of the lock-out?... The workers should be ashamed to entertain such an idea. A warrior must fight on his own strength. [*Ibid*, p.69]



Anandshankar Dhruv, the Arbitrator, was not able to submit his report within three months as stipulated in the settlement. The mill-owners, "for unavoidable reasons" were unable to submit their case within three months and the Arbitrator felt he would not be justified in giving an award based only on the case put up by the workers' side. Both parties then agreed to have the three-month period extended. The mill-owners' group submitted its case on 28 June. This again raised questions which had to be referred to the two sides for clarification. There were further delays from both sides on making their submissions.

In the absence of full and complete data, the Arbitrator felt he could not give an award which could satisfy the claims of pure justice. He felt he would nevertheless not be justified in delaying the award further, which course could only result in aggravating the hardships of the workers. The Arbitrator noted that many mills had already increased the wages of the mill-hands by 35 per cent without waiting for the award. Indeed in some other mills the wages had been raised by as much as 50 per cent.

The Arbitrator therefore felt justified in awarding to the workers an increase of 35 per cent and directed that the balance of this increase above 27 ½ per cent be paid to the workers. The award was announced on 10 August 1918. [*Ibid*, pp.90-91]

Erik H. Erikson , who studied 'the event', remarks:

Great movements can begin with small movements, and if Gandhi cannot be said to have made a deep dent in the national affairs of India with this campaign of three weeks, he certainly came one step closer to his people, identifying his name now with the kind of saga which travels by



word of mouth and reaches the vast constituency of Indian masses, who in those days were almost totally untouched by the news which the Press saw fit to print. Maybe in historical actuality the most important object is to make one's encounters matter, whether at the time they seem big or small. [Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, pp.362-63]

Gandhiji thus became the father of the Trade Union Movement in India based on the principle of arbitration. The Ahmedabad textile workers' union later developed into the INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) which became, and continues to be, one of the foremost trade unions in India. Anasuyabehn, Shankerlal Banker and Gulzari Lal Nanda, who later became a Cabinet Minister (and acted briefly as Prime Minister on two occasions) played a leading role in this context. The Ahmedabad Trade Union is still one of the most peaceful trade union activities based largely on principles.



CHAPTER IX: DISILLUSIONMENT

1

It was in 1920 that the Satanic nature of British Rule revealed itself to Gandhiji in all its nakedness. This disillusioned him and led him to launch the non-cooperation movement. Till that time Gandhiji, along with the leaders of the moderate opinion in India, had cherished the belief that the British Empire stood for certain high ideals and it was a force for good. India's association with the Empire, he had believed, would further the happiness and welfare of the people of India.

Gandhiji had clung to England because he had believed her to be, as he wrote to a correspondent, "sound at heart and because I believe that India can deliver her message to the world better through England." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.16]. India's security, too, was linked with the security of the Empire, he had held. It was in pursuance of these beliefs that Gandhiji had, all along, lent to the Empire ungrudging and unqualified support whenever it stood in need of such support. In a letter to J. L. Maffey, on 30 April 1918, Gandhiji gave a resume of his record in this respect:

I was in charge of the Indian Ambulance Corps consisting of 1,100 men during the Boer Campaign and was present at the battle of Colenso, Spionkop and Vaalkranz. I was specially mentioned in General Buller's despatches. I was in charge of a similar Corps of 90 Indians at the time of the Zulu campaign in 1906, and I was specially thanked by the then Government of Natal. Lastly, I raised the Ambulance Corps in London consisting of nearly 100 students on the outbreak of the present war, and I returned to India in 1915 only because I had a bad attack of pleurisy, which I developed while I was undergoing the necessary training. On my



being restored to health, I offered my services to Lord Hardinge, and it was then felt that I should not be sent out to Mesopotamia or France but that I should remain in India. I omit reference to renewals of my offer to provincial authorities. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.380-81]

One such offer to provincial authorities was made by Gandhiji even while the Champaran struggle was in a critical phase. Taking advantage of his visit to Ranchi to see the Lieutenant Governor in the course of the Champaran struggle, Gandhiji called on E.L.L. Hammond, the then Secretary of the Provincial Recruiting Board, and discussed with him the possibility of raising a corps of army ambulance bearers. Hammond was cool to the idea. He asked Gandhiji to help in recruiting labourers for service in Mesopotamia instead. Gandhiji expressed difficulty about getting men "if I could not assure them that they would all work in a body and with me." However, more pressing work in connection with the Champaran problem claimed all his time and energy, and the question of recruiting labourers receded into the background. [*Ibid.* pp.539-40]

In all that he said and wrote Gandhiji showed himself totally committed to the cause of the British Empire in the war. On 18 July 1918, he wrote to Srinivasa Sastri:

I entirely endorse the concluding remark of the authors of the historic document [Montagu-Chelmsford Report] that "... even as we are bringing our report to an end, far greater issues still hang in the balance upon the battle-field of France." It is there and not in Delhi or Whitehall that the ultimate decision of India's future will be taken. May God grant us Home Rulers the wisdom to see this simple truth. The gateway to our freedom is situated on the French soil.... If we could but crowd the battle-fields of France with an indomitable army of Home Rulers, fighting for



victory for the cause of the Allies, it will be a fight for our own cause. [Ibid, pp.488-89]

Writing to the Viceroy on 29 April 1918, he gave expression to similar sentiments :

If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions, and not whisper 'Home Rule' or 'Responsible Government' during the pendency of the war. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment.

But of course everyone did not see things the way Gandhiji saw them. As he himself pointed out to the Viceroy in the same letter, "practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course, and it is no longer possible to say that educated India does not exercise any influence on the masses." [Ibid, p. 278]

Educated India in this matter was represented in a large measure by such leaders as Tilak, Annie Besant and the brothers Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali. The Ali brothers as well as Maulana Azad had been put in prison by the British Government for their critical writings during the war. The Home Rulers were of course willing to lend the Government their support in the war, but they asked that as a *quid pro quo* the British should announce measures granting self-rule to India.

The Government were convinced of the continued hostility of Tilak. Ever since his return from Mandalay in June 1914, they had been keeping a strict watch on his activities. A circular of 26 June 1914 warned jagirdars, inamdars, watandars, title-holders, Government servants of all grades and Government pensioners : "Until Tilak shows by overt acts that he has altered his views and



intends to modify his propaganda, he must be looked upon as an enemy of the British Government." [*Source Material*, Vol.II, pp.303-05]

Similarly Annie Besant and her followers had ever since 1916 been under strict watch and had been subjected to various kinds of punitive measures including imprisonment. Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali had been imprisoned since October 1914 for pan-Islamic propaganda in their journals *Hamdard*, edited by Shaukat Ali, and *Comrade*, edited by Mohammed Ali. Particular objection was taken to an article entitled "Evacuate Egypt " in *Comrade*? [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.51]

Gandhiji believed that if the Government were to show that it trusted these leaders and sought their cooperation in war, they would certainly respond. It was necessary, in his opinion, that the Ali Brothers should be released from prison. In fact he believed that so long as these influential leaders were kept in jail, the response of the masses to Government appeal for men and money to help the war effort would remain doubtful.

2

Gandhiji received an invitation to attend the War Conference to be held on 26 April 1918. He wrote to Claude Hill:

I feel that the Conference will be largely abortive with the most powerful leaders excluded from it. The absence of Mr. Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Ali brothers from the Conference deprives it of any real weight. I must confess that not one of us ... has the influence of these leaders with the masses.... How to evoke in the Indian the loyalty of the Englishman, is the question before the Indian leaders. I submit it is impossible to do so unless you are prepared to trust the trusted leaders of the people and to do all that such trust means.



For these reasons he expressed his reluctance to attend the Conference.
[8 *Ibid*, pp.371-73]

There was a further consideration that made Gandhiji stiffen his attitude. C. F. Andrews had shown him a copy of the *New Statesman* which carried reports about secret treaties entered into by the British Government, terms of which included ceding of Constantinople to Russia. "The revelations," wrote Gandhiji in the same letter to Hill, "make painful reading. I do not know that I could call the Allies' cause to be any longer just if these treaties are truly reported." [ibid. pp.371-73]

Hill arranged a meeting with the Viceroy. The Viceroy, whom Gandhiji met the following day, 27 April, repudiated the report about the secret treaties. He said it had emanated from interested quarters and that there could be no question of the British Government agreeing to cede Constantinople to Russia.

Following the interview with the Viceroy, Gandhiji "in fear and trembling" decided as a matter of duty, to join the Conference. He sought the Viceroy's permission to speak in Hindustani at the Conference and the Viceroy said he could do so if he would also speak in English. "I had no speech to make," recalled Gandhiji in his Autobiography. [Autobiography, p.444]. "I spoke but one sentence to this effect. 'With full sense of responsibility I beg to support the resolution.'"

On Gandhiji's insistence Tilak had been finally sent an invitation to the Conference, but he refused to attend. G. S. Khaparde, who attended on behalf of the Home Rulers, wanted to move a resolution to the effect that "until Swaraj is given or promised to be given to the people of India, they will never be filled with the necessary ardour to take up cudgels for their country," [Source Material, Vol.II, p.306], but the Viceroy had made it clear beforehand that there would be



"no bargaining, no huckstering" [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.374] and Khaparde's resolution was not allowed.

3

On 29 April 1918, Gandhiji wrote a letter to the Viceroy after he came back from the War Conference. It was revised with the help of C . F. Andrews, who was with Gandhiji in Delhi at Principal S. K. Rudra's residence. In it Gandhiji explained why he had not wished to attend the War Conference at first, and why he had later done so after his meeting with the Viceroy. He also explained in it the viewpoint of Indians in general. Rudra, Andrews and others who had helped with the revision of the letter were very pleased with the final draft and called it "magnificent", "splendid" and so on. It was released to the press later with the Viceroy's permission.

The letter was sent to the Viceroy at Simla through Rev. Ireland, who left by the night train on the 29th to deliver it by hand to the Viceroy. Rev. Ireland was offered Rs. 70 for his expenses. He only took Rs. 20 and travelled inter class.

Gandhiji had reiterated his unequivocal and unconditional support for the war effort in the letter. But he had also added that he had been in close touch with the common people, the ryots, ever since his return to India. The message of Home Rule had spread far and wide. Nothing but a categorical assurance of self-government within the Empire, guaranteed by a Parliamentary statute fixing the date for the great event, could enthuse the people of India to offer their whole-hearted support to Britain like the British citizens. Gandhiji said :

Ours is a consecration based on the hope of a better future. I should be untrue to you and to my country if I did not clearly and unequivocally tell you what that hope is. I do not bargain for its fulfilment. However you should know it. Disappointment of the hope means disillusion.....



There is one thing I may not omit. You have appealed to us to sink domestic differences. If the appeal involves the toleration of tyranny and wrongdoing on the part of officials, I am powerless to respond. I shall resist organized tyranny to the uttermost. The appeal must be to the officials that they do not ill-treat a single soul, and that they consult and respect popular opinion as never before.

Gandhiji went on to explain how his Satyagraha in Champaran and Kheda had served the Empire, as some of the officials had not accepted this claim on his part. He wrote, "In Champaran, by resisting an age-long tyranny, I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British justice. In Kaira, a population that was cursing the Government now feels that it, and not the Government, is the power when it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents. It is, therefore, losing its bitterness and is saying to itself that the Government must be a Government for the people, for it tolerates orderly and respectful disobedience where injustice is felt."

Gandhiji also asked for a definite assurance about Mohammedan States. "In the most scrupulous regard for the right of these States, and for the Muslim sentiment as to places of worship, and in your just and timely treatment of the Indian claim to Home Rule, lies the safety of the Empire." [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1968, Vol.I, p.116; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.377-80]

This letter clearly shows that while Gandhiji insisted on India offering unconditional and whole-hearted support to the war effort, he took care to see that the Government understood the aspirations and expectations of the Indian people both with regard to Khilafat and Home Rule and the need on their part to fulfil those expectations in their own interest.



On 30 April 1918 Gandhiji wrote to J. L. Maffey, Secretary to the Viceroy: "In pursuance of my declaration at the Conference yesterday, I wish respectfully to state that I place my services at the disposal of the authorities to be utilized by them in any manner they choose, save that I personally will not kill or injure anybody, friend or foe." "In order to make my work effective," he requested permission to visit the Ali brothers in prison at Chhindwara, and relief to the Kheda farmers, a matter about which Satyagraha was then going on in Kheda. But he made it clear that "my offer is not conditional upon relief in either case." He merely asked for relief for the furtherance of the common object. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.380-81]

The Government did not give Gandhiji permission to meet the Ali brothers at Chhindwara, nor did it see its way to releasing the Ali brothers till well after the end of the war in 1919, when they were set free as part of the general amnesty granted under the Royal Proclamation .

As for the Kheda matter, the Governor of Bombay, to whom reference had been made, considered that "this, like all other questions of internal administration, must be dealt with separately on its merits, and that there should be no confusion of issues in regard to the great and urgent purposes of the Conference." [*Ibid*, pp.408-9fn]. However, the Kheda farmers did get the relief asked for soon afterwards.

4

Gandhiji left Delhi on 30 April and arrived at Nadiad the next morning where he had set up headquarters of Kheda Satyagraha. He left for Bombay the same night. There on 3 May, he met Mrs. Besant. She agreed to support Gandhiji regarding unconditional support for recruitment. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, I, p.118]



In the evening Gandhiji attended the Congress meeting. Khaparde, Tilak and others strongly advocated the view: "Give us Swaraj and take our help." Gandhiji made a touching appeal to them, saying :

The Empire is passing through a crisis. I am taking the most sordid view of the situation. We have stated our terms sufficiently. We need not repeat those terms. We must raise our own army and, if need be, our army will be able to defy the British Government itself for which it is being raised. Whether we help or not they are going to raise an army of 5 lacs of men. Why not then anticipate them, and offer them an army of our own selection ?

"I am putting before you what is surging in my breast," Gandhiji continued. He wanted them to realize the danger of the country going under another domination and repeating the history of subjection. "We ought to be in earnest and help our level best to save the situation." [*Ibid*, p.118]. It was clearly in India's interest to do so.

The second resolution to come up before the Congress was about Kheda. The members were ready to vote for whatever resolution Gandhiji put before them. The resolution was framed and presented by Gandhiji and all the members voted for it. But just then Srinivasa Sastri raised a point of order, saying that it was an important resolution, it could not be passed immediately as due notice had not been given. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, who was in the Chair, admitted that Sastri's objection was valid, but as a week's notice was not possible, he said, he was moving the resolution from the Chair. Gandhiji said that under the circumstances he wished to withdraw the resolution. In spite of Gandhiji's repeating the request several times, no one took any notice of it and members went on shouting: "We accept the resolution."



Mahadev Desai records: "With pain pictured on his face, Sastriar then got up and humbly declared, 'I am sorry I cannot give my assent to the resolution.' On his return home at night Bapu commented, 'Sastriar was at his highest and best today. It was evident his heart was lacerated at having to differ, but he is a holy man and he got up to raise his voice of protest in his own honourable way.'"

In a letter that night to Sastriar Gandhiji wrote, "Your 'No' had a real value to me. The 'Ayes' had no value at all!"

Mahadev Desai records further that when Sastriar read the letter, he remarked (as reported by Thakkar Bapa), "Only a Gandhi could write this letter." [*Ibid*, p.119]. It was an instance of one honest man recognizing and appreciating the honesty of the other man, even when they differed.

5

Gandhiji threw himself into the recruitment campaign with all his energy while he kept exhorting Tilak, Besant and other Home Rulers to do the same.

The Government in Bombay, under Willingdon, however, continued to be wary of the Home Rulers in general and Tilak and his followers in particular. When the Bombay Provincial War Conference was convened by the Governor on 10 June, the local authorities were not inclined to send invitations to Tilak and other Home Rulers. Indeed they contemplated taking "strong action against any article or speech which in their opinion will militate against success of manpower and resources campaign". They sought the support of the Governor-General should action become necessary against "important newspapers such as *Chronicle*, *Mahratta*, *Kesari* and the like and prominent persons such as Horniman, Tilak, Besant and others." The action contemplated, the Home Department was told, would be under the Defence of India Act. [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.693]



The Home Department demurred, expressing the view that there had been "distinct improvement all over the country in the attitude of the extremist press and publicists towards Government and its present war endeavours," and hoping that "no extensive action on the lines adumbrated in your telegram will be found necessary in the Bombay Presidency." [*Ibid*, p.696]

Tilak and other Home Rulers were ultimately invited to the War Conference on June 10. The proceedings did not go too well. Tilak, rising to express his loyalty to the King-Emperor, introduced in his speech what the Governor considered "purely political topics" and on being interrupted by the Governor, declined to proceed. N. C. Kelkar was then invited to speak. He too introduced "political" matters in his speech, and was not permitted to proceed. Thereupon the Home Rulers, namely Tilak, Kelkar, S. R. Bomanji, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and B. G. Horniman, walked out of the Conference. [*Ibid*, p.699]

Gandhiji wrote to Willingdon on June 11 : "I venture to think that your stopping of Messrs Tilak and Kelkar yesterday was a serious blunder.... If Mr. Tilak is an enemy of the Government or of the Empire you have undoubtedly strengthened his hands in the pursuit of his course.... Will you not publicly express your regret for the blunder? ... " [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.423]

On the evening of 16 June a public meeting was held at the Shantaram Chawl under the aegis of the Home Rule League. Gandhiji presided. Gandhiji expressed sorrow at the way the Home Rule Leaguers had been insulted by Lord Willingdon. "So," he said, "while I fully share the opinion of the members of the Home Rule League that we must protect national honour by asking for an expression of regret for his Excellency's *faux pas*, we must, at the same time, redouble our efforts to help the authorities in the prosecution of the war.... I hope



that His Excellency will see his way to concede to the wishes of this great meeting." [*Ibid*, pp.428-29]

The meeting passed two resolutions : one protesting against the public insult levelled by the Governor against the Home Rulers and the other demanding, *inter alia*, end to the delay in the amendment of the Arms Act, "in order to enable the general body of people to take and carry arms if they so desire" and opening to Indians of commissioned ranks in the Army. Gandhiji telegraphed the text of the resolutions to the British Prime Minister. [*Ibid*, pp.432-33]

6

Gandhiji opened the recruitment campaign in Gujarat with a speech at Nadiad on 21 June and on the following day issued his first "Appeal for enlistment". India, he wrote, was a subject country and not a partner in the Empire like Canada, South Africa and Australia. To be able to win partnership in the Empire it was necessary that the people of India should have the ability to defend themselves, that is, have "the ability to bear arms and to use them." This could be achieved "with the greatest possible despatch" by enlisting in the army. Further, "if we want swaraj, it is our duty to help the Empire and we shall undoubtedly get the reward for that help. If our motive is honest, the Government will behave honestly with us." Even if it did not, "greatness lies in returning good for evil".

Gandhiji continued : "There are 600 villages in Kheda district. Every village has on an average a population of over 1,000. If every village gave at least 20 men, Kheda district would be able to raise an army of 12,000 men." This worked out at 1.7 per cent, lower than the death rate at that time, he said. If they fell on the battle-field, they would immortalize themselves, their village and their



country, and 20 fresh men would follow their example and offer themselves for national defence.

Gandhiji's appeal was supported by many eminent leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Krishnalal Desai, Indulal Yajnik, Hariprasad Mehta, Pragji Desai, Mohanlal Pandya, G. V. Mavalankar, Kalidas Zaveri, Fulchand Shah, Gokuldas Talati, Shivabhai Patel, Raojibhai Patel and others. [*Ibid*, pp.439-43]

As earlier in pursuit of the Satyagraha campaign, so now in pursuit of recruitment, Gandhiji started on a tour of the district. He spoke at Ras. Kathlal, Karamsad, Navagaon, Nadiad and other places. It was a period of hectic activity for Gandhiji. "Bapu," runs the entry of 4 July in Mahadev Desai's diary, "has these days only one subject to talk about with all those who come to see him – recruitment." [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, I, p.170]

Gandhiji himself, writing to Horniman admits as much :

I am recruiting mad. I do nothing else, think of nothing else, talk of nothing else. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.17]

Yet the response of the peasantry was the opposite of what it had been during the Kheda Satyagraha. "Instead of flocking to him as before," noted Mahadev Desai, "people avoid seeing him. They are very much afraid of his recruitment campaign." [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, I, p.193]. On 8 July Gandhiji walked all the way from Barejadi to Navagam, a distance of over 10 miles, subsisting on the way on a meal of peanuts and jaggery which he carried with him. Not only did the people not offer him transport and food, they were most reluctant even to come and hear him. At Navagam Gandhiji and party found that even arranging a meeting of the people was difficult. [*Ibid*, pp.178 and 183]. Gandhiji wrote to Devadas on 9 July :



I have not had a single recruit so far.... People are not ready to follow my advice. They are ready, however, to accept my services in a cause which suits them. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, pp.479-80]

A month later, on 22 July, Gandhiji issued his second appeal for enlistment. He regretted that at the end of one month of campaigning in Nadiad, Karamsad, Ras, Kathlal, Jambusar and other places, barely a hundred men had come forward. He wrote :

The plain fact is that we have lost the very capacity to fight and our valour has ebbed away.... Running after so-called dharma, we forgot the claim of *karma* (duty). We cannot stand up and fight even if there is a raid on our village in broad daylight.... By enlisting in the army we shall learn the use of weapons, shall have the spirit of patriotism kindled in us and shall be strong enough to defend our villages.

In tones reminiscent of Krishna in the *Gita – hatwa va prapsyase swargam jitwa va bhokshesey mahim* – Gandhiji also referred to the material aspects:

A recruit gets a fixed pay, in addition to food and clothing. The minimum he gets is eighteen rupees and, according to merit, he rises in rank and scale. If he is killed, the Government provides for the maintenance of his wife and children. Those who return from the war get prizes and rewards. It is my view that in the final analysis soldiering is more paying than other professions. [*Ibid*, pp.493-95]

Years later Gandhiji had this to say of his work of recruitment:

As soon as I set about my task, my eyes were opened. My optimism received a rude shock. Whereas during the revenue campaign people readily offered their carts free of charge, and two volunteers came forth



when one was needed, it was difficult now to get a cart even on hire, to say nothing of volunteers.... We decided to dispense with the use of carts and to do our journey on foot. At this rate we had to trudge about 20 miles a day. If carts were not forthcoming, it was idle to expect people to feed us. [*Autobiography*, p.354]

7

Gandhiji's appeal for enlistment shocked and puzzled his pacifist friends. How could he talk of sacrificing men so lightly in a bloody war like any Government representative?

Some of Gandhiji's closest co-workers could not see eye to eye with him in the matter. A few of them, notably Andrews, persistently argued that Gandhiji's enthusiasm for recruitment was incompatible with his teaching of *ahimsa*.

Gandhiji did not agree. Some of the arguments he advanced ran:

You cannot teach *ahimsa* to a man who cannot kill. You cannot make a dumb man appreciate the beauty and the merit of silence. Although I know that silence is most excellent, I do not hesitate to take means that would enable the dumb man to regain his speech. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.444]

Gandhiji contested Andrews' assertion that Indians had as a race repudiated blood-lust and taken their choice on the side of humanity. "Is this historically true?" he asked, and proceeded :

I see no sign of it either in the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, not even in my favourite Tulsidas, which is much superior in spirituality to Valmiki. I am not now thinking of these works in their spiritual meanings. The incarnations are described as certainly blood-thirsty, revengeful and merciless to the enemy.... The finest hymn composed by Tulsidas in praise



of Rama gives the first place to his ability to strike down the enemy.... The code of Manu prescribes no such renunciation that you impute to the race. Buddhism, conceived as a doctrine of universal forbearance, signally failed and, if the legends are true, the great Shankaracharya did not hesitate to use unspeakable cruelty in banishing Buddhism out of India.... Then [came] the English period. There has been compulsory renunciation of arms but not [of] the desire to kill....

... *Ahimsa* was preached to man when he was in full vigour of life and able to look his adversaries straight in the face. It seems to me that full development of body-force is a *sine qua non* of full appreciation and assimilation of *ahimsa*.... So it comes to this that under exceptional circumstances, war may have to be resorted to as a necessary evil and that an ahimsaist may not stand aside and look on with indifference but must make his choice and actively cooperate or actively resist. [*Ibid*, pp.473-77]

In another letter on 29 July 1918 to Andrews Gandhiji wrote:

War will be always with us. There seems to be no possibility of the whole human nature becoming transformed. *Moksha* and *ahimsa* are for individuals to attain.... I find great difficulties in recruiting but do you know that not one man has yet objected because he would not kill? They object because they fear to die. This unnatural fear of death is ruining the nation. [*Ibid*, pp.509-10]

To Ada West Gandhiji wrote on 31 July.

My argument is briefly this : India has lost the power to strike. She must learn to strike before she can voluntarily renounce the power of striking.... Today I find that everybody is desirous of killing but most are



afraid of doing so or are powerless to do so. Whatever is to be the result, I feel certain that the power must be restored to India. The result may be carnage. Then India must go through it. [*Ibid*, p. 520]

To S. K. Rudra , Principal of St. Stephen's College, Gandhiji wrote:

There was a danger of those who put faith in my word becoming or remaining utterly unmanly, falsely believing that it was *ahimsa*. We must have the ability in the fullest measure to strike and then perceive the inability of brute force [to achieve the objective] and renounce the power [of striking]. [*Ibid*, p.511]

8

This new enunciation of non-violence had far-reaching implications. It had to find reflection in education too. Gandhiji wrote to Kishorelal Mashruwala :

The children till now were taught not to fight back if anyone beat them. Can we go on doing so now ? What will be the effect of such teaching on a child ? This new aspect of non-violence which has revealed itself to me has enmeshed me in no end of problems. [*Ibid*, p.515]

To Maganlal Gandhi, Gandhiji wrote:

I have felt, in all seriousness, that Swaminarayana and Vallabhacharaya have robbed us of our manliness. They made the people incapable of self-defence.... Do not mix up the Vaishnava tradition with the teaching of Vallabh and Swaminarayana.... I have come to see, what I did not see so clearly before, that there is non-violence in violence. This is the big change which has come about [in me].... Violence is a function of the body. *Brahmacharya* consists in refraining from sexual indulgence, but we do not bring up our children to be impotent. [*Ibid*, pp.504-05]



To Hanumantrao:

... All killing is not *himsa* [violence].... We as a nation have lost the true power of killing. It is clear that he who has lost the power to kill cannot practise non-killing.... It may look terrible but it is true that we must, by a well sustained, conscious effort, regain this power and then ... deliver the world from its travail of *himsa* by a continuous abdication of this power.... It is not possible to make any distinction between organized warfare and individual fighting. There must be an organized opposition and therefore even organized blood shed, say, in the case of bandits....I do believe that we shall have to teach our children the art of self-defence. I see more and more clearly that we shall be unfit for swraj for generations to come if we do not regain the power of self-defence. [*Ibid*, p.485]

Quite apart from the purely religious objections to the programme of promoting recruitment for war, there were also ethical difficulties urged by many in Gandhiji's circle. Esther Faering pointed out the inconsistency of a votary of passive resistance advocating participation in war. Gandhiji wrote to her:

What am I to advise a man who wants to kill but is unable owing to his being maimed? Before I can make him feel the virtue of not killing, I must restore to him the arm he has lost.... A difficult situation faced me in Delhi. I felt at once that I was playing with the greatest problem of life in not tackling the question of joining the army seriously. Either we must renounce the benefits of the State or help it to the best of our ability to prosecute the war.... Indians have a double duty to perform. If they are to preach the mission of peace, they must first prove their ability in war....A nation that is unfit to fight cannot from experience prove the virtue of not fighting. [*Ibid*, pp.462-63]



Gandhiji wanted very much to see his own children enlist in the army. On 28 July 1918 he wrote to Ramdas Gandhi, who had gone to South Africa with Kallenbach on health grounds and had tried to learn a trade to earn his living after his recovery:

Devadas is impatient to get himself recruited for the war, but he is doing such good work in Madras that he cannot be spared from there. I gave the same advice to Harilal.... You may gladly come if you are tired there and if you want to become a soldier. You alone must consider the matter. I would have enticed Manilal too. Only his case is similar to that of Devadas. [C.W.M.G., Supplementary, Vol.I, p.165]

Gandhiji was also trying his best to persuade the Home Rule Leaguers to throw themselves into the recruitment work, without laying down any conditions.

Annie Besant had agreed with Gandhiji when he met her on 3 May 1918 at Bombay after his return from the War Conference at Delhi, that the war effort should be supported unconditionally. But she had not done anything about it. Gandhiji wrote to her :

Surely it must be plain that, if every Home Rule Leaguer became an active recruiting depot, we would ensure the passing of the Congress-League Scheme with only such modifications as we may agree to. I think this is the time when we must give the people a lead and not await their opinion.... If we supplied recruits, we should dictate terms. But if we wait for the terms, the War may close, India may remain without a real military training and we should be face to face with a military dictatorship. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.I, p.169; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.469]

To Jinnah Gandhiji wrote :



I do wish you would make an emphatic declaration regarding recruitment.... 'Seek Ye first the Recruiting Office and everything else will be added unto you'. What I ask for is an emphatic declaration and not a halting one. [*Ibid*, p.169; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.470]

The Home Rulers' attitude on the question, as reflected in their utterances, was at its best, ambiguous, and as reflected in their actions, almost hostile to war effort. Gandhiji felt disillusioned both with regard to the attitude of the leaders and response of the people to his call for recruitment.

9

The Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme came out on 8 July 1918. Both the Home Rulers and Moderates were for rejecting it in favour of the Congress-League scheme. Gandhiji took the view that the scheme should be accepted. "We can , if we have the capacity, use it to draw much power out of it and make great progress," he said. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.I, p.183]

In a letter to Srinivasa Sastri on 18 July Gandhiji expressed the view that as an artistic production, the scheme now published is superior to the Congress-League Scheme. I further consider that both Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford ... have taken great pains over their most difficult and delicate task and I cannot but think that any hasty rejection of their effort will be a misfortune for the country.... But it would need to be considerably improved before it is accepted by the reformers. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.487]

Gandhiji expressed the same view to Govind Malaviya, youngest son of Madan Mohan Malaviya :

The Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme is, in my opinion, very good. We can have its shortcomings removed through agitation. Whatever the



merits of the Scheme, however, I definitely hold that we should join the war.... I hold that by joining the army we can accomplish two things: we shall become brave and we shall learn something about the handling of arms; and we shall prove our worth by helping those with whom we wish to become partners.

When, therefore, the representatives of the two wings of the Congress deliberated on the Reforms scheme in mid July in Bombay, Gandhiji was not among the participants, though he did see Tilak and other leaders to urge them to take a positive stand on recruitment. [*Ibid*, p.482]. Writing to Srinivasa Sastri on 17 July he expressed his intention not to attend the special Congress session scheduled to be held in Bombay from 29 August to 1 September. "How can I appear in an assembly," he wrote, "which I know is to be misled and in which the principal movers do not believe what they say and will denounce in the Press the very resolutions for which they would have voted." [*Ibid*, p.486]

To Tilak Gandhiji wrote:

I do not propose to attend the Congress or the Moderates' conference. I see that my views are different from those of either ...My view is that if all of us take up the work of recruitment for the war and enlist hundreds of thousands of recruits, we can render a very great service to India. I know that Mrs. Besant and you do not share this view. The Moderates also will not take up the work earnestly.

Efforts were being made to bring the two wings of the Congress together. Gandhiji was not in favour of a patched-up unity between the two wings. In the same letter he continued :

I do not at all like the attempt to bring together the Extremists and the Moderates. It will do much good if both the parties boldly proclaim



their respective positions before the Government and the people.
[C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.31-32]

Thus, in the second half of 1918, on the two vital questions of policy then confronting the Congress, namely the question of lending unconditional support to the war and the attitude to the Montford scheme of Reforms, Gandhiji did not have the support of either section of the Congress organization. He stood alone.

In the Champaran Satyagraha, in the Kheda Satyagraha and in the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike, even though Gandhiji had not involved the Congress, he knew he had the tacit support and sympathy of the entire Congress. But in his recruitment campaign he was totally isolated.

Gandhiji was aware that his appeal was not likely to make much impact on the youth of the country. They had been carried away by the politics of Tilak and Besant. He wrote to Mansukhlal Mehta :

Both these [Tilak and Besant] not only keep aside moral principles in politics but believe that sometimes that is the right thing to do. 'Tit for tat' is a principle which they have deliberately and openly accepted. I don't think I can at present persuade this class which has embraced their policy, to accept anything from me." [*Ibid*, p.26]

This must have weighed heavily on Gandhiji's mind.

Recruiting had been a most frustrating experience for Gandhiji. A breakdown was inevitable. It was a lonely and unrewarding campaign, with hardly any recruits forthcoming. Gandhiji fell severely ill on 11 August. It was an attack of dysentery brought on, he imagined, by his over-eating *ghens* - a Gujarati sweet preparation of rice cooked in whey. The illness was probably the result of physical



and emotional overstrain and exhaustion which resulted in a physical and nervous breakdown. The pain in his abdomen was severe. The following day he was too weak to get up or walk. "I have almost to crawl to reach the lavatory and I have such a griping pain there that I feel like screaming," he wrote to Fulchand Shah on 12 August. [*Ibid*, p.18]

Gandhiji went on a 'near-fast' but the illness persisted. A week later he was still on his back and "passing through the severest illness of my life." [*Ibid*, p.21]. After another ten days he was writing to Acharya P. C. Ray:

I can scarcely move out of my bed or even sit in it for any length of time. The great question is how to build up this broken-up body? I have abstained from milk and its products for a number of years and vowed to do so for life Do you know any vegetable substitutes for ghee or butter and for milk ? [*Ibid*, p.32]

Kasturba had joined Gandhiji at Nadiad. But she could do nothing in the face of his refusal to take any medicine or milk or milk products, which his body needed. She suffered with him in silence.

The illness continued. On 23 August Gandhiji was brought to Ahmedabad from Nadiad by Ambalal Sarabhai in his car and he stayed with Ambalal and Sarladevi Sarabhai in their house for some days. But his condition showed no improvement. On 17 September he was taken to Sabarmali Ashram at his insistence. On 2 October his condition suddenly deteriorated. Harilal and Devadas were summoned by telegram.

On 2 October, Gandhiji dictated a letter for Harilal Gandhi in which he said :



I feel that I am now going. It is now only a question of a few days. The body is wearing away. I am not able to take any nourishment. My mind is at peace. I am not at all sorry at the prospect of going. I feel that the bequest I am leaving you brothers is appropriate. What profit would it have been to you if I were to leave you money? The bequest of character that I am leaving you is, in my view, priceless. I wish that you should cherish it. Serve Ba. [Chandulal Dalal, *Harilal Gandhi* (Gujarati), p.73]

Gandhiji dictated another to Devadas in the same vein, instructing him to send copies of the letter to Manilal and Ramdas. In the letter he said:

My health, instead of improving, is steadily declining. I am not able to take any cereals. Taking only fruit cannot sustain the body and hence it must necessarily succumb. In that event you must have forbearance and show the strength of a Kshatriya. If you keep me alive in your actions, you will be judged not as having loved the body but as having loved the soul.... My body has become like an old garment and that is why it is not at all difficult for me to discard it. I do not wish to acquire the burden of a new garment. But I do not think I have qualified myself to be freed of that burden. But the time is not past yet. [C.W.M.G., Supplementary, Vol.I, p.171]

Mahadev Desai records: "Severe set-back in Bapu's health since last night. The crisis continued throughout from the 2nd to the 10th instant." But he was at peace with himself. He added : "All through the period Bapu lived the life of the ideal man as depicted in the *Gita*." [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.I, p.259]

The crisis passed, but Gandhiji continued to remain bedridden. On 30 November he went to Matheran for a change of air, but found the water there too "heavy". On 13 December he cut short his stay at Matheran and went to Bombay. His health showed no improvement. Meanwhile there were anxious



enquiries from people all over India. Tilak, Sastri, Andrews, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Mohammed Ali and other leaders were seriously concerned.

Mohammed Ali appealed to Gandhiji to relax his vows about diet. Gandhiji wrote to him : "... I am deeply grateful and if, as some return for it, could strain the letter of my vow and do what you suggest, I should gladly do so. But there is no getting out of the self-imposed restraint." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.63]. He gave a similar answer to Sarojini Naidu: "The doctors of course despair in face of the self-imposed restrictions under which I am labouring. I assure you that they have been my greatest consolation during this protracted illness. I have no desire whatsoever to live upon condition of breaking those disciplinary and invigorating restrictions. [*Ibid*, p.64]

Gandhiji's general debility was further aggravated by the piles, which occasionally caused excruciating pain. His condition continued to wax and wane like the moon, as he told his friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. [*Ibid*, p.70]

Friends, medical and non-medical, were doing their best to persuade Gandhiji to take milk. Kasturba, who had been making herself miserable on this account, one day early in January – maybe 6 January 1919 – pointed out to Gandhiji that his vow related only to cow's milk. Why could he not take goat's milk? she asked. "This went home," wrote Gandhiji to Maganlal Gandhi on 10 January:

My vow related only to cow's milk.... It was different with goat's milk, and I felt I could relieve friends of much of their concern. I therefore decided to take goat's milk. [*Ibid*, p. 71]

He further explained the matter to Narhari Parikh who wondered if Gandhiji's taking milk did not amount to a breach of his vow, saying:



I feel convinced that I have fully succeeded in observing my vow with the utmost strictness. I deliberated for 24 hours before I commenced taking goat's milk. I am not at all anxious to live on and, though more than five months have elapsed since I fell ill, this indifference of mind remains. When I took the vow of not taking milk, I had, or could have, no thought in my mind of any milk, other than that of the cow or the buffalo.... I was painfully aware of the ill-treatment of cows and buffaloes and that was the reason for my taking the vow concerning milk. What is my duty in the present circumstances?... With the passing of days, friends become insistent. Dr. Mehta goes on sending telegrams. Thousands of other Indians are extremely agitated over my illness. Though Ba is not always weeping and grieving over my illness, yet I know that her soul is in torment." He felt strongly that "without detracting ever so little from my vow, I should adopt a liberal attitude wherever possible and allow myself some freedom. [*Ibid*, pp. 74-75]

It occurred to Narhari Parikh that giving a literal meaning to the vow by Gandhiji amounted to special pleading. Gandhiji wrote to him :

I do not agree, because I am not aware of any special pleading at all.... Any loophole in a vow indicates the uniqueness and completeness of the vow. Mere abstention from milk does not serve the purpose for which the vow had been taken. One must either prove that one can live without milk or find a substitute for milk.... In writing all this I am trying to show that under some circumstances, even if we give up the implied meaning of a vow and stick only to the literal meaning, we will have followed the vow perfectly. [C.W.M.G., Supplementary, Vol.I, pp.175-76]



Thus from 9 January 1919 Gandhiji started taking goat's milk and continued to do so till the end of his life.

Referring to this incident at the Aga Khan Palace detention camp Gandhiji remarked that by taking goat's milk, he had been able to retain the letter of his vow, but "the spirit of it is gone." There is no doubt that he wanted to live to serve the country.

Gandhiji's haemorrhoids had become active, causing him acute discomfort. "For four days," he wrote to Balibehn Adalaja (sister of Harilal's wife Chanchalbehn) on 21 January 1919, "I suffered torments because of piles." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.75]. He was hospitalised and on 20 January the piles were surgically treated at Bombay. The operation was painful. He wrote to Narhari Parikh: "When I had suffered enough, I was given morphia by injection." [*Ibid*, p.73]

While Gandhiji had been carrying on his gruelling recruitment tour and was afterwards confined to bed owing to illness and general debility, the war situation in Europe had decisively turned in favour of the Allies. Early in November 1918 Germany sued for peace and the Armistice was signed on the 11th. Gandhiji thought that India could now hope for justice and fair play from Britain. But the hope was short-lived.

The year 1918 was thus a mixed kind of year for Gandhiji. While the first half of the year had seen a series of triumphs in the shape of Champaran, the Ahmedabad mill-hands' strike and the Kheda Satyagraha - though the success in this last campaign was not wholly unqualified, the latter half of the year was a period of disappointment and distress.

The recruitment drive taken up by Gandhiji was a total failure. The intense physical and emotional strain involved aggravated the effects of the illness that followed and kept him bedridden for almost five months.



The period also brought personal distress. Harilal Gandhi lost his job as a consequence of what appeared to be defalcation of his employer's money. It might have been merely a foolish investment, resulting in a loss of Rs.30,000 or so to Seth Narottamdas. Gandhiji nevertheless wrote to Harilal on 1 May 1918:

Everyone acts according to his nature. The true end of all effort in life is to gain control over the impulses of one's nature; that is dharma. Your faults will be forgotten if you make this effort. Since you are emphatic that you did not commit the theft, I may believe you but the world will not. Bear the world's censure and be more careful in future. You should give up your notion of what the world means. Your world is your employer. Have no fear if you are tried in court of law. If you take my advice, do not engage a lawyer, explain everything to the advocate on the other side.

I have done something very big in Delhi.... I have no time to write about it. Mahadev will find some time to do so. He was an eyewitness to it all. He has taken your place, but the wish that it had been you refuses still to die. I would have died broken-hearted if I had no other sons. Even now, if you wish to be an understanding son without displacing anyone who has made himself such to me, your place is assured. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.385]

Gandhiji later seemed to have been convinced, on the basis of the documents Manu Subedar (who had also been in the employ of Narottam Seth) showed him that Harilal was guilty. [Chandulal Dalal, *Harilal Gandhi* (Gujarati), p.68]. "He said that Harilal should be prosecuted irrespective of his being his son. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIV, p.459]. Gandhiji was so cut up by Harilal's conduct that he would not accept even the offer of Harilal to enlist in the army. On 9 July he wrote to Harilal:



I understand what you say about your enlisting. I made the suggestion at a time when I did not doubt your truthfulness. I do not think I have any interest in it now. I can give you no idea of what my condition has been since I began to doubt your truthfulness. [*Ibid*, p.480]

On 31 July, Gandhiji wrote to Manilal Gandhi:

I can take no interest in Harilal's life and he in mine. The fault is not his. The way he thinks is governed by his past actions. I am not angry with Harilal. But the chain which bound him and me together is broken and the sweetness which should inform the relations of father and son is no more.... He has in sheer folly lost his employer Rs. 30,000, has passed a disgraceful letter to him and is now without employment. As they know he is my son, he is not in jail. [*Ibid*, p.518]

Harilal was out of employment. His wife had gone to her parents' house. From there she came to the Ashram in June 1918 to be with her in-laws. She was very unhappy. She cried all the time. Gandhiji was informed. But he had too many other burdens to carry and could not find the time to comfort her or talk to her.

Then came the influenza, which brought much suffering and sorrow to the Ashram, including Gandhiji's own family.

In the midst of all this Gandhiji was able to be at peace with himself, according to Mahadev Desai, and presented the picture of a *sthita prajna*, the man with the steadfast intellect described in the last 19 verses of the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

It was a nightmarish time for the whole country and the whole world. Death haunted homesteads and cast its shadow over the length and breadth of India. It came in the battle-fields of Europe, where Indian soldiers were defending



the Empire; it came in fields and huts and hovels of the poor in India where malnutrition and hunger made men, women and children fall easy prey to the epidemic of influenza that ravaged the country. Quoting the Census Report of 1921 the Soviet historian Balabushevich writes :

Perhaps because it came on the heels of famine conditions and the failure of crops, it took a heavy toll of human lives from the lower strata of society. People really died like flies and at places whole families were completely wiped out of existence. [Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, pp.29-30]

The Census Report of 1921 described the havoc wrought by this epidemic in the months following the end of the war in November 1918 graphically:

It is no exaggeration to say that at the worst period whole villages were absolutely laid desolate by the disease.... Crops were left unharvested and all local official action was largely paralysed, owing to the fact that the majority of the official staff was put out of action by the epidemic, and between twelve to thirteen million died of it.

But this was quite an underestimation as admitted by the Census Report itself :

It was calculated that death rate was 5 per cent among the European patients, 6 per cent among the well-to-do Indian classes...but as high as 50 per cent and above among the peasants and low-income-group city dwellers. [*Ibid*, pp.29-30]

The epidemic attacked Gandhiji's Ashram and took its toll of Gandhiji's household. Harilal Gandhi's youngest child and third son Shanti, three and a half



years of age, succumbed to the disease in October 1918 and a week later his wife Chanchalbehn (also called Gulab – Rose) fell victim to it.

This domestic calamity could not but have deepened the anguish of Gandhiji, though in his letters and utterances of the time he did not let emotion show. Indeed outwardly he appeared to have felt much more deeply the passing away of Sorabji Shapurji Adajania and A. M. Kachalia both his comrades from the South African days, and of Dr. H. S. Dev of the Servants of India Society. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.56-58]

To· Harilal Gandhi Gandhiji wrote on 21 October :

If I could help you by any word of mine and if I knew that word, I would write it at once. I do not know whether you have understood what this world means, but I have the clearest vision of it every moment and I see it exactly as it has been described by the sages, and that so vividly that I feel no interest in it.... It is no exaggeration to say that I experience wave after wave of joy from the practice of self-restraint.... If this calamity puts you in a frame of mind in which such happiness will be yours, you may even regard it as welcome. [*Ibid*, p.60]

In another letter to Harilal of 26 November 1918. Gandhiji wrote :

Your responsibilities have increased, your trials have increased and your temptations will increase likewise. To a man with a family, the fact of being such, that is, having a wife, is a great check. This check over you has disappeared.? [*Ibid*, p.65]

The role of a wife, to be sure, does not solely consist in exercising a check on her husband. She above all provides him the only sure support and sustenance in life's trials. In Harial's case this had been much more so. Not only had the



husband and wife been deeply devoted to each other, Harilal had also long felt the deprivation of parental support which every offspring expects as a right. His father had an expanded family, so that Harilal could not claim his father's special concern and care as his eldest son. He laboured further under a feeling of personal inadequacy resulting from the neglect of a career-oriented schooling for which he had ever yearned. His father had given opportunities of higher education to others in preference to him which had made him more unhappy and resentful. His wife loved and cherished him as he was. She had been his greatest support in life. She had built up his self-confidence and his self-esteem. That support was now gone; it was a shattering experience for Harilal. It led to his rapid decline to the great sorrow of both his parents.

11

Harilal had started life as a young man full of promise and idealism. At the age of 20 years he had actively participated in the Transvaal Satyagraha against the Black Act in South Africa, again and again courting arrest by unlawfully entering the Transvaal and by hawking without licence. He served many terms in jail, the longest one being of six months in 1909.

Harilal's disenchantment with his father had begun in 1906 when Gandhiji took the vow of *brahmacharya* and introduced in the Phoenix settlement discipline and regimen suited to a monastic life of voluntary poverty. Sensing hypocrisy in the whole exercise on the part of some of the inmates, Harilal could not conform. On top of it, when he wanted an opportunity to study for the bar in England like his father, Gandhiji did not sympathise with his ambition.

Gandhiji was opposed to modern education. Harilal might have been reconciled to it if this rule was applied to everyone in a uniform manner. But when Dr. Pranjivan Mehta offered to provide the expenses for the education of one of



his sons in England, Gandhiji said he would accept the offer only if he was free to nominate anyone he chose. This was agreed to. Gandhiji chose his nephew Chhaganlal Gandhi, rejecting Harilal's claim for the bonanza . This was bound to hurt Harilal. He was unhappy and sulked. But when Chhaganlal, owing to illness, had to return without completing his education, Gandhiji selected Sorabji Shapurji to fill his place and again bypassed his own sons . This was too much for Harilal to take. He deeply resented this treatment. He was now convinced that his father was using Kasturba as well as his children in the pursuit of his own fads. Gandhiji loved, he felt, his own ideas and reputation more than he loved his wife and children. Harilal decided to part company with his father.

Harilal fled from South Africa on 8 May 1911, intending to make his way back to India, but was recognized in Delagoa Bay and brought back by Kallenbach. He met his father, they talked, but it was of no use. Harilal's mind was now made up. He could not be persuaded to stay on in South Africa. [Chandulal Dalal, *Harilal Gandhi* (Gujarati), p.46]

Harilal went back to India with the intention of pursuing his education, passing matriculation and then going for higher studies. There was again a difference of opinion between father and son as to where he should study in India. Harilal wanted to go to Lahore for his studies. Gandhiji considered it best for him to continue his education at Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad there were many relatives and there were distractions of various kinds. Harilal could not concentrate on his studies there and did not manage to pass his matriculation examination. After three attempts he decided to give up studies and take to business.

Harilal did try to make up with his father after Gandhiji's return to India in January 1915. He joined his father's entourage and travelled with him for some



time. But the differences between father and son persisted. On 13 March 1915, he finally parted company with his father to follow his own path. [*Ibid*, p.46]. Attempts at reconciliation would continue on both sides till the end, but to no effect.

Harilal took up a job and was happily settled with his family in Calcutta for some time. Kasturba and Gandhiji visited him there. In fact Kasturba came to Champaran from Calcutta at Gandhiji's call. But Harilal's desire to make more money and make it fast led him to speculate with his employer's money and he lost a substantial sum. The result was that he lost his job and had to send his wife to her and his own parents along with the children. She was very unhappy to be away from him and at the turn events had taken. When she lost her child she was heart broken. And then she caught influenza herself and passed away in the prime of her life, leaving behind two daughters and two sons. The cup of Harilal's misery was now full.

Having lost his wife when only twenty-eight and been left with a family of four children between one year to ten years of age, Harilal did make a valiant effort to pull himself together. Kasturba had taken the children under her own care after their mother's death and Harilal was spared the responsibility of rearing them. But this freedom and the resulting loneliness regrettably led to other complications. He did not succeed in making an adjustment with his misfortunes and could not find a satisfactory new way of life. It is possible that he wanted to remarry but Gandhiji was against widowers marrying again. Moreover, Harilal already had four children to bring up. The result was that Harilal made a mess of his life. He could not decide what to do with himself. He borrowed money which he could not pay back. Gandhiji publicly wrote that no one should lend money to him. Harilal sank lower and lower into the mire of



despair and dissipation. Alcohol completed the wreck of a promising life. It is a difficult question to what extent Gandhiji's too high expectations from his first-born were responsible for this tragic turn in Harilal's life. One has to admit that Harilal did not get that support from his father which every son has a right to expect and to get. The price of being a Mahatma's son proved too much for Harilal.

Extracts from Harilal's open letter to his father written on 31 March 1915, summarized in English below, make a sad reading:

By your leave, at your desire and following your teaching I obeyed the inner voice and parted with you, and since you and Phoenix were indistinguishable, I also parted with Phoenix

You hold that you have given me and my brothers all the education that was necessary; indeed that you could not have given us better education. I hold that amidst all your preoccupations you have, without being aware of it, given us no attention. You intended with all your heart to give us your attention, give us education, and you have confused the intention with the act.

For the last ten years I have been crying my heart out to you.... You have always used us – and by 'us' I mean all us brothers, myself, Manilal, Ramdas and Devadas – as your instruments.... Yes, your treatment of us all has been more or less similar. You have treated us as a ring-master would treat the beasts of the circus. The ring-master can of course say that by taming the beastly propensities of the beasts, he is doing them a good turn.

... You have always suppressed us. You have spoken to us, never with love, always with anger. In argument you have always used with us humiliating language: 'You are ignorant... you lack understanding, you



think you have reached the last frontier of knowledge...' and so on.... Walking and moving, sleeping and sitting, reading and writing, you have kept us in constant fear of you. You have a heart of stone. Love I have not seen in you, so I can say nothing about it.

The more complicated your political life became, the more your ideas changed, the more twisted our lives became....

In 1906 when I was 19, I pleaded with you that I ought to acquire education.... I asked you to send me to England. I kept on at the theme for a year. You did not listen. You said the first requisite was character-building. I told you a fully-grown tree could not be bent. I was 19 and no great change was possible in my character". You went to England when you were 19 and you became a barrister. Today you think a lawyer's vocation is sinful. I doubt if, had you not been a barrister, you would have been doing all that you are doing today.

In the interests of Phoenix you sent Bhai Chhaganlal to England in 1910. He fell ill there. He came back in six months.

But the lot of my mother was worse than mine. I saw her insulted and humiliated. It was like the thief taking the policeman to task. 'Mrs. Gandhi takes too much sugar, which has led to increased expenses'; 'Mrs. Gandhi has no right to assign work to the employees of the press' and so on and so forth. I have not the words to describe the misery Mother went through.

In 1907 the Satyagraha struggle started and I joined it. I had plenty of time in jail for reflection.



In 1911, following the prompting of my inner voice, I left a letter for you and secretly left Phoenix, intending to go back to India. I would earn my living, keep away from temptation and pursue my studies in Lahore

I was stopped at Delagoa Bay.... At your command I went back to Phoenix. I remained unshaken in my purpose. You clipped my wings. You made me give up the idea of Lahore and agree to Ahmedabad. You fixed Rs. 30 per month for my expenses. You did not allow me to measure my own strength. You did it for me.

So on your insistence I stayed in Ahmedabad with relatives. There were deaths among relatives. The death of uncle was followed by my own illness. I remained bedridden for about a year. How serious the illness was only the doctors or those who nursed me can tell. In 1912 I failed in matriculation.

But how far could Rs. 30 a month go? I borrowed. When the matter of repaying the debt came up you spoke of selling the jewellery of my mother and of your daughter-in-law; which is to say, the money could not come from you.

Life in Ahmedabad was harsh, but I learnt a great deal there You came back to India and I stayed with you for a few days. When I complained that you had not allowed me to go to Lahore and had sent me to Ahmedabad, your answer was "Why did you not remain firm?"

... You rebuked me for having married against your wishes. I admit I did so. Still, looking at the circumstances, my act should be forgiven .



We were married in May 1906. In three months I had left for South Africa to be with you.... I have now been married nine years. Of these I have spent six years away from my wife.

... Not to take salt, not to take *ghee* (clarified butter), not to take milk has no bearing on character. You say this is necessary in pursuit of self-control. But my view is that even before one cultivates self-control, there are other even more desirable qualities that need to be stressed – such as being unselfish, that is, charitable, being endowed with courage, simplicity, etc. If one does not have these qualities, giving up salt etc., will not help one to acquire self-control. For the spirit of renunciation will be lacking.

... I gave up Phoenix because what I did there, what I saw others doing there was out of fear. ‘Whether the bridegroom dies or the bride, do what Bapu says’. And in truth, Father, you only like those who go by this rule. You dislike those who do not, such as me.

Providence so decreed – for good or ill – that I should be married. God has blessed me with four children. I am caught in the net of worldly attachments like others, and I cannot renounce them. So with your permission I have detached myself from you. I do feel that I should earn my own living. Notwithstanding, I am willing to join myself to the Phoenix party if you so order. I have never deliberately defied you, as you will admit. In the inmost recesses of my heart I do not wish to be anything but your son – if only I could be fit to be your son. [*Ibid*, pp.172-200]

Gandhiji also wanted him to be his son, as is clear from his letters quoted earlier. But somehow they could not come together as father and son. Things went from bad to worse. Gandhiji's remark on Harilal's open letter was that it was good he had had it off his chest. And he plunged into his public activities even



before he had fully regained his own health and strength. India needed his leadership.



Part III
MASS ACTION



CHAPTER X: THE ROWLATT ACT SATYAGRAHA - I

1

The Rowlatt Act Satyagraha, inspired and initiated by Gandhiji, was the first campaign of a political nature he undertook on a national scale. Champaran and Kheda had been skirmishes of a local nature, with socio-economic rather than political goals. The target of attack, too, in those cases was not British rule as such, which Gandhiji still considered benevolent as a whole, in spite of certain iniquities which he attributed mainly to a faulty working of the system and lack of vision and proper perspective on the part of various functionaries.

As distinct from these, the Rowlatt Act agitation took the shape of mass political action. The intention was to rouse the political consciousness of the people against British rule. The introduction of satyagraha in Indian politics that the agitation marked, not only changed the technique and programme of India's struggle for freedom but transformed the very content of politics and the people's approach to it. Though the Satyagraha was not conducted under the aegis of the Congress, it was qualitatively to change the very character of that organization. It also firmly placed Gandhiji at the centre of the stage in Indian politics, unfolding a new phase, the Gandhian phase, in the history of the country.

The year 1918 was significant in many ways. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report on constitutional reforms in India came out in July 1918. The Report recommended substantial steps to give some measure of responsibility to elected representatives of the people. It suggested:

- (1) so far as possible, complete popular control in local bodies;
- (2) immediate grant of a measure of autonomy to provinces in matters legislative, administrative and financial;



- (3) enlarging the Central legislature to make it more representative; and
- (4) gradual relaxation of the control of British Parliament and the Secretary of State on the Government of India.

The World War ended on 11 November 1918 with unconditional surrender by Germany.

In spite of the many unsatisfactory features of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms scheme, Gandhiji was on the whole favourably disposed towards it and urged the acceptance of the Reforms after suitable modifications. He wanted the Congress and the Muslim League to define the minimum changes which would make the scheme acceptable and then stake their all to get those changes accepted by the British Government. Basically he was still a believer in the Empire.

The fact was that, notwithstanding the constitutional reforms envisaged in the Montford Report, the grim reality throughout the war years had been ruthless repression and total denial of elementary human freedoms to the Indian people. The Defence of India Act, the Seditious Meetings Act, the Press Act and a plethora of Ordinances had placed sweeping powers in the hands of the officials which they exercised with a heavy hand. Action had been taken against leaders like Mohammed Ali, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Annie Besant, and several others who had criticized the Government. In Bengal nearly 3,000 young men had been interned .

All over the country high-handed methods were put into operation to get recruits for the army and loans and donations for the war fund. "Pressure and persuasion" in collection of funds and "voluntarism if possible, conscription if necessary" in promoting recruitment, were the phrases used by Willingdon and O'Dwyer, Lieut-Governor of the Punjab, to describe the Government's policy. In



the districts a procedure called "the indent system" was used to fleece the peasantry. Local officials would assess the paying capacity of an area and then swoop down upon it to realize the amount. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1946, Vol.I, p.156]

Even after the end of the war the rulers were not willing to let go of the despotic powers they had come to enjoy during the war, powers which appeared to be threatened with the inauguration of the Montford Reforms. It was necessary, they felt, to enact alternative laws to replace the Defence of India Act and other measures which would cease to operate in the post-war years. The militancy of the anarchists in Bengal and the scathing criticism of the Government by the activists of the Home Rule League made it an urgent need for them.

In anticipation of the end of the war, the Government of India had therefore appointed, on 10 December 1917, a Sedition Committee, with Justice Sidney Rowlatt as President and Kumaraswami Sastri and Provash Chandra as members, "to investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India and to examine and consider the difficulties that have arisen in dealing with such conspiracies and to advise as to the legislation, if any, to enable Government to deal effectively with them." [*Ibid*, p.157; C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.140]

The Rowlatt Committee, as it came to be known, had, in accordance with the order appointing it, all its sittings *in camera*. The public had no knowledge of the nature of evidence given before the Committee, or who gave it. No witnesses, therefore, could be cross-examined on behalf of the public.

The Committee submitted its report to the Government on 15 April 1918. When the contents of the Committee's recommendations became known in June, the country was shocked. "In the Report," notes a study, "facts and figures



were distorted in such a manner as to make the image of India's freedom movement look as a sum total of dacoities, robberies and acts of arson and murder. It argued that the politically conscious middle class was the source of all trouble.... The Report appeared to be a thesis written to prove that Indian nationalists were anarchists of the worst order, and as much a danger to society as to law and order in India.... Much influenced by the working of the Defence of India Act and the Rules made thereunder, and the salutary effect they produced, the Report concluded that the chief requirement of the situation was strengthening of the Executive permanently by arming it with similar powers as they had temporarily acquired under the Defence of India Act." [Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, pp.35-36]

2

The special session of the Congress held in Bombay at the end of August 1918 had in a resolution "condemned the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee which, if given effect to, would interfere with the fundamental rights of the Indian people and impede the healthy growth of public opinion." [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, p.157]

The thirty-third session of the Congress held in Delhi at the end of December 1918, which Gandhiji had been unable to attend owing to indifferent health, reiterated the Bombay resolution in this regard. It expressed the view that any legislation based on the Rowlatt Committee's report "would prejudicially affect the successful working of the constitutional reforms." [*Ibid*, p.158]

Non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council were equally agitated. On 23 September 1918, they moved a resolution in the Council seeking to keep in abeyance the full consideration and disposal of the Rowlatt Report till a thorough and searching inquiry had been made, by a committee consisting of



an equal number of officials and non-official Indians, into the working of the Criminal Investigation agencies of the Central and Provincial Governments. The motion was rejected. [Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p.36]

Yet acting on the recommendations contained in the Report, the Government of India drafted two Bills which were presented to the Imperial Legislative Council on 18 January 1919.

The first of these, the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, (Bill No. 1 of 1919) was intended to amend the Indian Penal Code so as to put effective curbs on activities dangerous to the State. It made it an offence for a person to be found in possession of a "seditious document," punishable with two years' imprisonment or with fine or with both, unless the accused person could prove that the document was in his possession for lawful purpose. "That is," commented Gandhiji, "instead of the prosecution having to prove the guilt of the accused, it is the latter who will have to establish his innocence." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.115-16]

The second, the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill, (Bill No. 2 of 1919) was much more sweeping in scope and much more obnoxious. It was intended to provide for expeditious trial of certain categories of offences called the "scheduled offences". The Local Government would have the power under this measure to order the trial of any person, even for offences committed before the issue of the notification bringing the Act into force in a particular area. The evidence of each witness examined in the case was required to be recorded only in summary, which, as Gandhiji pointed out, could lead to serious miscarriage of justice, for no judge could know in advance what weight to attach to which part of the evidence.



In an area where nationalist activities prevailed, the local Government had the power to order persons suspected of committing or promoting offences against the State to execute bonds of good conduct, to remain in a specified area and to report themselves at specified intervals to the police officer of the area. The Bill further provided for continued detention of persons already in jail.*

Coming at a time when the air was full of the talk of political reforms promised in the Montford Report, the “Black Bills,” as the proposed legislation came to be described, stunned the nation.

When the Bills were published, Gandhiji was still bedridden and had been advised rest for three months outside India. But this threat of legislative outrage against individual freedom so stirred him that he decided to forgo the prescribed rest. He wrote to O. S. Ghatge, the lawyer of the Ali Brothers:

I agree with you that the new Bill for preservation of internal tranquillity is damnable and no stone may be left unturned by us to kill the measure. But I strongly feel that because of its very severity it will never become law. I think that all the Indian members of the Imperial Council will strenuously oppose it. But all this is no reason for the country not taking up vigorous agitation. I am myself preparing to do my humble share in it.... There is no fear of its immediately becoming law. There will therefore be ample time to direct and develop the strongest possible agitation. [*Ibid*, pp.81-82]

Nationalist newspapers and journals of all shades were unanimous in condemning the Bills. Annie Besant's *New India* wrote that the Government was "courting a serious danger in proceeding with the Bills" and hoped the protests would be strong enough to check their further progress. The *Young Patriot* and the *Tribune* called the Bills "the greatest political blunder." *Amrita Bazar Patrika*



was reminded of Nadir Shah who, on some of his soldiers having been killed, gave over Delhi to "rapine, lust and blood-thirstiness of his brutal soldiery". The *Leader* called upon Indian leaders to oppose the measure with passive resistance. The *Commonwealth* of Madras suggested that non-official members of the Imperial Council should leave the Chamber if the Bills were passed into law. The *Kesari* wrote: "People should agitate on such a large scale as to attract the notice of the big statesmen at the Peace Conference.... Time may come even for the adoption of passive resistance." [Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, pp.41-42]

Opposition to the Bills from the public platform was also intensified. The two Home Rule Leagues as well as the Moderates came together for the purpose.

* For a full summary by Gandhiji, see Appendix-II.

3

In total disregard of Indian sentiment, the Rowlatt Bills were introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council on 6 February 1919. The Indian members of the Council, notably Vithalbhai Patel, Srinivasa Sastri and Madan Mohan Malaviya put up a strenuous fight against them. Srinivasa Sastri, answering the imputation of the Home Member that Indian leaders were indulging in threats of agitation, said:

The agitation must be there already. The heart must be throbbing.... I wish to assure my official colleagues that none of us has had a share yet in this business, but, if our appeals fall flat, if the Bill goes through, I do not believe there is anyone here who would be doing his duty if he did not join the agitation. [*Ibid*, p.44]

From early February 1919, Shankerlal Banker, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Omar Sobhani and other luminaries of the Home Rule League had been having



consultations with Gandhiji on the situation arising out of the introduction of the Rowlatt Bills. On 2 February, at a meeting organized by the Home Rule League and presided over by Madan Mohan Malaviya, a letter from Gandhiji was read out to the effect that if the Rowlatt Bills were passed into law, the Reforms, whatever their value, would be rendered absolutely worthless. It was absurd to promise on the one side the enlargement of the powers of the public and, on the other, to put unbearable restraints on their powers. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.83]

Writing to Madan Mohan Malaviya on 8 February, Gandhiji referred to the disappointing speech of the Viceroy in regard to the Bills and hoped that under the circumstances "all the Indian members will leave the Select Committee [to which the Bills had been referred or, if necessary, even the Council, and launch a country-wide agitation."

The only question was what shape such an agitation should take. Gandhiji held the view that even holding a hundred thousand meetings all over India would make no difference to the situation. In the same letter to Malaviya he added: "I feel that when the Government bring in an obnoxious law the people will be entitled to defy their other laws as well.... In my opinion you should all make it clear to the Government that so long as the Rowlatt Bills are there, you will pay no taxes and will advise the people also not to pay them." [*Ibid*, p.86]

To V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, he wrote on 9 February:

I have just read your forcible speech on the Rowlatt Bills. This is none too strong. The Bills coupled with the Viceroy's, Sir William Vincent's and Sir George Lowndes' speeches have stirred me to the very depths; and though I have not left my bed, still I feel I can no longer watch the progress of the Bills lying in bed.



Gandhiji further told Sastri that to him the Bills were the aggravated symptoms of a deep-seated disease. They were a striking demonstration of the determination of the Civil Service to retain its grip on our necks. When petitions and resolutions of gigantic mass meetings failed there were but two courses open – the ordinary rough and ready course was an armed rebellion, and the second was civil disobedience to all the laws of the land or to a selection of them. Speaking for himself, Gandhiji felt if the Bills were to be proceeded with, he could no longer render peaceful obedience to the laws of a power that was capable of such a piece of devilish legislation as the two Bills, and he would not hesitate to invite those who shared his feelings to join him in the struggle. [*Ibid.* pp.87-88]

To Pragji Desai he wrote the same day:

The Rowlatt Bills have agitated me very much. It seems I shall have to fight the greatest battle of my life. I have been discussing things. I shall be able to come to a decision in two or three days. [*Ibid.* p.88]

Notwithstanding the general clamour raised against the legislation all over India and the warnings sounded both inside and outside the Council by nationalist leadership, the Government pushed through the measure. By dint of the official majority in the Council, it had the other obnoxious Bill passed by 18 March. On 21 March, the Act to cope with Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes (Act No. XI of 1919) received the assent of the Governor-General.

4

The two Home Rule Leagues in Bombay and especially the All-India Home Rule League of Annie Besant – had been carrying on a sustained agitation against the Bills ever since they had first been published in January. Protest mass meetings had been held in Delhi, Bombay, Allahabad, Kanpur, Banaras, Lucknow, Patna, Madras and other cities. The initiative came from Bombay, which was the



stronghold of the two Home Rule Leagues. It was one of the six branch headquarters of Tilak's Home Rule League. The Bombay City branch of Annie Besant's Home Rule League had a membership of 2,600. [H. F. Owen, "Organizing for the Rowlatt Satyagraha" in R. Kumar, ed., *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, p.69]

On 24 February 1919, Home Rule leaders from Bombay, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankerlal Banker, Omar Sobhani, B. G. Horniman and Sarojini Naidu visited Gandhiji at Sabarmati Ashram, where he had been recuperating, and sought his guidance. A few workers of Ahmedabad, such as Vallabhbhai Patel, Anasuyabehn Sarabhai and Indulal Yajnik also joined in the consultations. This was in the nature of a "war council," as Gandhiji described it, to decide on the next step.

Gandhiji was in perfect agony with "doctors telling me that I should not undertake any exertion, the voice within me telling me that I must speak out on the Rowlatt Bills and the Viceregal pronouncement.... Many friends have looked to me for guidance. The desire was to take the plunge even if we were only a few. The last word rested with me." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.104]

The result of the deliberations was a Satyagraha Pledge, which was drafted by Gandhiji. It read:

Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. 1 of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Power) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed may think



fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property. [Ibid, pp.101-02 and 104]

The pledge was signed by more than fifty persons, some of the signatories being: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Mrs. Annie Besant, Madras, Vallabhbhai Patel, Ahmedabad, Anasuya Sarabhai, Secretary, Women's Branch of the Home Rule League, Ahmedabad, Indulal Kanaiyalal Yajnik, Editor, *Navajivan*, Ahmedabad, B. G. Horniman, Editor, *The Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Bombay, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Hyderabad, Umar Sobhani, Bombay, Shankerlal Banker, Secretary, All-India Home Rule League, Bombay, Dinkar Sathye, Secretary, All-India Home Rule League, Bombay, Narayan Damodar Savarkar, Bombay. [Source Material for a History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol.III (I), Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, p.102]

Before publishing the pledge Gandhiji wired to the Viceroy making "an humble but strong appeal to His Excellency to reconsider Government's decision to proceed with the Bills," and added that "in the event of unfavourable reply, the pledge must be published and the signatories must invite additions." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.102-03]

On 25 February Gandhiji sent copies of the Satyagraha Pledge to K. Natarajan of *The Indian Social Reformer* and Stanley Reed of *The Times of India* under instructions that it be published if and when Gandhiji sent the necessary authorization which he would do after he heard from the Viceroy.

There was no reply from the Government.

Explaining the importance of the pledge in a letter to the Press, Gandhiji said:



It will be now easy to see why I consider the Bills to be an unmistakable symptom of a deep-seated disease in the governing body.... The Bills must intensify the hatred and ill-will against the State, of which the deeds of violence are undoubtedly an evidence. The Indian covenanters by their determination to undergo every form of suffering make an irresistible appeal for justice to the Government.... They have convinced themselves that the disease is serious enough and that milder measures have utterly failed. The rest lies in the lap of the gods. [*Ibid*, pp.121-22]

5

The decision as regards civil disobedience having been taken, the question now was one of organization. The Congress just then had so many different and even conflicting strains that it could hardly be made the vehicle of satyagraha as conceived by Gandhiji. And Gandhiji had little control over that organization. Shankerlal Banker writes:

Although we all worked in the Home Rule League, civil disobedience could not be carded on through that body. Though Annie Besant did not like the Rowlatt Committee report, she did not favour satyagraha against it. Jinnah took the same position. Then the membership of the League was composed of lawyers and doctors, who would not readily take up the programme, while the matter brooked no delay. It was therefore decided that a wholly independent body be formed for the purpose and the Satyagraha Sabha was accordingly formed. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Rashtriya Pravritti* (Gujarati), p.39]

On 26 February Gandhiji issued detailed instructions to the volunteers to be strictly followed in collecting signatures for the Satyagraha Pledge. He insisted



that volunteers must make sure that the intending signatories understood the significance of the Rowlatt Bills.

The signatories must understand the significance of the word "civilly" occurring in the phrase "we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws." Breaking moral laws would not be civil disobedience, nor would be discourteous behaviour towards officials. A signatory must be prepared to bear "every kind of suffering and sacrifice," if necessary, both in person and property. "He must be prepared to carry on the struggle single-handed if need be."

The signatory must observe truth and *ahimsa*, said Gandhiji. Volunteers must not aim at merely increasing the number of satyagrahis. Emphasis must be on quality rather than quantity. Signatures should not be taken from persons below 18 years of age, nor from students. Persons on whose earnings their families were solely dependent must not be induced to sign the Pledge. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.118-20]

In a letter to the Press the same day, 26 February, Gandhiji explained that the Satyagraha decision was "probably the most momentous in the history of India." He had not been able to find any justification for the contemplated legislation in the report of the Rowlatt Committee, which stated "that secret violence is confined to isolated and very small parts of India, and to a microscopic body of people." It could be no justification for the Government to assume such sweeping powers out of all proportion to the situation sought to be dealt with. [*Ibid*, pp.120-22]

The country was now ready to be launched on its first mass Satyagraha campaign. The developments should have made the Government take note and reconsider their position. But this did not happen.



India 1919, an Information Department publication edited by Rushbrook Williams, wrote:

Mr. Gandhi is generally regarded as a Tolstoyan of high ideals and complete selflessness. Since his stand on behalf of the Indians in South Africa, he has commanded among his countrymen all the traditional reverence with which the East envelops a religious leader of acknowledged ascetism. In his case he possesses the added strength that his admirers are not confined to any one religious sect. Since he took up his residence in Ahmedabad in the Bombay Presidency, he has been actively concerned in social work of varied kinds.

His readiness to take up the cudgels on behalf of any individual or class whom he regards as being oppressed has endeared him to the masses of his countrymen. In the case of the urban and rural population of many parts of the Bombay Presidency his influence is unquestioned; and he is regarded with a reverence for which adoration is scarcely too strong a word. Believing as he does in the superiority of 'soul-force' over material might, Mr. Gandhi was led to believe that it was his duty to employ against the Rowlatt Act that weapon of Passive Resistance which he had used effectively in South Africa, if the Bills were passed. This announcement was regarded as being of the utmost gravity both by Government and by many of the Indian politicians....

It must be clearly stated that there was nothing in Mr. Gandhi's attitude or pronouncement which could have justified Government in taking any steps against him before the inception of the movement. Passive Resistance is a negative and not a positive process. Mr. Gandhi expressly condemned any resort to material force. He was confident that



he would be able, by a process of passive disobedience to civil laws, to coerce the Government into abandoning the Rowlatt Act. [Rushbrook Williams, (Ed.) *India in 1919*. Govt. of India Press, Calcutta, 1919, pp.29-30]

This, alas, did not happen.

6

As days passed preparations for the Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills steadily gathered strength. In Bombay the Home Rulers were most active. So was *The Bombay Chronicle*, which according to a Home Department report, devoted its columns day after day "to a campaign of extraordinary vehemence in favour of passive resistance." [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.738]

Another report of the Bombay Home Department says:

On the 1st of March Mr. Gandhi arrived in Bombay where he was continuously visited by Messrs. Horniman, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, S. G. Banker, Dr. D. D. Sathye, Dr. M. B. Velkar, Mrs. Naidu, Miss Anasuyabai of Ahmedabad, Mavji Govindji and other Home Rulers. [*Source Material*, Vol.III,(I), p.104]

On 2 March the Satyagraha Sabha appointed an Executive Committee to collect funds and do propaganda work, with Gandhiji as President, Horniman as Vice-President, Shankerlal Banker and Omar Sobhani of Annie Besant's League and D. D. Sathye of Tilak's League as Secretaries and Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Sarojini Naidu among the 24 members from Bombay. [H. F. Owen, in R. Kumar (Ed.); *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.77-78]

The Bombay Government in its fortnightly report to the Government of India for the first half of March 1919 singled out the Home Rule League for denunciation:



The Rowlatt Bills continue to overshadow every other topic in Indian political circles. *The Bombay Chronicle* and the Bombay Home Rule League lead the van in the agitation against the Bills and in beating up recruits to the Satyagraha movement. Since the end of last month three to four protest meetings have been held weekly in Bombay under the auspices of the local Home Rule League.... There is little doubt that the protest of a large number of the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council against Gandhi's Satyagraha movement has had a very sobering effect.... The fact of the matter is that the movement has been rushed through by the small and influential but rather ill-balanced clique of Home Rulers in Bombay, whose one anxiety is to dominate the political situation in India.... It was they who tried to rush the country into the adoption of the cry "unacceptable" in respect of the Reforms Report; it was they who spoiled all chance of a compromise with the Moderates during the Special Sessions of the Congress-League at Bombay to consider the Report and it is they who waited on Gandhi and overpersuaded him into adopting his present line in respect of the Rowlatt Bills without waiting to consult other political leaders in India or to consider [other] ways and means. They are now using the appeal of his name for all it is worth. [National Archives of India, Home Poll. Deposit, April 1919, File No.48]

The Congress of course, by its Bombay and Delhi resolutions, was committed to oppose the Rowlatt Bills. In the Imperial Legislative Council Congress spokesmen denounced the measure in no uncertain terms and the elected members all voted against it. But that leadership conceived the agitation as a series of protest meetings all over India. They never had it in mind to take their opposition to the point of disobeying laws.



On 2 March, Dinshaw Edulji Wachha, Surendranath Bannerjea, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and other Moderate leaders issued a manifesto distancing themselves from the Satyagraha. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.127 and 138]

Gandhiji later also saw V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and had prolonged discussions with him. "But," he wrote to Maffey, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, "in this business there is a difference of ideals between him and me, and I could discover no meeting-ground between us." [Ibid, p.130]

Mrs. Besant, too, refused to countenance the idea of satyagraha. According to Jamnadas Dwarkadas, at a mass meeting held under her presidentship in Bombay, while Horniman and others exhorted the audience to rise up against the latest insult hurled at India by the British and resort to Satyagraha and defiance of laws, Mrs. Besant opposed the idea and openly criticized Horniman. Indiscriminate defiance of laws, she said, was a most dangerous thing. She, however, agreed with the view expressed by Motilal Nehru that in giving expression to their views the people should disregard the provisions of the Rowlatt legislation and accept whatever punishment was inflicted on them in consequence. [Jamnadas Dwarkadas, *Political Memoirs*, pp.268-69]

Still later, on 18 April 1919, after the violence and vengeance in Delhi, Gujarat and the Punjab, she said in a statement:

No one, I presume, will contend that the Government should look on while mobs murdered, wrecked banks and fired railway stations.... Will my critics say at what step the Government should intervene? I say that when a small handful of soldiers and police is face to face with a mob of many thousands, and the mob begins to pelt them with brickbats, it is more merciful to order the soldiers to fire a few volleys of buckshot than to allow



the violence to gather strength until either the town must be given to mob rule or machine-guns or bombs be brought into play.

She went on :

Let us who are Home Rulers... for this time of danger drop all criticism of Government action and stand firmly by the Government against revolution, which means bloodshed at home and invasion from abroad. [*India in 1919*, p.38]

From then on the expression "bullets for brickbats" became associated with her name and her popularity suffered a good deal as a consequence. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, p.171]

The top leaders of Tilak's Home Rule League were equally divided on the question of civil disobedience. G. S. Khaparde and N. C. Kelkar were openly opposed and, according to one commentator, Khaparde's negative attitude to the satyagraha movement was decisive in the lukewarm attitude of the Central Provinces and Berar, where the Tilakite Home Rule organization took little part in the Rowlatt Satyagraha. This was further supported a little later by the police report.

The fortnightly report of the Government of Central Provinces for the period ending 15 April took note of the role of Khaparde. Reporting that little notice had been taken of the Satyagraha movement in the Marathi-speaking towns like Nagpur, Amraoti and Akola, it went on:

Some of the local extremists were anxious to get up an agitation over Gandhi's 'arrest' but Mr. Khaparde strongly dissuaded them, telling them he did not believe in passive resistance as it could not be carried on to the end.... There is no doubt that the Maratha extremists have generally



been lukewarm in their attitude towards the passive resistance movement.

[National Archives of India, Home Poll. Deposit, July 1919, File No.46]

But Tilak's younger and more impetuous followers according to the same source, participated fully in the movement – as for example 'men like Sathye in Bombay City, S.M. Paranjpe in Central Maharashtra and Gangadharrao Deshpande in Karnatak. As the campaign reached its climax the local Home Rule offices were used for distributing proscribed literature printed in Bombay, Madras and elsewhere." [H. F. Owen, in R. Kumar (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, p.72]

7

On 5 March Gandhiji saw the Viceroy in Delhi. Even though the talk was "extremely cordial and friendly", as Gandhiji wrote to Devadas, "neither succeeded in convincing the other". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.126]

Though still extremely unwell and quite unable to stand up or even sit up for any length of time, Gandhiji nevertheless proceeded on an extensive Satyagraha tour. From Delhi, where he addressed a largely attended protest meeting on 7 March, he proceeded to Lucknow, thence to Allahabad, finally returning to Bombay on 12 March.

The response from the people was tremendous. Gandhiji telegraphed to Srinivasa Sastri that so far as he was able to gauge public opinion during his wanderings, it was intensely strong. [Ibid, p.128]. He again addressed an appeal to the Viceroy "to pause and consider before passing" the Bills, for there was no mistaking the strength of public opinion against the measure. [Ibid, p.128]

In Bombay in the meantime prominent activists of the two Home Rule Leagues who had joined the Satyagraha Sabha, had now taken up propaganda and public education work vigorously. Shankerlal Banker set to work printing



copies of the Satyagraha Pledge, as well as posters and leaflets explaining the significance of the Rowlatt Bills. Extracts from Thoreau's *Duty of Civil Disobedience*, relevant to the Satyagraha movement, were printed in Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi and Marathi and widely distributed. [H. F. Owen, in R. Kumar (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.70-71]

Some questions and their answers taken from Thoreau were adapted and distributed; e.g.:

- Q. Whom will you respect – Rowlatt Bill or the Truth?
- A. I see no necessity of teaching the virtue of respecting the law. It is always necessary to respect the truth.
- Q. How can the atrocities of the Rowlatt Bill be stopped?
- A. There is no atrocity if a thousand men can refuse to pay taxes. But to pay taxes to the Kingdom which does atrocities is to support such rule and thus atrocities lie in paying taxes.
- Q. How will the bonds of the Rowlatt Bill be broken?
- A. There will be the commencement of the breaking of the bonds of slavery the very day on which only one hero, having opposed slavery and having not paid the taxes, will go to jail.

Fight against the bonds of the Rowlatt Bill.

Thoreau's advice:

A man is privileged to oppose the tyrannical rule when there is much tyranny. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand persons talk of truthfulness, but only one puts it into action. The value of this one is, however, very great. [Source Material, Vol.II, p.753]



On 14 March, at a largely attended public meeting at which Mahatma Munshiram, who had become a sannyasi and was known as Swami Shraddhanand, was also present having thrown in his lot with the satyagrahis, Gandhiji told the audience that there was no such thing as defeat in Satyagraha and that the six hundred men and women in the Bombay Presidency who had signed the Pledge were more than enough for the purpose, if they had strong wills and invincible faith in their mission. Satyagraha was not a threat; it was a fact. He proceeded:

We may no longer believe in the doctrine of tit for tat; we may not meet hatred by hatred, violence by violence, evil by evil; but we have to make continuous and persistent effort to return good for evil. [C.W.M.G. Vol.XV, p.135]

Gandhiji was still weak but when Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and C. Rajagopalachari invited him to visit Madras, he immediately agreed and spent two weeks from 18 March to 2 April, touring the Madras Presidency. This was the first time Gandhiji met Rajagopalachari. The two immediately took to one another and became close friends and colleagues. Gandhiji stayed with Rajaji in Madras. Rajaji had shifted to Madras from Salem two weeks earlier in the interests of his law practice and education of his children. [*Autobiography*, pp.458-59]. The meeting with Gandhiji was to change the course of his life.

The agitation against the Black Bills had already been gathering strength in the Presidency. The Madras Government's fortnightly report for the first half of March sent to the Government of India said:

The Rowlatt Bills continue to be violently criticised at public meetings and in the papers. Mrs. Besant had declined to sign Mr. Gandhi's Satyagraha vow.... Mrs. Besant's is one for refusal to obey the Rowlatt Bills



only in such ways as a committee may direct.... On the 14th March 1919 it was stated in *New India* that the total number of persons in Madras who have announced to Madras Anti-Rowlatt Bills Executive Committee that they had taken the Satyagraha Pledge, was 110. It is also stated that the Anti-Rowlatt Bills Executive Committee intends to adopt the following measures:

- (1) Continuous protest meetings through the country;
- (2) Presentation of a monster petition to Parliament;
- (3) Agitation in England; and
- (4) Passive Resistance. [National Archives of India, Home Poll. Deposit, April 1919, File No.48]

At the Madras meeting held on 18 March, the very day on which one of the Rowlatt Bills – Bill No. 2 - was passed by the Imperial Legislative Council despite vehement opposition from the elected members, Gandhiji referred to the manifestoes issued by the Moderate leaders on 2 and 18 March and deprecated the "recrimination, innuendo and insinuation in our public life." He appealed to the satyagrahis not to be resentful of them. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.138]

8

A country-wide Satyagraha campaign was on the tapis, but Gandhiji was yet to work out the form that the campaign should take. In Madras, even after prolonged discussions with Rajagopalachari, he could not come to any decision in the matter. On the night of 18 March, when he went to bed he was still in this state of indecision.

Writes Gandhiji:



That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual. I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me – it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari. [*Autobiography*, p.459]

The idea that came to him in the dream was that he should call upon the country to observe a general hartal. Satyagraha being a process of self-purification, it would be in the fitness of things for it to commence with an act of self-purification. Let the people of India therefore suspend their business on that day and observe the day as a day of fasting and prayer. [*Ibid*, pp.459-60]

On 23 March Gandhiji in a letter to the press explained that satyagraha was essentially a religious movement, a process of purification and penance. It sought to secure reforms and redress of grievances through self-suffering. He suggested that the second Sunday after the publication of the Viceregal assent to Bill No. 2 of 1919 be observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. "There must be," he said, "an effective public demonstration in keeping with the character of the observance." He called for :

(i) a twenty-four hours' fast counting from the last meal on the preceding night by all adults, unless prevented from so doing by consideration of religion or health. The fast was, for the satyagrahis, a necessary discipline to fit them for civil disobedience contemplated in their pledge, and for others a token of the intensity of their wounded feelings;

(ii) suspension for the day of all work, except such as might be necessary in the public interest, and closure of all markets and other places of business. Employees required to work on Sundays might suspend work only after obtaining previous leave. Gandhiji recommended the programme to public servants too.



While it was right for them not to take part in political discussions and gatherings, they had a right to express their feelings in vital matters.

Public meetings were to be held on that day in all parts of India, not excluding villages, at which resolutions praying for the withdrawal of the two measures were to be passed.

Gandhiji's co-workers were worried. How were they to reach the message to every nook and corner of India? There was so little time. There was no radio or television then and even the postal service did not reach many villages. But Gandhiji pressed his proposal and asked them to go ahead in God's name. He was proved right. The people responded. He narrated this experience to us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp (1942-44) as one of the occasions when he saw God. He ascribed the success in getting people's response to God's intervention.

As regards particular laws to be disobeyed, Gandhiji suggested the distribution of proscribed literature. The Government, he said, had foolishly confiscated some good books. The second law to be disobeyed was the one relating to the registration of newspapers, 'one of the blackest Acts in the Statute-book', which had enervated the journalists and the whole country. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.145-46]

Gandhiji then discussed the plan of future work with co-workers. Immediate activities suggested comprised (1) printing and publishing of clean prohibited literature; and (2) issue of handwritten newspapers without licence. He advised the Bombay Committee not to put anything more before the public for the time being. As the struggle progressed, other laws would be taken up for defiance; such as Salt Act and Revenue Law. As for organization, Gandhiji thought that the best course for each province was to have its separate independent



organization, and for all those different organizations to cooperate, rather than having an All-India organization. [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, p.314; C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.147-48]

On 24 March, at a meeting in Tanjore, Gandhiji answered questions from workers and elaborated the principles of Satyagraha as distinguished from passive resistance. Passive resistance, he explained, was a weapon of the weak and admitted the possibility of violence or fraud. The suffragette movement in England was a passive resistance movement and the suffragettes had certainly resorted to violence. It was a political weapon when circumstances warranted. In Satyagraha, on the other hand, there could be no room for violence. "The word [satyagraha] means adherence to Truth. Truth is one side of the coin the other side of which is love. Love is the dynamic form of Truth." Satyagraha was woven into the very fabric of our religious life, he said. Satyagraha was the "weapon of the strongest ," [Mahadev Desai, *A Righteous Struggle*, pp.310-11], Gandhi explained.

The workers mentioned the lack of unity among the people and expressed the fear that the Government might not accept the propriety and justice of our resistance. They asked if the South African Satyagraha in comparison was not a very simple affair.

Gandhiji disagreed. He said:

Perhaps people there will call this our fight (here) an easy affair. There was in South Africa so much of internecine bickering, of groupism with all its evils, of sons at variance with their fathers and so on. Then there were among them quite a good number of murderers, robbers and thieves. There were also the Pathans, who knew no other laws than that of a stab for a stab. But all of them were bound by the pledge of non-violence and they did behave properly. [*Ibid*, pp.315-16]



In the last week of March Gandhiji remained in Madras Presidency, touring, addressing meetings at Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura, Tuticorin, Nagapatnam and Madras. He appealed to the people to follow the programme for 6 April as enunciated in his letter to the Press.

The Madras Government's fortnightly report for the second half of March said:

Meetings have been held almost daily on the beach at Madras and were attended by audiences varying from 2,000 to 10,000. They have been addressed by, among others, G. Harisarvottama Rao, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva, political ex-convicts, and by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, Mr. Kasturiranga Iyengar (Editor of *The Hindu*) and Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar of Salem.... The principal object of the meetings appears to be to popularize passive resistance. Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal suggested that the movement should be confined to the Rowlatt Acts and Cognate Acts which take away the liberty of the people, in other words to the printing of proscribed books and defiance of the law relating to public meetings.... On the 22nd March 1919 the Madras branch of the Passive Resistance Movement was formed, Mr. Gandhi being President. Among Vice-Presidents are Mr. S. Kasturiranga Iyengar and Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar. [National Archives of India, Home Poll. Deposit, April 1919, File No.49]



CHAPTER XI: THE ROWLATT ACT SATYAGRAHA - II

1

In Delhi, at the meeting addressed by Gandhiji on 7 March 1919 and attended by about 6,000 persons, a Satyagraha Sabha was formed. A number of well-known persons signed the Satyagraha Pledge. These included Dr. M. A. Ansari (President), Swami Shraddhanand (who became President of the Sabha after 26 March), Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Dr. Abdur Rahaman, Lala Shankarlal, Shiv Narian Haksar, Miss Gmeiner, Mohammed Shuaib, Indra Vidyavachaspati, Subhadra Devi and K. A. Desai. By 30 March approximately 120 persons had signed the Pledge. [Donald W. Ferrell, "The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Delhi", in R. Kumar, (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.203-04]

Delhi's vernacular newspapers, the Urdu *Qaum* and *Inquilab* and the Hindi *Vijaya*, *Congress* and *Hind Samachar*, which had started between November 1918 and February 1919 and together had a wide circulation among the lower middle class and trading classes, played an important part in awakening political consciousness. Ferrell quotes an entry of 6 March from the diary of G. S. Khaparde who represented Berar in the Imperial Legislative Council and was a staunch follower of Tilak:

The city was buzzing with rumours about the Rowlatt Bills and that even an illiterate Muslim rickshaw-wallah complained bitterly about the ill effects that would follow their enactment. [*Ibid*, p.202]

There were besides a number of voluntary organizations in Delhi, six of them classified as political or quasi-political, all founded between May 1917 and February 1919, whose activities did much to awaken political consciousness among the people. These were Indraprastha Sewak Mandli, Home Rule League



Volunteer Corps, Muslim League Volunteer Corps, Tibbia College Corps, Congress Volunteer Corps and Delhi Volunteer Corps.

Most of these organizations took an active part in organizing public protest against the Rowlatt Act and in course of time were closely connected with the Satyagraha Sabha. [*Ibid*, p.204]

Delhi was thus ready when the appeal came from Gandhiji for the observance of the day of humiliation and prayer. Unfortunately there was a mix-up about the dates. Gandhiji had said the day would be "the second Sunday after the publication" of the Viceregal assent to the Bill. "Those who came to know of the Viceregal assent immediately after it was given," Gandhiji later testified before the Hunter Committee, "for them the calculation would be 30th March. That was brought to the notice of the people in Madras. I immediately sent a telegram fixing the 6th April. But at the end of the day telegrams had gone all over India when this letter was published fixing the second Sunday after the Viceregal assent was given in Delhi." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, p.384]

Delhi observed the day on 30 March. The leaders met early on that day and despatched members of the different volunteer corps to maintain peace and to make sure that no one was forced to close his shop against his will. They then issued a final request to the traders to close their shops. By mid-morning there was a complete hartal in Delhi. Huge crowds of people surged up and down the streets to make sure that the hartal was complete. Tonga-drivers, rickshaw-pullers, porters, palki-bearers and others joined the hartal. [Donald W. Ferrell, "The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Delhi", pp.209-14]

Crowds of people collected at the Railway Station and at the Clock Tower. They were rowdy but not violent. The satyagrahis discovered that *halwais* at the Railway Station had not observed hartal and tried to persuade them to do so. This



was enough for the authorities to arrest a number of satyagrahis. News of the arrests spread in the city and crowds at the Railway Station swelled. A demand for the release of the arrested persons was raised. The officials were adamant and tempers on both sides ran high. It was said that some of the people in the crowd threw brickbats at the troops and the officials. One of the officials ordered the troops and the police to open fire. Five persons were killed and two injured. This infuriated the people. Another crowd collected at the Clock Tower and resumed throwing brickbats at the police. Another round of firing resulted in 12 injured. [*Ibid*, pp.190-92]

In the evening there was a large public meeting at Peepal Park at the end of Chandni Chowk, attended by an audience estimated at 40,000. It was addressed by Swami Shraddhanand, Mohammed Shuaib and Dr. Abdur Rahman. [*Ibid*, p.216]

How surcharged the atmosphere was, was demonstrated by an incident in which Shraddhanand might well have been shot or bayoneted. As he made his way after the meeting with a large group of people to the Clock Tower, he was encountered by Gurkha troops coming from the opposite direction. The soldiers, on seeing the crowd, stepped on to the footpath and made ready to load their rifles. A shot was fired in the air. Shraddhanand at once confronted the soldiers and, baring his chest, challenged them to shoot him. The situation was saved by the timely arrival of a senior police official, who told the Gurkhas to lower their bayonets. Shraddhanand immediately became a popular hero and his act of daring was prominently featured in the press. [*Ibid*, pp.218-19]

Complete hartal in the city continued on the following day, 31 March.



On 3 April, one of the persons injured in the firing on 30 March succumbed to his injuries. Swami Shraddhanand joined the funeral procession and urged the people to boycott foreign goods. [*Ibid*, p.220]

Hindi and Urdu newspapers in the city devoted their entire issues to the agitation and police firing. On 4 April the Muslims of Delhi threw an open invitation to the Hindus to their Friday *khutba*. Swami Shraddhanand was invited to speak from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid to a congregation that included both Muslims and Hindus. When he emerged from the mosque Hindus and Muslims alike flocked around him and kissed his hands and feet as though he were a saint dear to both the communities. [*Ibid*, p.222]

On 6 April, despite appeals to the contrary by the Satyagraha Sabha, Delhi observed a complete hartal. A large public meeting was held at King Edward Park at noon at which Swami Shraddhanand and other speakers exhorted the audience to take to swadeshi and satyagraha. There were eight similar meetings in Daryaganj in the evening. The absence of violence on 6 April was a proof, the gathering felt, that firing by the Government on 30 March was unnecessary and uncalled for. The number of people gathered at these meetings was estimated at one lakh. Those who flocked to the meetings represented the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Delhi.

On 7 April another victim of police firing died and Shraddhanand again joined the funeral. The Chief Commissioner, C. A. Barron, was scared by the growing popularity of Shraddhanand and took steps to extenuate him. He was unsuccessful, as neither the Punjab nor the U.P. Government was willing to take responsibility for him. [*Ibid*, p. 223]



Gandhiji had committed himself to pay a visit to Delhi and the Punjab in the second week of April in answer to the importunities of Swami Shraddhanand and Dr. Satyapal. About the 1st of April Dr. Satyapal had written to him from Amritsar saying he had been trying to follow the satyagraha movement, that he appreciated it and liked it immensely, but that he himself did not fully understand it, nor did the people. He requested Gandhiji to "go over to Amritsar" be his guest, and "deliver a few speeches explaining the doctrine of satyagraha."

Swami Shraddhanand had also sent to Gandhiji two or three telegrams following the events of 30 March, saying that the leaders in Delhi might not be able to manage the crowds, and requesting Gandhiji to come. "Your presence will have a pacifying influence," Shraddhanand had written. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.400-02]

On 7 April Gandhiji wired to Dr. Satyapal that he would be reaching Delhi on 9 April and that Dr. Satyapal should meet him there. On 8 April he wired to Swami Shraddhanand giving him the same information and requesting him to keep the visit strictly private. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.194 and 204]

The authorities, however, had other ideas. As the train reached Kosi Kalan, Gandhiji was served with an order not to enter Punjab. Another order prohibited him from entering Delhi and a third order, from the Government of India, restricted him to Bombay. Gandhiji expressed his inability to comply with the orders. He was then arrested at Palwal and conveyed back to Bombay. [*Ibid*, p.207]

On 9 April the news spread in Delhi like wildfire that Gandhiji, while on his way to Delhi, had been arrested and taken back to Bombay. At 9 a.m. on the morning of the 10th, 20,000 people flocked to the banks of the Jamuna to hear Shraddhanand read the message Gandhiji had written for the people prior to his arrest. Swami Shraddhanand called upon the people to follow Gandhiji's example



and go to jail. The city went on a total hartal, which continued up to the 18th. [Donald W. Ferrell, "The Rowlatt Act Satyagraha in Delhi", pp.224-25]

Attempts were made to induce the workmen of the North-Western Railway, as also lawyers, domestic servants, Government employees and even Europeans to join the hartal. At Shakurpur some railwaymen did go on strike. The authorities, grown apprehensive at the way the situation was developing, called Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari and a few others for consultations. When these leaders emerged from the Town Hall after their meeting with the officials, they found themselves in the midst of a crowd of 15,000 carrying lathis. Fearing deception, the crowd had come to free the leaders if they were arrested. [*Ibid*, pp.227-28]

Sporadic acts of violence against policemen also occurred and a number of people were arrested. Delhi was then proclaimed under the Seditious Meetings Act, and 14 leading citizens, most of them members of the Satyagraha Sabha, including Asaf Ali, were appointed special police officers, chiefly to humiliate them.

2

In Bombay, 6 April 1919, the Black Sunday, was peacefully observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. According to newspaper reports it was a city in mourning. From long before sunrise people had started collecting on the Chowpatty beach for a bath of purification as decided by the Satyagraha Sabha. Gandhiji was one of the first arrivals. By 6.30 he was already seated on one of the stone benches, surrounded by a crowd of satyagrahis. The crowd continued to swell till there was a huge concourse variously estimated between 30 and 50 thousand. Sarojini Naidu, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, B.G. Horniman and other



workers also arrived. At 8 a.m. Gandhiji's speech was read out by Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Gandhiji himself being too weak to make the speech.

The meeting by a resolution expressed its deep sympathy with the kin of those killed in police firing in Delhi on the preceding Sunday, congratulated the people of Delhi and the organizers of the demonstrations on the self-restraint displayed by them and called upon the public to see that financial support was provided to the dependants of those killed.

Another resolution was a prayer to the Secretary of State for India “that he will be pleased to advise His Majesty the King-Emperor to disallow the Revolutionary and Anarchical Crimes Act and an equally simple prayer to H. E. the Viceroy that he will be pleased to withdraw Rowlatt Bill No. I.”

The audience then formed itself into a dignified procession and marched to Madhav Bagh – a solid mass of humanity watched by women and children crowding the roof-tops on either side of the road. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.187-88]

Later Gandhiji, accompanied by Sarojini Naidu, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and other leaders, attended a meeting of Muslims held at a Mosque on Grant Road. They were warmly welcomed by the crowd , some 5,000 strong, and seated on the balcony of the mosque. Gandhiji told the audience that satyagraha was like a banyan tree with deep roots in the soil and would help unite the two communities together. [*Ibid*, pp.188-89]

According to police reports a certain amount of rowdyism was indulged in by some elements in the crowd after the meeting was over and tram-cars were stopped. Mrs. Naidu's reference in her speech to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain "which brought tears to the eyes of some among her audience" was also taken exception to by the police. [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.744]



The following day, on 7 April, Gandhiji called a public meeting for taking a vow of swadeshi and Hindu-Muslim unity. It was poorly attended and the previous day's enthusiasm was lacking.

On the same day (7 April) the Satyagraha Sabha issued a statement that "for the time being laws regarding prohibited literature and registration of newspapers may be civilly disobeyed."

The prohibited works selected for dissemination were: *Hind Swaraj*, *Sarvodaya* or *Universal Dawn* (a paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*), *The Story of a Soldier of Truth* (a paraphrase of Plato's *Defence and Death of Socrates*) and the *Life and Address of Kamal Pasha*, all works of Gandhiji.

Copies, which were in limited supply, were to be procured by satyagrahis from the Satyagraha Sabha and sold openly. People bought them eagerly and some of them emptied their pockets to do so. The satyagrahis were also advised to collect small groups of people and read to them from the proscribed literature. They could also copy in their own hand extracts from such literature for dissemination.

Civil breach of the Press Act was to be committed by bringing out from every satyagraha centre a handwritten newspaper without registering it. Such a newspaper, held Gandhiji, if well edited, could become "a most powerful vehicle for transmitting pure ideas in a concise manner." Each person receiving such a newspaper was expected to make copies of it for further distribution, till in the process "the multiplication is made to cover the whole of the masses of India." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.192-93]

The first such newspaper, the *Satyagrahi*, made its appearance on 7 April under the editorship of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Readers were cautioned that it might be difficult to ensure continuity of publication, for the editor might



be arrested at any time, but that no stone would be left unturned "to secure a ceaseless succession of editors." [*Ibid*, p.190]

Gandhiji had copies of *Hind Swaraj* and the *Satyagrahi* sent round to the Police Commissioner, who found that "unfortunately neither of these moves brought their author within the four corners of the law " and that therefore no action should be taken by the police. The Government used the excuse that the edition of *Hind Swaraj* being sold was not prohibited. [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.745]

On 8 April Gandhiji drafted the Swadeshi Vow to be taken by the satyagrahis on the 9th, the Ramnavmi day. The vow ran:

With God as my witness I solemnly declare that from today I shall confine myself, for my personal requirements, to the use of cloth manufactured in India from Indian cotton, silk or wool and I shall altogether abstain from using foreign cloth, and I shall destroy all foreign cloth in my possession.

For a proper observance of the Swadeshi Vow Gandhiji advised people "to use only hand-woven cloth made out of hand-spun yarn." Bonfire of foreign clothing was advocated, not out of any punitive or revengeful spirit, but because Swadeshi was a religious... conception, a "natural duty imposed upon every man." Swadeshi, further, was not the same thing as boycott. Gandhiji rejected the suggestion that boycott of British goods should be resorted to till the Rowlatt legislation was withdrawn. A satyagrahi, he said, could not participate in any boycott movement, while a "perpetual Satyagraha is impossible without Swadeshi." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.195-201]

News of Gandhiji's arrest on his way to Delhi spread in the city of Bombay on the 10th. All markets were spontaneously closed. On the following morning, 11 April, there was complete hartal in the city. Agitated crowds stoned tram-cars



and forced passengers to get down and walk. Mounted police and army cavalry units were called in to control the crowds. There were repeated baton charges at Pydhownie, Girgaum, Chowpatty and other places and forty persons were arrested. [Source *Material*, Vol.II, pp.747-49]

3

In Ahmedabad, the news of the passing of the Rowlatt Act on 21 March and the police firing in Delhi on 30 March added to the excitement that had been building up. The Satyagraha Sabha and the Home Rule League consequently decided to organize a massive procession and public meeting on Sunday, 6 April. The District Magistrate summoned Vallabhbhai Patel and Jivanlal Desai, secretaries respectively of the Satyagraha Sabha and the Home Rule League, and expressed to them his apprehensions as to possible disorders.

The procession, however, of well over 50,000 people, was wholly peaceful and orderly, ending at the Sabarmati river bed, when it transformed itself into a meeting. Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yajnik and Kalidas Jaskaran addressed the rally.

On 9 April, there was another meeting at the same place, where the people were exhorted to take the Swadeshi Vow. [K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919" in R. Kumar, (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, p.135]

As soon as news of Gandhiji's arrest spread in the city on the morning of the 10th, all shop-keepers downed shutters, mill-hands stopped work in the mills and everyone came out on to the streets, shouting "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*". At places crowds became violent, cinema houses were damaged and people were made to get down from their conveyances. When two Europeans resisted they were chased and stoned. At the Rajnagar Mill a crowd of several thousands, according to the District Magistrate, became threatening and the police had to



open fire in "self-defence". A sepoy was belaboured by the crowd and died of injuries. In another incident ten persons were injured in police firing and a boy was killed.

Satyagrahi workers in the end managed to persuade the crowds to disperse and in the evening at a mass meeting Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yajnik and Kasturba Gandhi exhorted the people to preserve peace. [Source *Material*, Vol.II, pp.756-60; K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", p.136]

On the following day the situation took a turn for the worse. According to information that came to Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel and to which they referred in their testimony before the Hunter Committee, some mischief-mongers, among whom were some educated persons, remained active among the crowds and instigated violence.

While the hartal by shop-keepers continued and mills remained closed, crowds started assembling in the streets in groups. Soon there were all kinds of rumours, the most mischievous being that Anasuyabehn had been arrested. The rumour, Vallabhbhai Patel told the Hunter Committee, could only have been started deliberately by someone intending to create a disturbance or hoping that the mill-hands might get out of control and create a disturbance.

Crowds then started arming themselves with sticks and lathis taken from shops and beating up any European who came their way. They equipped themselves with kerosene and syringes and "systematically burned down every building they believed to be Government property." They thus burnt the office of the District Magistrate and the buildings adjoining it. Also a *mandap* where matriculation examination was being held.

A force of 500 troops was then called which stationed itself in a few key areas. Orders were issued that anyone caught in the act of arson would be shot.



Nevertheless no less than 51 Government buildings and several municipal buildings were destroyed. Telephone lines were cut and electric bulbs were smashed. The crowds raided the Swami Narayan and Gosaiji Maharaj temples for guns and swords. A European sergeant was killed. The houses of a Rao Bahadur and Khan Bahadur, who were associated with the Government, were looted. Liquor shops were raided. Policemen were stripped of their uniforms, which were then burnt.

The city was then placed in the hands of the army, which intermittently kept firing throughout the day. The civil hospital received 50 cases of bullet wounds, many of which proved fatal. Many more were killed on the spot and so were not taken to hospital. Orders were issued that any gathering of over ten individuals collected in one place would be fired upon, and any individual seen outside between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m., who did not come up when challenged, would be shot. [Source Material, Vol.II, pp.756-60; K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", pp.137-38]

The popular violence soon spent itself and there were no crowds to be seen on the streets on the following days. The presence of the troops was one reason. The other reason was that the people had learnt that the rumour about Anasuyabehn's arrest was not founded on fact. The troops nevertheless continued to fire at the slightest pretext. In all, according to one account, at least 28 persons were killed and 123 wounded in the firing by the army. [K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", p.138]. The Government estimate was that 20 were killed by firing and 250 wounded. [Source Material, Vol.II, p.763]. By 15 April another 22 persons had died of injuries in the hospital.

Gandhiji arrived in Ahmedabad on 13 April and along with Anasuyabehn Sarabhai and other workers tried to pacify the crowds. On 14 April he addressed a largely attended public meeting at Sabarmati Ashram. In his speech, of which



25,000 printed copies were distributed, Gandhiji reminded the audience that satyagraha did not admit of violence, pillage and incendiarism. In the name of satyagraha they had "burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people and plundered shops and private houses."

Gandhiji called upon the people to repent and by way of repentance to contribute "not less than eight annas towards helping the families of those who have been killed by our acts." He also advised all to observe a twenty-four hours' fast. He announced that he would fast for three days, i.e., 72 hours. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.220-24]

Gandhiji has written that when he saw the "actual state of things" he confessed to having been guilty of "Himalayan miscalculation" in launching the satyagraha campaign. "Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience," writes Gandhiji, "one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the State laws.... I had called on the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified themselves for it, and this mistake seemed to me of Himalayan magnitude." [*Autobiography*, p. 470]

Largely on account of Gandhiji's presence the situation in Ahmedabad was brought to normal on 14 April. Altogether in the riots and the Martial Law that followed, more than 50 persons lost their lives and 250 were wounded. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.250]

The officials pointed their finger at the mill workers and labourers as the sections responsible for rioting and violence. It was considered significant that 12 mills were just then on strike, involving 5,000 workers and 3,000 others. Chatfield, the District Magistrate, later in his evidence before the Hunter Committee, gave it as his opinion that the mill workers had been aroused by the



rumours that both Gandhiji and Anasuyabehn had been arrested: that their concern was personal and not political. [K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", p.139]

However, according to information received by Gandhiji, the riots had been organized by Literate people. There were some "educated and clever men behind them." [C.W.M.G., Vol. XV, pp. 223-24; C.W.M.G., Vol. XVI, pp. 390-91]

The Government decided to punish the whole city. A special tribunal was set up which tried 217 persons for offences connected with the disorders. Of those tried 106 were convicted. [K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", p.138]. A punitive fine of Rs. 9 lakhs was imposed on the population, with a view, it was said, to compensating the loss of property during the riots. Additional police was posted in Nadiad and Barejadi at the cost of the people. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI. p.398]

At Viramgam on 12 April, striking railway workers set fire to the Railway Station and the telegraph office and other Government buildings. The crowd also burnt alive a Mamlatdar, looted goods and took away parts of the rails. The authorities asked for military assistance. [*Source Material*, Vol.II, p.761]. The troops arrived in the evening and fired on crowds, killing 6 and wounding 11.

At Nadiad too the news of Gandhiji's arrest and, afterwards, reports of firings by the military in Ahmedabad, caused a wave of anger. There was complete hartal in the town on the 11th. On the 12th a train carrying troops was derailed as the railway sleepers had been removed by some people, telegraph wires were cut and telegraph posts pulled down. [*Ibid*, p.755]

In Bengal under persuasion of the Government many individuals and organizations, such as the Bengal Mahajan Sabha, had done their utmost to prevent any mass participation in the programme of 6 April. They issued



manifestos and public appeals exhorting the people to have nothing to do with it. They partly succeeded. In 15 districts of the Presidency, according to the fortnightly report of the Bengal Government for the first half of April, the day was not observed at all, while at Bankura nothing occurred beyond a demonstration on a small scale in an outlying village. Shops were closed and meetings were held in five districts while in four other districts only meetings were held. [N.A.I. Home Poll. Deposit, July 1919, File No.46]

In Calcutta, however, the celebrations on 6 April organized by C. R. Das and Byomkesh Chakravarti of the Home Rule League were marked with great success. According to a report C. R. Das sent to Gandhiji in answer to a query, all shops and markets remained closed and all business was suspended in the city. After prayer and fasting there was a huge public meeting attended by about two lakh people. Processions were later taken out, which were wholly peaceful. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.204]

On the evening of the 10th, however, the climate suddenly changed for the worse when news spread that Gandhiji had been arrested. The majority of shops in the city closed down on the morning of the 11th. Leaflets were distributed among the people urging them to agitate for the release of Gandhiji. The tramway service was interfered with. Occupants of taxis, private cars, and other vehicles were asked to get down and walk. Several Europeans were similarly treated.

In the afternoon a large meeting was held at the Nakhoda mosque, which was attended by both Hindus and Mohammedans. Among the speakers at the meeting was Byomkesh Chakravarti. Among those attending was Harilal Gandhi, whom the police report described as "a Hundi Broker, at 4 Pollock Street." Later the crowd at the mosque moved on to Beadon Square for another mass meeting.



Principal speakers at the meeting were Byomkesh Chakravarti, I. B. Sen, Ambika Prasad Bajpai, Madanlal Jaroja and Debi Prasad Khaitan. The speakers urged the audience to observe mourning and keep their shops shut for four days.

On the 12th the pattern of action on the part of the people remained the same, except that the authorities deployed some 200 British soldiers with instructions to move out if required. The drivers employed by the Indian Motor Taxi Company observed a complete hartal and alternative arrangements had to be made to mobilize a certain number of taxis for the transport of the police and military.

At a few places crowds in the streets came in conflict with the police, who were pelted with stones. In one incident a sergeant was injured and another policeman was stabbed. Troops were then stationed at various points with machineguns. In the firing by the army several people died. According to the report of the Police Commissioner, six dead bodies were taken for burning during the night. Two other persons at another place received gunshot wounds and died of them.

On the 13th, partly as a result of the news that Gandhiji had been released, shops were reopened in most parts of the city and normal life was resumed. There was no further violence reported. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperation Movement, 1920-21" in R. Kumar (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.329-30]

The situation in the Punjab was already tense when the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha began. Lt.-Governor Michael O'Dwyer's administration had generated widespread resentment among the people. The methods used by him to secure recruits for the army and contributions for the war fund went far beyond moral



or social pressure. At a meeting he openly said : "200,000 men for the regular army, voluntarism if possible, conscription if necessary." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.130]

The ruthless oppression that was let loose in the villages in pursuit of this aim led to severe friction in many places. In Leihia village a large crowd besieged the residence of a Naib Tehsildar and beat up some policemen. Fifty-two persons were put on trial for the offence. In Shahour a Tehsildar was murdered. A special tribunal, which tried forty-six persons in the case, awarded death sentences to four and transportation for life to eight.

The Tehsildar's way of coercion , according to a witness, had been to make men stand naked in the presence of their womenfolk or to confine them between thorny bushes. [*Ibid*, pp.133-34]

In other cases criminal suits were instituted against people, to be withdrawn when they subscribed to war loans or agreed to provide recruits. [*Ibid*, pp.137-38]

By the time the war was over, Michael O'D wyer's administration had managed to estrange all classes of people in the Punjab, and popular anger that burst forth following the inauguration of Satyagraha proved beyond the restraining influence of the local leaders and Satyagrahis. The fact is that the Satyagraha in the Punjab was not allowed to run a peaceful course. It brought in its wake Martial Law atrocities that form one of the blackest pages in the annals of British rule in India.

Public agitation against the Rowlatt Bills had started in the province even before they had been introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council on 6 February. Throughout February and March organizations such as the Indian Association had kept busy holding meetings to protest against the Bills and



newspapers such as the *Wakt*, *Arora Bans Gazette*, *Pratap* and *Siyasat* had been vociferous in denouncing the measure.

When, therefore, the programme of the Rowlatt Satyagraha was announced, the Punjab took it up whole-heartedly, more than any other province. The Disorders Inquiry Committee of Lord Hunter, appointed later, estimated that "nearly one-third of the total hartals staged all over India against the Rowlatt Act between 30 March and 6 April, were held in the Punjab ." [Satya M. Rai, *Legislative Politics and Freedom Struggle in the Punjab*, p.84]

In Amritsar the authorities did their worst to prevent any meetings or demonstrations taking place. Dr. Satyapal, a popular leader, was on 29 March served with an order forbidding him to speak at any public meetings and confining him to Amritsar. Nevertheless the meetings that took place on 29 March and again on 30 March were attended by people in large numbers and generated great enthusiasm. The hartal observed on 30 March in Amritsar was so complete that "without a single exception all shops were closed and the city wore a gloomy and mournful appearance." [*Ibid*, p.84]. In the evening a public meeting was held at Jallianwala Bagh under the presidentship of Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew. The meeting was attended by over 35,000 persons. Both events were wholly peaceful.

On 3 April Dr. Kitchlew, too, was served with an order forbidding him from speaking at public meetings or communicating with the press and confining him to Amritsar. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, Cassel, London, 1981, p.46]

The administration then stepped up efforts to prevent the hartal and meeting planned for 6 April. Deputy Commissioner Miles Irving summoned the local magistrates and leading citizens and asked them to use their influence to



have the 6 April programme cancelled. They agreed to do so and even the Congress Reception Committee, set up to prepare for the forthcoming Congress session, lent a hand. But their efforts were to no avail.

On 6 April the city observed a complete hartal. Rickshaws and tongas were stopped and people travelling in them persuaded to walk. In the evening a public meeting was held in the Jallianwala Bagh, which was attended by a mammoth crowd of 50,000 people. The meeting passed a resolution urging the King-Emperor to withhold assent to the Rowlatt Act.

The authorities found all the meetings and hartals, however peaceful they were, too much to take. They smelled rebellion. O'Dwyer warned that those who appealed to "ignorance rather than to reason have a day of reckoning in store for them." Deputy Commissioner Miles Irving wrote to his superiors:

We cannot go on indefinitely with the policy of keeping out of the way.... I think we shall have to stand up for our authority sooner or later by prohibiting some strike or procession which endangers public peace. But for this a really strong force will have to be brought in and we shall have to be ready to try conclusions to the end to see who governs Amritsar.

Irving sent this despatch on 8 April. 9 April was Ram Naumi, which was jointly celebrated by Hindus and Muslims. There was a large procession at which slogans for Hindu-Muslim unity were raised. The Hindu-Muslim fraternization was not liked by the authorities. Miles Irving described it as "the most sinister development of all". In the evening an official arrived with orders from Michael O'Dwyer for the detention and deportation of Satyapal and Kitchlew to Dharmsala, a hundred miles away. O'Dwyer also issued instructions that Gandhiji, who was then on his way to the Punjab, be halted on the way and prevented from



entering the province. O'Dwyer in fact wanted Gandhiji to be deported to Burma. But this was countermanded by the Viceroy.

On 10 April Kitchlew and Satyapal were summoned by Miles Irving to his bungalow, put in a car and whisked away to Dharmasala. [*Ibid*, pp. 50-52]. The authorities tried to hide the fact of deportation of the leaders, but it could not be kept a secret for long. The news soon spread and a crowd immediately gathered, peaceful and unarmed, but determined to proceed to the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to plead with him for the release of the two leaders.

At the railway footbridge on the way the procession was intercepted by a military picket. Assistant Commissioner Becket, who was on duty there, appealed to the crowd to withdraw, but the crowd pressed on. Its ranks soon swelled to 40,000 and it kept asking for the whereabouts of Satyapal and Kitchlew, about which Becket said he knew nothing. When Becket saw that the crowd would not desist from pelting stones he ordered the mounted soldiers to open fire. Three or four persons were killed and several were wounded.

The crowd fell back but was now enraged. Carrying the dead and wounded and now armed with sticks it made its way through the Hall Bazar, where many more incensed citizens joined it. It again made its way to the railway footbridge, where Miles Irving had positioned himself. He entreated the crowd to disperse peacefully, but his plea was ignored and the crowd began raining sticks and stones on the small picket. A couple of city advocates tried to intervene, but while they were trying to pacify the crowd, the soldiers, provoked by the continued stone-throwing, again opened fire, this time killing about 20 persons and wounding many more. The police refused to allow hospital stretchers to carry the wounded. Some of them were then taken to the house of an Indian doctor. [*Ibid*, pp.61 -63; C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.164-65]



As news of the firing spread crowds began gathering throughout the city. Thousands went on a rampage, looking for white men and women on whom to vent their fury. The National Bank was sacked and the manager and the accountant, Stewart and Scott, lynched and their bodies burnt on piles of the bank furniture. The Telegraph Exchange was destroyed and an unsuccessful attempt was made to murder the Telegraph Master. The railway goods yard was attacked and Robinson, a railway guard, was chased, overtaken and beaten to death. Telephone and telegraph wires were cut and part of the railway track ripped up.

The Chartered Bank was looted and gutted but the manager of the bank and his assistant managed to hide themselves and were saved. But G. M. Thompson, manager of the Alliance Bank, which was the next target, was not so fortunate. When discovered by the crowd, he fired with his revolver, killing one person. He was then chased and clubbed to death. His body was hurled off a balcony and burnt on a pile of bank furniture. Sergeant Rowland, an electrician, was murdered near the Rigo Bridge. The Town Hall, the Post Office and the Mission Hall were burnt, as also Bhagtanwala Railway Station.

A group of rioters made for the Zenana Hospital, where they looked for Mrs. Easdon, the doctor in charge. But she managed to hide herself and was later helped to safety. Miss Marcia Sherwood, who had been working for the Zenana Mission society and was well liked by Indians, was set upon by the rioters as she rode her bicycle and beaten and kicked and left for dead. By some miracle she survived and was looked after by some shop-keepers. She was later taken to the safety of the Fort, which was already full of European women and children evacuated from their homes. A roll-call established that there were 130 women and children in the Fort, not counting infants. They complained of heat,



insanitation and want of food. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.164-65; Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.65-70].

In the evening military reinforcements arrived – 100 British soldiers supported by 230 Indian soldiers. The detachment learned that the Fort and the Railway Station were the only parts of Amritsar remaining in British hands.

Brig. General Dyer arrived in Amritsar on 11 April and took charge of the troops. Miles Irving said the civil authority could no longer cope with the situation and asked Dyer to take over responsibility. Some leading towns people were summoned and handed a document for distribution. This read:

Handed over to G.O.C. 45th Brigade and signed by the Deputy Commissioner midnight 11-12 April, 1919.

The troops have orders to restore order in Amritsar and to use all force necessary. No gathering of persons or processions of any sort will be allowed. All gatherings will be fired on. Any persons leaving the city in groups of more than four will be fired on. Respectable persons should keep indoors."

Dyer asked for a list of ring-leaders and arrested about a dozen persons right away.

Dyer had at his disposal 474 British and 710 Indian troops, consisting of Gurkhas, Baluchis and Sikhs. He shifted his headquarters to Ram Bagh.

The following day, 12 April, the situation in the city was reported to O'Dwyer, who in turn telephoned to Simla. He received instructions that if the troops were forced to open fire "they should make an example."

On the night of the 12th-13th Lieut.-Col. Morgan also arrived from Lahore. His instructions were: "Amritsar is in the hands of the rebels. It is your job to get



it back." But Dyer told him he was already in command and Morgan might remain there to assist him. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.78-79].

On 12 April at a meeting held at a high school it was decided to hold a public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh the following day. One Hans Raj, who had all along been acting as an *agent provocateur*, and later was to turn approver, was the prime mover and engineer of the events the next day. He said Lala Kanhaiya Lal would be the chairman of the meeting. The fact was that Lala Kanhaiya Lal had not been told anything about it.

The military authorities were preparing to deal with the situation in their own way. According to a witness, the Railway Station looked like a regular military post "with soldiers and guns scattered all over." Anyone entering the station was thoroughly searched. At every step outside the city, one could see nothing but military and police with rifles and bayonets. Electricity supply to the city was cut off. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.169]

On 13 April at 10.30 a.m. Dyer set out to march through the city with a military column made up of British and Indian soldiers. He stopped at nineteen places in the city and had a drummer read out the following proclamation:

1. It is hereby proclaimed to all whom it may concern, that no person residing in the city is permitted or allowed to leave the city in his own private or hired conveyance, or on foot, without a pass from one of the following officers...
2. No person residing in Amritsar city is permitted to leave his house after 8 p.m. Any persons found in the streets after 8 p.m. are liable to be shot.



3. No procession of any kind is permitted to parade the streets in the city or any part of the city or outside of it at any time. Any such processions or gatherings of four men will be looked upon and treated as an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force of arms if necessary. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.81-82]

April 13 was Baisakhi, the harvest festival day in the Punjab, and a large number of people had come to the city in connection with the festival. Many of them had gathered on the grounds of the Jallianwala Bagh, though they had no interest in politics or political meetings.

At 4 p.m. Dyer received information that a meeting at Jallianwala Bagh was already in progress. He at once set out towards the city with a force of 25 Gurkhas and 25 Sikh riflemen and another 40 Gurkhas armed with *khukris*. He also took two armoured cars with him. Marching at a leisurely pace, his force reached Jallianwala Bagh a little after 5 p.m.

Jallianwala Bagh was not exactly a bagh (garden). It was an open piece of waste land surrounded by houses. It was, at the time, a private property owned in common by several people. It formed an irregular quadrangle, indifferently walled, and for the most part, the back walls of the houses surrounding it enclosed the quadrangle. In the quadrangle were three trees, a delapidated *samadhi* with a dome, and a well. The main entrance was a narrow passage. There were no other regular entrances, but at four or five points it was possible to get out through narrow openings. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.171]

Just before General Dyer's arrival Hans Raj had been addressing the meeting. Though the crowd in the garden was vast – estimates varied between



15,000 and 50,000, not all were listening to the speakers. Some played cards, some slept, some just idled.

Immediately on arrival, Dyer deployed 25 soldiers to the right and 25 to the left of the high ground on the north side of the rectangular space just after the main entrance. He then shouted the order: "Gurkhas right, 59th left fire." The soldiers knelt, raised their rifles and fired. As people fell, dead or wounded, the crowd rose and ran in all directions in an attempt to escape the hail of bullets. But there appeared to be no escape. The firing in the meantime continued.

The firing continued for as long as ten minutes or more until 1650 rounds of ammunition – which was all Dyer then had at his disposal – were exhausted. Dyer then calmly ordered the soldiers to withdraw.

Lala Girdharilal, a prominent citizen of Amritsar and deputy chairman of the Punjab Chamber of Commerce, watched the scene with binoculars from the roof of an overlooking house. He later testified before the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Congress:

I saw hundreds of persons killed on the spot. The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was directed towards gates through which the people were running out. There were small outlets, four or five in all, and bullets actually rained over the people at all these gates.... Even those who lay flat on the ground were shot.... I went around the whole place and saw almost every body lying there.... Some had their heads cut open, others had eyes shot, and nose, chest, arms or legs shattered.... I think there must have been over 1,000 dead bodies in the garden then. [*Ibid*, p.174]

After the carnage Jallianwala Bagh looked like a deserted battle-field, the largest numbers of the dead being around the exits. Among the dead were the



peasants and their children from the surrounding villages who had come to celebrate Baisakhi.

Dyer had made no provision for the removal of the dead or for the wounded to be taken to hospital. The city being under curfew, the relatives of the victims could not venture out at night to look for them. A large number of jackals and vultures were however attracted by the stench of human blood.

O'Dwyer was informed about the Jallianwala Bagh firing in the early hours the following day while he was still in bed. He was also informed of the disturbed situation in Lahore and other areas, such as Taran Taran and Kasur. He sent a message to the Government of India at Simla:

State of open rebellion exists in parts of districts of Lahore and Amritsar. Lieut.-Governor ...requests Governor-General-in-Council to suspend functions of ordinary Criminal Courts in Amritsar and Lahore districts to establish Martial Law therein.

The Viceroy approved. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, p.95]

On 14 April a deputation of citizens asked Dyer for permission to burn or bury the dead. He granted the permission with a stern warning that there must be no demonstrations of any kind.

On the same day Kitchin, the Commissioner, called a meeting of prominent local residents, municipal commissioner, magistrates and local merchants and talked sternly to them. Deputy Commissioner Miles Irving also spoke to them. He said: "You have committed a bad act in killing the English. The revenge will be taken upon you and your children." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.177]

On 15 April all the shops were opened. Martial Law was then proclaimed in the district, which remained in force till 9 June, making the life of the people



of Amritsar a long nightmare. The torture and humiliation inflicted took a variety of forms:

1. The street in which Miss Sherwood was assaulted was set apart for flogging people and for making those who passed through it to crawl on their bellies.

2. All were made to salaam every Englishman they encountered, on pain of being arrested and tortured.

3. All the lawyers of the town were made special constables without cause and made to work like ordinary coolies.

4. Indiscriminate arrests were effected of persons, irrespective of their status. During detention they were humiliated and tortured in order to extract from them confessions or evidence.

5. Special tribunals were set up for trying offences. The aggrieved parties had no right of appeal.

On 16 April the Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State:

O'Dwyer has asked me for powers under Regulation X of 1804, as throughout Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala districts bands were perambulating the country looting and destroying. I assented with modification.... I am afraid summary justice is the only thing for wandering bands of marauders. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.103-04]

The severity of Martial Law went beyond all bounds. The railways were all closed to Indians, with no third-class or inter-class tickets being issued. Not more than two persons could walk abreast in the streets. All cycles were taken away.



Water and electricity supply to the city was off. All lathis, walking sticks, riding crops and fancy canes were required to be surrendered.

The crawling order, which remained in force till 24 April, when it had to be withdrawn at the intervention of the Viceroy, required persons to lie flat on their bellies and crawl exactly like reptiles for the entire length of the street – about 150 yards. Any lifting of the head or the knees or bending thereof invited punishment. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.178]

The arrests and detentions were indiscriminate, frequently without any charges having been framed. Many innocent people were kept in the lock-up in most inhuman conditions for a few days and then allowed to go.

Martial Law tribunals in Amritsar tried 298 persons for major offences. Of these 218 were convicted, 51 being sentenced to death and 46 for transportation for life. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.165]

When reports of the atrocities - not officially - reached London, the Secretary of State found it difficult to face the criticism that was directed at him. He himself appeared to be outraged. On 1 January 1920 he telegraphed to the Viceroy :

Cages for prisoners, the whipping of selected schoolboys, the punishments devised by Captain Doveton, and so on. I must again remind you that throughout the long months until the District Reports arrived, I had no news from you as to what occurred at Amritsar other than your contemporaneous telegrams. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.189-900]

Indian newspapers, such as *Tribune* also charged Chelmsford with having deliberately withheld the truth with regard to the events in the Punjab.



Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab, with a population of 2,80,000 peacefully observed 6 April as the day of humiliation and prayer. There was a complete hartal in the town and people in their thousands went to the river to bathe and on their return formed themselves into a peaceful procession. In the evening there was a huge public meeting at which the speakers demanded repeal of the Rowlatt Act, a law which they described as having the distinction of "*na dalil* (no argument), *na vakil* (no lawyer), *na appeal*."

April 9 was the Ramanaumi day. The Hindus of Lahore invited the Muslims to join them in the celebrations. The Muslims did so in their thousands. In the evening there was a procession of 20,000 and more, which included a large proportion of Muslims. There were scenes of fraternization between members of the two communities. The need for Hindu-Muslim unity to fight the British was emphasized by the leaders.

On April 10 *The Civil and Military Gazette* splashed the news of Gandhiji's arrest while on his way to Delhi and the Punjab and by 4 p.m. the entire city spontaneously suspended business. All shops were closed in protest. Some people formed themselves into a procession, which made its way up the Mall towards the Government House with the intention of demanding the release of Gandhiji. It was stopped by the police, which ordered the procession to disperse. When it did not disperse, the police fired on the crowd, killing two on the spot and wounding many more. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.196 97]

A little while later another procession, a much larger one, was marching along Anarkali Bazar towards Lahori Gate. The police tried to make the procession disperse. Chowdhury Rambhuj Dutt, the local Congress and Arya Samaj leader, undertook to persuade the crowd to disperse. But his voice did not carry and he



could make no impact. The police then gave him two minutes and as soon as this time was up opened fire, inflicting the same number of casualties as in the earlier firing. [*Ibid*, p.198]. According to another source the dead and wounded numbered more than a score. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperation Movement 1920-21", p.286]

This led to increased bitterness against the British authorities. Life in the city came to a standstill. Government and private offices, schools and colleges, shops, factories and workshops were completely deserted. Most of the workers of the railway workshop at Mughalpura absented themselves from work. There were fears of starvation and pillage. *Langarkhanas* (free food distribution centres) were opened through voluntary effort of public bodies. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.200]

On the 11th, Fyson, Deputy Commissioner, summoned a few prominent citizens, including Chaudhury Rambhuj Dull, Lala Duni Chand, Mohsin Shah and Shujauddin, to persuade them to help the authorities.

In the evening of the 11th there was a mammoth public meeting at the Badshahi Mosque, with an estimated audience of 35,000, two-thirds of whom were Muslims. On Chaudhury Rambhuj Dutt's proposal the meeting elected a people's Committee of 50 prominent persons for negotiations with the authorities, and to carry on the affairs of the city in the absence of any established authority. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperation Movement 1920-21", p.289]. This Committee initially ruled Lahore for the three days of its existence from 11 April to 14 April.

Apprehensive that the situation was getting out of his hand, O'Dwyer called upon the military authorities to take charge of matters. On 12 April a military force under Col. Frank Johnson marched through the principal streets of the city and came upon a meeting being held at the Badshahi Mosque. Elements



in the crowd rushed at the troops under Johnson's command. The troops opened fire, as a result of which twenty persons were killed and twenty-seven wounded. [*Ibid*, pp.293-94]

On the 13th Lahore district was placed under the Seditious Meetings Act. On the same day the Wagha station was burnt and sacked by rampaging crowds, telegraph lines were cut and an armoured train was derailed. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.559]

On 16 April the Deputy Commissioner invited Chaudhury Rambhuj Dutt, Lala Harkishen Lal and Lala Duni Chand for a meeting, placed them under arrest and deported them. Then the authorities proclaimed Martial Law in the district, the avowed purpose being the breaking of the hartal. Col. Johnson was put in command. [*Ibid*, p.200]

This officer declared that if a bomb was thrown on his troops he would have the buildings within a radius of 100 yards from the place demolished. He commandeered 200 *tongas* (horse carriages) and kept them throughout the Martial Law period. He commandeered all the motor-cars belonging to Indians and restricted railway travelling by Indians. [*Ibid*, p.203]

He resorted to the device of pasting Martial Law notices on houses and making the residents in the houses responsible for them. If the notices were damaged in any way the members of the house would be arrested. The Sanatan Dharma College was one of the buildings selected for putting up a notice. The notice was torn down by some unknown persons. Col. Johnson ordered the arrest of all the 500 students of the college and all the professors too. They were made to march to the Fort, three miles away, carrying their bedding on their heads. They were kept there for two days. [*Ibid*, p.209]



Punishment was also meted out to students of the D.A.V. College, the Dayal Singh College and the Medical College. Students were made to present themselves for the roll-call four times a day. Some of the students had to walk as much as 17 miles during the day to be able to do this. All this was in the middle of May, the hottest part of summer. [*Ibid.* p.209]

The college authorities were made to pick a certain proportion of students and award to them various punishments, such as rustivating them, suspending them and preventing them from attending examinations and so on, irrespective of whether they had done anything wrong or not. In this way a thousand and eleven students were punished. [*Ibid.*, pp.210-13]

It shocked the youth to see their Principals bending before the British and instead of protecting the students succumbing to the Government pressure. There was dark despair and suppressed anger in the hearts of the youth.

Pyarelal, the author of the first three and the last two volumes of this multi-volume biography of Gandhiji, was then an M.A. student in Government College, Lahore. He has given a graphic picture of the atmosphere at that time in his book *In Gandhiji's Mirror* (Oxford University Press.)

Proprietors and trustees of newspapers were prosecuted and such papers as *Tribune*, *Punjabee*, and *Pratap* were forced to stop publication. [*Ibid.*, p.214]

Almost every prominent citizen of note was tried before a Martial Law Commission or a Summary Court. Sixty-four persons were thus tried before the Commissions, of whom eight were discharged and 56 punished. Three hundred and fifty were tried before Summary Courts, of whom 102 were discharged. Forty persons were arrested and detained for a long time without trial. [*Ibid.*, pp.214-20]



Kasur, a town in Lahore district (population 24,000) did not observe any hartal on 6 April. On the 11th, when news spread of Gandhiji's arrest and of deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, markets closed spontaneously and a public meeting was held in the evening.

On 12 April there was a complete hartal. Crowds assembled and marched to the Railway Station and tried to burn it down. Elements in the crowds also made an attempt to assault a few European train passengers, who however managed to escape. Two English warrant officers, travelling by the train, were brutally done to death by the crowd. Martial Law was proclaimed on the 16th. One hundred and seventy-two persons were arrested, of whom 51 were convicted, 40 sentenced to be whipped, the number of stripes awarded being 710. Two persons were shot by the sentries.

To humiliate them still further, people were made to rub their noses on the ground for failure to salaam Europeans.

7

In Gujranwala town (population 30,000) and district nothing happened on 30 March. On 6 April there was a complete and wholly peaceful hartal. As news of the arrest of Gandhiji on the 10th and happenings in Amritsar and Lahore and the deportation of Satyapal and Kitchlew spread in the city on 14 April, there was another complete hartal. [*Ibid*, pp.228-29]

Early on the morning of 14 April a dead calf was found hung up on one of the railway bridges and bits of pork were also found thrown into one or two mosques. People at once realized that it was the handiwork of *agents provocateurs*; the game was to divide Hindus and Muslims. Later in the day news arrived of the Jallianwala Bagh carnage. All this infuriated the people. Crowds



formed and attempted to set fire to two bridges and also attacked a train. [*Ibid*, p.230]

Demonstrators at Kachhi bridge were fired on by the police, resulting in several casualties. This had the effect of adding fuel to the fire. The mobs proceeded towards the station, bent on vengeance. The church, the post office, the Tahsil, the Court House were all burnt down, the police making no attempt to check incendiarism. [*Ibid*, pp.230-32]

In the afternoon three aeroplanes coming from Lahore flew over the city on bombing missions. The Khalsa Boarding House was bombed. Bombs were similarly dropped on Gharjak, Bhagwanpura, Dhulla and other neighbouring villages from a height of 22 feet. Machineguns opened fire from the air on the Indian quarter of the city – not on the houses but on the "natives". [*Ibid*, pp.231-33]

On the 15th again the bombing sorties were repeated. At the same time large-scale and indiscriminate arrests took place.

On the 16th Martial Law was proclaimed, bringing with it Martial Law Tribunals, summary trials, salaaming orders and other humiliating inflictions on the people. [*Ibid*, pp.229-36]

There were in Gujranwala 14 other places where disturbances occurred, chief among them being Wazirabad. In that town there had been no stir till 14 April, not even a hartal. On 15 April news of military brutalities elsewhere brought on a complete hartal in the town, with demonstrations and acts of violence by mobs. The house of a Scottish missionary was burnt down. Railway bridges were set on fire and extensive damage was done to the telegraph system.

Martial Law was proclaimed on 18 April. Flogging on a wide scale was resorted to. There were confiscations of property and fines. [*Ibid*, pp.237-38]



In Lyallpur (population 15,000), although there had been a hartal on 6 April and later on 12 April in protest against the arrest of Gandhiji and army atrocities in Lahore and Amritsar, the town had remained wholly peaceful, with no violent demonstrations and no damage to public property. Yet the town was placed under Martial Law, with its salaaming orders, restrictions upon travelling, prosecutions, fines and indiscriminate arrests. [*Ibid*, pp.277-82]

In Gujarat, the headquarters of the district of that name, there was not even a hartal on 6 April. Later, following the happenings in Lahore and Amritsar, students managed to induce a hartal on 14 April. Some students smashed window panes of school buildings. Martial Law was proclaimed in Gujarat on 19 April and continued to be in force till June.

At Jalalpur Jattan and Malakwal, towns in Gujarat district, some telegraph wires were cut and the railway line was damaged. Martial Law was proclaimed in both towns and arrests and indignities on the people followed. [*Ibid*, pp. 282-85]

8

Ever since 6 April when Gandhiji inaugurated the Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills, he kept issuing a series of Satyagraha leaflets and instructions to satyagrahis, emphasizing repeatedly the need for the satyagrahis to remain peaceful and civil all the time. Except for carrying out the programme to be fixed by the Satyagraha Sabha, they must do nothing on their own. There were to be "no processions, no organized demonstrations, no hartals on any account whatsoever, without previous instructions from the Committee. All police orders were to be implicitly obeyed; no violence, no stone-throwing, no obstruction of tram-cars or traffic, no pressure to be exercised against anyone." At public meetings there must be "no clapping of hands, no demonstrations of approval or



disapproval, no cries of 'Shame', no cheers, perfect stillness, perfect obedience to instructions of volunteers or management." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.213-14]

As popular violence manifested itself and the bitterness against the rulers increased, Gandhiji's sorrow and pain too deepened. Incendiarism and destruction of public property, murders of Englishmen and officials such as at Viramgam and Ahmedabad, were not civilized behaviour, he said. "Rights so obtained are not rights at all, they are rather the signs of our enslavement." [*Ibid*, p.234]. He even invited police protection for citizens against the depredations of hooligans when found necessary. Such was the case, for instance, at Shahpur. [*Ibid*, p.235]

On 18 April, 1919 Gandhiji announced "temporary suspension of civil disobedience." In a press statement he said:

I am sorry, when I embarked upon a mass movement, I underrated the forces of evil and I must now pause and consider how best to meet the situation. But whilst doing so, I wish to say that from a careful examination of the tragedy at Ahmedabad and Viramgam, I am convinced that Satyagraha had nothing to do with the violence of the mob, and that many swarmed round the banner of mischief raised by the mob, largely because of their affection for Anasuyabai and myself. Had the Government, in an unwise manner, not prevented me from entering Delhi and so compelled me to disobey their order, I feel certain that Ahmedabad and Viramgam would have remained free from the horrors of the past week...

My attitude towards the Rowlatt legislation remains unchanged. Indeed, I do feel that the Rowlatt legislation is one of the many causes of the present unrest. But in a surcharged atmosphere, I must refrain from examining these causes. The main and only purpose of this letter is to



advise satyagrahis to temporarily suspend civil disobedience, to give Government effective cooperation in restoring order and by preaching and practice to gain adherence to the fundamental principles mentioned above. [*Ibid*, pp.243-45]

9

The Bombay Chronicle and its intrepid editor B. G. Horniman carried on a sustained crusade against oppression and brutalities in Punjab and elsewhere. Horniman never approved of lawlessness and never supported any act of violence. But he was a fearless critic of the Government. He wrote an excellent book *Amritsar and Our Duty to India*. The Government took action against *The Bombay Chronicle* under the Press Act and arrested and deported Horniman to England on 26 April. This in spite of the fact that Horniman had condemned popular acts of violence and had been advising Gandhiji to suspend the civil disobedience movement. [*Autobiography*, p.472]

Gandhiji appealed to the people to remain "perfectly calm" in the face of the provocation caused by Horniman's arrest and deportation. "There should not be stoppage of business anywhere in Hindustan, there should be no large public meetings of protests, no processions, no violence of any kind whatsoever." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.253]

It was later decided, however, to bring about by voluntary effort a hartal in Bombay to show popular disapproval of the action taken against Horniman. Gandhiji in this connection issued the following instructions:

In honour of Mr. Horniman on next Sunday the 11th instant (May),
 1) the citizens should observe hartal, 2) all should fast for 24 hours,
 3) people should remain indoors and pass their time in religious devotion.
 But, there should be no pressure put upon anyone regarding suspension



of business, tram-cars and other vehicles should not be impeded, passengers in no way to be interfered with, there should be no large crowds in the streets, there should be no street demonstrations and police orders and volunteers' instructions should be implicitly carried out. [*Ibid.* p.286]

In the last Satyagraha Leaflet, No. 21, issued on 12 May 1919 Gandhiji congratulated the people of Bombay for preserving perfect calm on 11 May during the hartal. He listed the following four attributes for a nation enjoying or desiring to enjoy swaraj :

- (1) The police should be the least needed for self- protection,
- (2) jails should be the least patronized,
- (3) the hospitals should have the least work,
- (4) the law courts should have the least work.

After Horniman's deportation, Omar Sobhani and Shankerlal Banker came to Gandhiji and asked him to take over the editorship of *The Bombay Chronicle*. Gandhiji was hesitating, but the Government decided the question for him by banning *The Bombay Chronicle*.

Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Omar Shobhani and Shankedal Banker had been running a weekly called *Young India*.. Gandhiji agreed to their request to take over the editorship of *Young India*.. It was made a bi-weekly for some time, but when *The Bombay Chronicle* was allowed to be revived, it again became a weekly.

Gandhiji realized that education of the mass of the people in satyagraha was not possible through the medium of English. Indulal Yagnik had been running since 1915 a monthly in Gujarati called *Navajivan ane Satya*. Gandhiji asked the proprietors to make it into a weekly and accepted the editorship of *Navajivan*



also. The first issue of *Navajivan* under Gandhiji's editorship came out on 7 September 1919 and was followed the next day by the first issue of *Young India*. Indulal Yagnik became Gandhiji's assistant. From 1921 a Hindi edition of the weekly was also brought out. The two journals, *Young India*. and *Navajivan*, became an excellent vehicle of Gandhiji's thoughts and an effective means of education of the public as well as the satyagrahis, till they ceased publication in 1931. They were later replaced in February-March 1933 by the English *Harijan*, Hindi *Harijan Sevak* and Gujarati *Harijanbandhu*. The regularity with which they appeared and the way in which Gandhiji wrote for them while on tours and had the articles posted from particular Railway Stations to ensure that these reached Ahmedabad in time, where he had set up a printing press in Navajivan Karyalaya, was amazing and most instructive for all those who worked with him. The weekly journals served the purpose of educating public opinion, and keeping satyagrahis, friends and sympathizers, as well as the opponents informed of Gandhiji's thinking and progress of the various activities he and his colleagues were engaged in. The weeklies served as an effective means of mass education and mass communication even as *Indian Opinion* had done in South Africa.

10

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Martial Law atrocities perpetrated on the people in Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujarat, and Lyallpur – five districts which passed through the nightmare for over two months – shocked the conscience of India. C. Shankaran Nair resigned his membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council in protest. Rabindranath Tagore also renounced his knighthood. [*Ibid*, p.519]

Gandhiji was deeply distressed by the Punjab atrocities. He seriously contemplated launching a satyagraha movement in that province. Accordingly he



sent out a circular letter to Swami Shraddhanand, Hussain Imam, Sunderlal, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Jiramdas Doulatram and Vallabhbhai Patel, inviting them for an informal conference on 28 May in Bombay. [*Ibid*, pp.315-16]

Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Anasuyabehn, Shankerlal Banker, L. R. Tairsee, Sunderlal, Zulfikar Ali Khan, Hasrat Mohani, Ghanshamdas from Sind, Mahadev Desai, Vallabhbhai Patel, Vithaldas Jerajani and Indulal Yagnik attended the conference.

Gandhiji explained that in view of what had happened in the Punjab, he thought the time had come to extend satyagraha to that province. His idea was to send from Bombay a few trusted satyagrahis not too well known to be stopped by the Government. Jamnadas Dwarkadas opposed Gandhiji, saying the course of action he suggested was bound to lead to violence, especially since the Turkish Peace terms were about to be announced and Muslim feeling had been running high. Indulal Yagnik pointed out that the satyagraha pledge taken by the volunteers covered only the Rowlatt Act and did not concern events in the Punjab.

Gandhiji said it was his intention to approach the Viceroy with a view to the appointment of an independent and impartial committee of inquiry to go into the happenings of Punjab and to revise sentences passed by the Martial Law tribunals and should the Viceroy and the Secretary of State refuse to concede the demand, only then to start satyagraha, which should be confined to satyagrahis drawn from Bombay.

Jamnadas Dwarkadas a little while later resigned from the Satyagraha Sabha. So did Swami Shraddhanand who did not attend the conference, but sent a letter withdrawing himself from the movement. Hassan Imam, too, sent a letter advising Gandhiji to drop civil disobedience. [*Ibid*, pp.332-33]



The case of Kalinath Roy, editor of *Tribune*, Lahore, further strengthened Gandhiji's view that civil disobedience in Punjab could not be further postponed. Kalinath Roy had been convicted by a Martial Law tribunal for seditious writings under Article 124A, I.P.C. and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 1,000. He had been refused permission to be defended by counsel.

Gandhiji took up the cudgels on behalf of Kalinath Roy. He wrote in *Young India* exposing the injustice of the case. Reading the articles upon which the conviction had been based, Gandhiji said, no *prima facie* case could be made out. Kalinath Roy had never been guilty of preaching violence. Gandhiji suggested that memorials be sent to the Viceroy from lawyers, editors and others, and resolutions be passed at public meetings to demand release of Kalinath Roy.

On 12 June Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, informing him that he contemplated renewing civil disobedience in July. Gandhiji said his letter regarding the appointment of a committee of inquiry was already before the Viceroy, as also his letter requesting the release of Kalinath Roy. Both were matters of the greatest importance and intimately connected with the Rowlatt Act agitation. He hoped both his requests would receive the Viceroy's favourable consideration.

Should, however, renewal of civil disobedience become necessary, it would be restricted to Gandhiji and other satyagrahis would only help by assisting in preserving peace. [*Ibid*, pp.377-78]

Gandhiji also informed the Secretary of State by cable of his intention to resume civil disobedience unless circumstances altered the situation. [*Ibid*, pp.387]

On 30 June Gandhiji issued detailed instructions to satyagrahis. He explained that he proposed to offer civil disobedience about the beginning of July



by disobeying the orders of internment and externment standing against him. He emphasized the need for preserving perfect peace and equanimity at the time of, after, and during his incarceration. There must be no demonstrations, no hartals and no mass meetings.

Gandhiji called upon satyagrahis to devote themselves during the month to:

- (a) preaching of the cardinal principle of satyagraha, namely, the necessity of strict adherence to truth and non-violence and dissemination of such works as Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, *Hind Swaraj* and *Defence of Socrates* by Gandhiji, *Tolstoy's Letter to Russian Liberals* and Ruskin's *Unto This Last*;
- (b) propagation of Swadeshi;
- (c) the advocating of Hindu-Muslim unity not by public speeches but by concrete acts of help and kindness by each community towards the other;
- (d) holding meetings where resolutions should be passed praying for repeal of the Rowlatt Act, appointment of a committee of inquiry to go into the causes of the disturbances in Punjab and release of Kalinath Roy.

After having thus prepared themselves, satyagrahis could take up civil disobedience of laws. It would be difficult to decide which laws to defy. But individual satyagrahis could disobey any internment orders or orders imposing restrictions on them. Satyagrahis, when tried, must not defend themselves. [*Ibid*, pp.412-16]



On 1 July in a written statement concerning his future plans, Gandhiji said he would give due notice to the authorities before offering civil disobedience and should "the Government desire that I should suspend the resumption of civil disobedience for any definite time not too distant, I would consider it my duty to respect their wish." [*Ibid*, pp.424-25]

On 20 July the Governor of Bombay conveyed to Gandhiji

a grave warning of the consequences which must inevitably be anticipated from the resumption of any action or propaganda involving civil disobedience of the law and of the heavy moral responsibility that must lie on those who take or advice this course.

The Government at the same time gave Gandhiji to understand that the Committee of Inquiry on Punjab would shortly be set up. The Viceroy also reduced the prison sentence of Kalinath Roy from two years to three months.

Gandhiji, therefore, "after deep consideration decided not to resume civil disobedience for the time being." He pointed out at the same time that the only way to avoid civil disobedience altogether was for the Government to withdraw the Rowlatt legislation.

The period of suspension, Gandhiji suggested could be utilized by the satyagrahis for propagation of swadeshi and Hindu-Muslim unity. These tasks required "powers of organization, honesty of purpose, integrity in trade and immense self-sacrifice and self-restraint." Swadeshi propaganda on the purest lines and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji said, could not but have an effective bearing on the movement for securing the repeal of the Rowlatt Act. [*Ibid*, pp.468-71]



C . F. Andrews had proceeded to Punjab in June and had been sending to Gandhiji harrowing accounts of the atrocities inflicted on the people by the Martial Law regime. He urged Gandhiji to go to the Punjab. Gandhiji himself was eager to go there, but the order prohibiting him from entering the Punjab that had been served on him on 9 April, stood in the way. Not wishing to defy the order, Gandhiji pleaded with the Viceroy to have it withdrawn. The order was finally rescinded on 15 October. On 24 October Gandhiji arrived in Punjab.

"The scene that I witnessed on my arrival at Lahore," Gandhiji wrote later, "can never be effaced from my memory. The railway station was from end to end one seething mass of humanity. The entire population had turned out of doors in eager expectation, as if to meet a dear relation, and was delirious with joy." [*Autobiography*, p.476]. The press of the people was so great that it took Gandhiji forty minutes to get to his car.

In Lahore Gandhiji was the guest of Sarala Devi, wife of the Punjab leader Rambhuj Dutt Chowdhury, who was then in jail. Gandhiji was greatly impressed by Sarala Devi's gift for music and poetry. She composed patriotic songs and herself set them to music.

Gandhiji straight away plunged into work to get at the truth as to the cause of the disturbances. He was assisted by Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Swami Shraddhanand and those of the Punjab leaders who were still outside prison. In the course of his work Gandhiji came in close touch with the people of Punjab. Their affection overwhelmed him. He wrote:

Young and old continue to come all day to have darshan of me. It is impossible for me to go out anywhere alone. As soon as the people catch sight of me, they crowd round. I simply cannot check them.... That people



should crowd round to have darshan of a mere servant is intolerable to me.....

"It is perfectly clear to me that this is the miracle wrought by even a small measure of devotion to truth and service.... The incomparable love that I have received has made it clear to me that they in whom truth and the spirit of service are manifested in their fulness will assuredly sway the hearts of men and so accomplish their chosen task. [C .W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.282-83]

12

The Government in the meanwhile, forced by persistent public clamour, had moved towards appointing a committee of enquiry. The Viceroy announced the decision of the Government in the Legislative Council on 3 September. On 24 October a Disorders Enquiry Committee under Lord Hunter was duly constituted. Besides Lord Hunter it included on it Justice Rankin, W. F. Rice, Sir George Barrow, Pandit Jagat Narayan, Thomas Smith, Sir Chimanlal Setalwad and Sahebzada Sultan Ahmed Khan. The Committee was charged with investigating the disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and the Punjab, their causes and the measures taken to cope with them. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.544-45]

In his speech in the Legislative Council on 3 September the Viceroy also announced the Government's intention to introduce an Indemnity Bill in the Council granting to officials immunity against civil or criminal proceedings for their actions. There were loud protests against the proposed Bill. When the Home Member introduced the Bill on 18 September, explaining that it only "indemnified from legal, as apart from departmental, penalties, actions taken in good faith and in a reasonable belief that they were necessary for maintaining or restoring order," Madan Mohan Malaviya vehemently opposed the Bill. In a long speech



lasting four and a quarter hour, he said the disturbances had been "nothing but the inevitable consequences of tactless treatment meted out by Government to persons already exasperated beyond endurance by official stupidity and harshness." Some non-official members, among them, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, supported the Bill. [*India in 1919*, pp.43-44]

Gandhiji was not unduly perturbed by the Bill. He said that Government officials were not liable even under ordinary law to answer for their actions in discharge of their duties. He wrote:

Every State needs such protection. Even when we come to enjoy swaraj, the State will retain this power. The officers will then too commit grave mistakes and the public will get excited; even under swaraj the people will resort to violence ... there will be martial law and firing, followed by appointment of commissions. Even under swaraj indemnity acts will be passed to protect the authority of the State. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, p.141]

Gandhiji, however, asked for departmental enquiries and dismissal of erring officials.

13

To deal with the matter of the Punjab Martial Law atrocities, the All India Congress Committee, meeting in Allahabad on 8 June 1919, had appointed a Punjab Sub-Committee, with the following personnel: Madan Mohan Malaviya, President, Rash Behary Ghosh, Motilal Nehru, Syed Hassan Imam, B. Chakravarty, C. R. Das, Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar and Umar Sobhani, members and Gokaran Nath Mishra, Secretary. Subsequently, on 16 October the following were co-opted to the Sub-Committee: Gandhiji, Swami Shraddhanand, Purushottamdas Tandon,



Jawaharlal Nehru, Ganpat Rai, Sheikh Umar Baksh, Bakshi Tekchand, Gokulchand Narang, K. Santhanam, Badr-ul-Islam Ali Khan and Lala Girdharilal.

The Sub-Committee was already busy collecting evidence when the appointment of Lord Hunter's Committee was announced. As the Sub-Committee's enquiry proceeded, it realized that the presence of the principal Punjab leaders would be necessary in their work. It asked the Government to release them from jail on bail or parole for the duration of the proceedings of Lord Hunter's Committee. The Government refused the request, but said that if the Committee desired to hear evidence of any prisoner, it would be arranged.

Malaviya and Motilal Nehru announced on 17 November on behalf of the Punjab Sub-Committee that the Sub-Committee would not participate in the proceedings of Lord Hunter's Committee. The work of collecting evidence would however be continued. Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Abbas Tyabji and Fazli Husain were appointed Commissioners and K. Santhanam Secretary to carry on this work. [C.W.M.G., Vol. XVI, pp.546-50]

A short while later, Motilal Nehru having been elected President of the Congress, M. R. Jayakar took his place on the committee.

Throughout November and December 1919, Gandhiji, along with other members of the Punjab Sub-Committee, remained in the Punjab, touring all the affected places. In the course of this work Gandhiji visited, besides Lahore and Amritsar, Gujranwala, Kasur, Wazirabad, Nizamabad, Akalgarh, Ranmagar, Hafizabad, Sangla Hills, Sheikhupura, Chuharkhana, Lyallpur and other places. He also addressed meetings and called upon the women of Punjab to persevere with the spinning-wheel. Writing about the Punjab villagers Gandhiji said:

It was as if we had known each other for ages. Wherever I went they came flocking and laid before me their heaps of yarn. My work in



connection with the Enquiry brought home to me the fact that Punjab could become a great field for khadi work. [*Autobiography*, p.477]

The responsibility for organizing the work of the committee devolved on Gandhiji and the task of drafting the report was also entrusted to him. In December Jayakar went to help him in the task. The report, under the title *Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress*, was published on 25 March 1920, Volume I consisting of the report and Volume II of the evidence. The report was a shining example of a document based on truth and justice. The Hunter Committee's report appeared pale in contrast.

The letter of 20 February 1920, forwarding the report to Motilal Nehru, the Congress President, said:

We examined the statements of over 1,700 witnesses and have selected for publication about 650 statements which will be found in the accompanying volumes of our Report. The statements excluded were mostly statements proving the same class of facts.

Every admitted statement was verified by one of us and was accepted only after we were satisfied as to the *bona fides* of the witness.... Every such statement bears the name of the witness at the foot thereof. No statement was accepted without sufficient cross-examination of the witness.

It will be observed that many witnesses are men of position and leaders in their own districts or villages.

It will be further observed that some of the witnesses have made very serious allegations against officials. In each and every case, the



witnesses were warned by us of the consequences of making those allegations and they were admitted only when the witnesses adhered to their statements, in spite of the knowledge of the risk they personally ran and the damage that might ensue to the cause by reason of exaggeration or untruth. We have moreover rejected those statements which could not be corroborated, although in some cases we were inclined to believe the witnesses. Such, for instance, were the statements regarding ill treatment of women.

The majority of the statements were given in the vernaculars. We have endeavoured to procure the most accurate translations but the statements appended to our Report may be treated as original as we checked the witnesses through the translations and made corrections or amendments ourselves wherever necessary.

We freely availed ourselves of the evidence led before the Disorders Enquiry Committee (Hunter Committee) in order to strengthen or correct our conclusion. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.39-40]

M. R. Jayakar recalls:

When I returned to the High Court after six months' absence in the Punjab, I met Inverarity, the then doyen of the Bombay Bar. He was then in his declining years. Yet the fire of his advocacy, his ripeness of judgment, his love of accuracy, were still his own and had remained undiminished. He asked me where I had disappeared all these months. I explained to him what I had been doing in the Punjab, and ended by mentioning that our deliberations had crystallized into a report which had then been published. He said he would like to read it. I gave him a copy. He finished it overnight, and next morning said to me, in his characteristic manner, 'I should like to



put a bullet through your head for writing such a report. It is a damaging document, and you know its effect is largely due to the very careful way in which you have presented your facts and the restraint with which you have drawn your conclusions. Who is responsible for such a Report?' I said, 'Mainly Gandhi.' 'You know,' he said, 'its restraint makes the Report all the more damaging from the British point of view, because I have always thought that if the Indian case were presented with accuracy, truth and restraint as your Report does, it would cause far more damage to our rule in India than the rubbish some newspapers write from day to day. And you can take it from me that, when this Report is read in England, it will produce a far greater effect than in India, where people delight in hyperboles. [M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, pp.324-26]

14

The Hunter Committee's report, on the other hand, which was presented to Government on 8 March 1920, was an attempt to underplay the Martial Law atrocities and to whitewash the crimes of Martial Law officials. The Indian members were unable to agree with the conclusions of the majority and submitted a separate Minority Report.

Describing the Majority Report of the Hunter Committee as political freemasonry, Gandhiji wrote:

Look at the manifestly laboured defence of every official act of inhumanity except where condemnation could not be avoided through the impudent admissions made by the actors themselves; look at the special pleading introduced to defend General Dyer even against himself; look at the vain glorification of Michael O'Dwyer although it was his spirit that actuated every act of criminality on the part of the subordinates.... The



Report and the despatches, in my humble opinion, constitute an attempt to condone official lawlessness. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.480-83]

The Report , Gandhiji wrote to Andrews, had taken away all his faith even in the good intentions of the Ministry and the Viceregal Council. [*Ibid*, p.500]

The reports of the two committees form a scathing indictment of the administration of Michael O'Dwyer. A perusal of the Congress report brings out the fact that O'Dwyer "abused the power given to him by the Defence of India Act by prohibiting the entry into the province of Messrs Tilak and Pal. He interned hundreds of local men with little or no cause. He gagged the vernacular press, prevented the Nationalist papers edited outside the Punjab from being circulated in the province ... and then, having prevented free speech and free writing, allowed himself to think, and gave outsiders to understand, that the people of the Punjab were the happiest under his rule." He had obviously been unaware of the volcano of people's anger underneath him till it burst.

But even the Hunter Committee could not entirely whitewash the barbarity of General Dyer. It had to concede that in using force General Dyer had "exceeded the reasonable requirements of the case." The Government of India directed Dyer to resign his appointment as Brigade Commander and debarred him from further employment in India. The Secretary of State approved this action. [*Ibid*, p.580]

In England Dyer's conduct was debated in Parliament. In the House of Commons, which took up the matter on 8 July 1919, he came in for severe condemnation. Montagu, speaking first, said:

When you pass an order that all Indians must crawl past a particular place, when you pass an order to say that all Indians must forcibly or voluntarily salaam any officer of His Majesty the King, you are enforcing



racial humiliation.... When you take selected schoolboys ... and whip them publicly... when you flog a wedding party, you are indulging in frightfulness....

Are you going to keep your hold upon India by terrorism, racial humiliation, subordination and frightfulness, or are you going to rest it upon the growing good will of the people of your Indian Empire?

Churchill, too, condemned "the slaughter of nearly four hundred persons and the wounding of probably three or four times that number at Jallianwala Bagh" for which he saw no parallel in the history of the British Empire. He said Dyer deserved not only dismissal and censure but disciplinary action. The Labour representative said his party stood for recall of the Viceroy, impeachment of O'Dwyer and trial of Dyer and other officers responsible

But in the House of Lords, Dyer's action was eulogized and a resolution was passed, after a debate on 19 July, deploring "the conduct of the case of General Dyer as unjust to that officer."

The sympathy for Dyer was widespread in England, for he had "saved India". The *Morning Post* launched a fund to raise money for him. The response was generous. Among those who contributed was Michael O'Dwyer. Rudyard Kipling too contributed. So did all the Anglo-Indian newspapers of India. The fund eventually closed with a total collection of £26,317. 4. 10. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar : The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.227-42]

There arose widespread demand in the country for the recall of Chelmsford, the Viceroy, and impeachment of O'Dwyer. The All-India Congress Committee backed the demand. [*Ibid*, p.513]



The Punjab Sub-Committee of the Congress in its report listed a number of measures that needed to be taken to redress the wrong done to the Punjab. These included repeal of the Rowlatt Act, recall of the Viceroy, relieving Dyer, O'Dwyer, Col. O'Brien, Bosworth Smith, Rai Saheb Sri Ram Sud and Malik Saheb Khan of any position under the Crown, and refund of fines collected from the people. Even the Liberal leader Srinivasa Sastri asked for the prosecution of Dyer. Gandhiji said he would not join in the demand, which could never be met. Had not practically the whole English press joined the conspiracy to screen those offenders against humanity? Bad as General Dyer was, Bosworth Smith (Deputy Commissioner of Gujranwala, one of the most vicious of Martial Law Administrators) had been infinitely worse and his crimes far more serious than the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh. [*Ibid*, p.510]

The reverberations of the Punjab atrocities continued to echo in the following years.

In March 1922 Sir Sankaran Nair, at the behest of the Government of India and with their active assistance wrote a tract under the title *Gandhi and Anarchy*. Unfortunately for him, while denouncing Gandhiji, he also severely criticized O'Dwyer and his administration of the Punjab. When O'Dwyer was told of it he asked Nair to withdraw the book and apologize or face legal action. Nair refused to apologize and O'Dwyer instituted an action for libel against him.

The trial opened on 30 April, 1922. It soon became evident that the presiding judge was wholly biased in favour of O'Dwyer and by his *obiter dicta* seemed to support his misdeeds and even the Jallianwala Bagh outrage perpetrated by Dyer. In his summing up of the case, which took 25 days of hearing, he made it clear that he relied only on the evidence of Europeans. He also declared that Dyer had been wrongly punished.



The jury by a majority of eleven to one declared in favour of Michael O'Dwyer. He was awarded damages amounting to £500. The total amount that Sankaran Nair had to pay including costs, was about £ 20,000. [Alfred Draper, *Amritsar : The Massacre that Ended the Raj*, pp.247-61; *The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June 1924, pp:786-89]



CHAPTER XII: THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT - I

KHILAFAT

1

The Khilafat Question

During the thousand years and more that saw the rise and expansion of Islam, the power centre of Islam had shifted from Arabia to Turkey. There, under the Ottoman kings called Caliphs, it had established its sway over vast territories in east Asia, Africa and parts of Europe. The Caliph, besides exercising suzerainty over the lands and peoples made parts of the Ottoman Empire, claimed allegiance of Muslims all over the world, as the temporal and spiritual symbol of the faith.

When the world war came and Turkey found herself fighting on the side of Germany and the Central Powers against Britain and the Allies, Muslims outside the Ottoman Empire, and especially the eight crore Muslims of India, were faced with a dilemma. It was their duty, as loyal subjects of the King-Emperor which they claimed to be, to contribute with men and money for the defence of the Empire. But as Muslims it went against their grain to take up the sword against a combination which included the Caliph of Islam. The British were fully aware of this dilemma in which the Muslims of India were placed. Their spokesmen, therefore, again and again categorically assured the Muslims that they had no designs against Turkey and the Caliphate.

Very soon after Turkey joined the war on the side of Germany, British Prime Minister Asquith gave it as the view of the British Government that the Sultan had had no hand in this step; that it was the mistake of a few Turks and Turkey would not be made to suffer for it. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.2]. His successor,



Lloyd George, on 5 January 1918, when the war was going badly for the British and they wanted recruits fast, reiterated this assurance to Muslims, saying that the British were not fighting "to deprive Turkey of its capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race We do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish Empire in the homeland of the Turkish race with its capital in Constantinople." [*Ibid*, p.413]

This pronouncement had the desired effect. According to Lloyd George's own admission later, on 26 February 1920:

The effect of the statement in India was that recruiting went up appreciably from that very moment. They were not all Mohammedans but there were many Mohammedans among them. Now we are told, that was an offer to Turkey. But they rejected it, and therefore we are absolutely free. It was not. It is too often forgotten that we are the greatest Mohammedan power in the world and that one-fourth of the population of the British Empire is Mohammedan. There have been no more loyal adherents to the throne and no more effective and loyal supporters of the Empire in the hour of its trial. We gave a solemn pledge and they accepted it. They are disturbed by the prospect of our not abiding by it. [*Ibid*, p. 459]

As soon as the war ended with the surrender of Germany and the Central Powers, British statesmen went back on their word. They started talking of punishing Turkey for having joined the Central Powers. The Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, shared this view of the British Ministers. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, p.518]

Though the Turkish Peace Treaty was still on the anvil, it was clear to all which way the wind was blowing. Muslim opinion in India was much exercised, and an agitation started .



From the very beginning Gandhiji associated himself with the Muslim sentiment and Muslim protest. The very first meeting he attended in this connection was the one organized by Anjuman Ziaul Islam on 9 May 1919 in Bombay. Gandhiji told the meeting that he had no difficulty in gauging Muslim sentiment over Turkey and that when he had landed in India in 1915 he had been full of thoughts with regard to Hindu-Muslim unity and the Turkish question, and he wanted to assist in the solution of that question. Then he had met the Ali Brothers, Dr. Ansari and Maulana Abdul Bari and he had discussed the question with them and with many other Muslims throughout India. He felt that the Khilafat question was "the greatest of all, greater even than that of the repeal of the Rowlatt Legislation; for it affects the religious susceptibilities of millions of Mohammedans." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.495-98]

In Lucknow, in early October 1919, a Khilafat Conference was held, which was attended by both Hindus and Muslims. The Conference decided to observe 17 October as a day of fasting, prayer and hartal. Gandhiji appealed to the Hindus to join the Muslims in observing 17 October, as the Khilafat Day. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp. 207-31]. Meetings were held and resolutions were passed that the people should boycott the Peace celebrations that were shortly to take place. The whole of India except the Punjab observed the Khilafat Day. [*Ibid*, p.308]

The Khilafat Conference was held in Delhi on 23 and 24 November. Gandhiji addressed the Conference both on the 23rd, when only Muslims were present, and also on the 24th when Hindus also were present. He presided at the Conference on the 24th. The Conference decided that the Government should be told that the Muslims would cease to lend cooperation to the Government, and if their righteous demand was not met they would not participate in the Government-sponsored peace celebrations, which had been fixed for 13



December and the following days. Gandhiji endorsed the decision, but criticised another decision taken at the behest of Maulana Hasrat Mohani, which asked for the progressive boycott of British goods. Instead, on Gandhiji's suggestion the Conference decided that should the conditions for Turkish peace go against Turkey, they would no longer cooperate with the Government. No one, Gandhiji explained, was bound to accept titles or employment from the Government. There could be no obligation to help anyone whose actions were against the good of the people. [*Ibid*, p.321]

The deliberations of the Conference on the 23rd began at 4.00 p.m. and concluded at 3 a.m. on the following morning. The Conference thanked the Hindus for their support to the cause of Khilafat. The question of stopping cow-slaughter was raised by the Muslims, but Gandhiji did not want it as a *quid pro quo*. The Hindus must help the Muslims over the Khilafat question unconditionally, he said. And if the Muslims thought they should refrain from cow slaughter, then they should do so whether the Hindus helped them or not.

At Gandhiji's suggestion money was collected to organize boycott of the Peace celebrations. Gandhiji was asked to contribute one pice. Since he did not have even one pice on him, Khawaja Hasan Nizami paid it on his behalf. The coin was then put to auction and fetched Rs. 501. In all a sum of two thousand rupees was raised on the spot. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.552-57]

The Amritsar Congress

The thirty-fourth session of the Indian National Congress held in Amritsar from 27 December 1919 to 1 January 1920, under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru, forms a milestone in its history. It marks the point of time at which the Congress passed, irreversibly, under the leadership of Gandhiji.



So far, though Gandhiji had attended the annual sessions of the Congress, such attendance had been "nothing more perhaps than an annual renewal of allegiance to the Congress". [*Autobiography*, p.486]. His share in the deliberations had been confined largely to the advocacy of Hindi and to presenting the case of overseas Indians. Gandhiji himself considered that his participation in the proceedings at Amritsar marked his real entry into the Congress politics. [*Ibid*]

An important resolution passed by the Congress that bore Gandhiji's stamp was the one condemning the excesses committed by the people. The Subjects Committee threw out the resolution. Gandhiji was firm. He wrote later:

That in Ahmedabad, Viramgam, Amritsar, Gujranwala and Kasur, our own people set fire to buildings, killed people, burnt down bridges, removed rail tracks and cut wires, needs no proof.... So long as we refuse to see the evil around us, we do not acquire the strength to fight it.... We have no right whatsoever either to notice or condemn other people's faults so long as we do not roundly denounce our own. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, p.465]

Gandhiji had his way and the resolution was carried which "while fully recognizing the grave provocation that led to a sudden outburst of mob frenzy", expressed deep regret of the Congress at and its condemnation of, the excesses committed in certain parts of the Punjab and Gujarat resulting in loss of life and injury to person and property during the month of April. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.180]

The most important issue around which the deliberations of the Congress revolved was one of defining its attitude towards the Government of India Act, 1919, passed by the British Parliament earlier in the month and the Royal Proclamation of 24 December that followed the enactment. The Act gave shape to the constitutional reforms recommended in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report



of July 1918 and modified in certain respects the existing constitution and machinery of the Government.

The first part of the Act dealt with Local Governments. It provided for distribution of subjects between the Local Government and Legislature and the Governor-General-in-Council and the Central Legislature. It provided also for the division of provincial subjects into "reserved" and "transferred", the former to be dealt with by the Governor's Executive Council and the latter by Ministers popularly chosen .

Provincial Legislative Councils would be composed of nominated and elected members, the number of the latter in each Council to be not less than 70 per cent. The number of members of each of the eight Provincial Legislative Councils was fixed : the largest being Bengal with 125 members and the smallest Assam, with 53 members. It was provided that the life of a Legislative Council would be three years.

The Governor had the power to certify any legislation not passed by the Legislative Council or veto any legislation passed by it.

The second part of the Act dealt with the Government of India. It provided for a Legislative Assembly with a membership of 140, of which 40 would be nominated. The life of the Assembly would be three years. There would also be a Council of State with a membership of 60 and a life of five years.

The third part of the Act dealt with the Secretary of State and his Council and laid down that their salaries, which had so far been defrayed from Indian revenues, would henceforth be provided by the British Parliament.

The fourth part of the Act dealt with the Secretary of State's Services.



The fifth part laid down that at the expiry of ten years after the passing of the Act a Statutory Commission would be appointed to enquire into the working of the system and consider whether further advance could be made towards responsible government.

The sixth part of the Act covered miscellaneous matters.

The Royal Proclamation issued on 24 December said if the Act should achieve its purpose, the results would be momentous. It commended Indians' desire for representative institutions and political responsibility. The Proclamation directed the Viceroy to exercise the King's Royal clemency "to political offenders in the fullest measure" compatible with public safety.

By the Proclamation the King also announced the formation of a Chamber of Princes of Indian States.

As a result of the Royal clemency out of a total of nearly 1,800 persons convicted in the disturbances in the Punjab all but 96 were discharged from prisons during the year. The number of those released through exercise of clemency all over the country was 2,300. [*India in 1919*, pp.53 and 175-80]

The dominant political opinion in the country had been greatly disappointed with the Montford scheme, for it fell far short of the demand of Indians for responsible government. The scheme, with its principles of dyarchy, nominated membership of the Legislatures, the Council of State, powers of certification of unpopular laws conferred on the Governor-General and the Governors, their power of veto, ordinance-making powers and various other reactionary features, [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.178] had been roundly denounced both at the Bombay special session and the Delhi session of the Congress the previous year.



The resolution on the subject, as approved by the Subjects Committee, was moved by C. R . Das. It ran:

(1) That this Congress reiterates its declaration of last year that India is fit for full responsible government and repudiates all assumptions and assertions to the contrary.

(2) That this Congress adheres to the Resolution passed at the Delhi Congress regarding Constitutional Reforms and is of opinion that the Reforms Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing.

(3) That this Congress further urges that Parliament should take early steps to establish full responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination. [*Ibid*, p.179]

Gandhiji agreed with the dominant opinion that "the reforms are undoubtedly incomplete; they do not give us enough" but he felt that they ought not to be rejected. He declared that the Reforms Act, coupled with the Royal Proclamation issued on 24 December 1919, was an earnest of the British people to do justice to India. The juxtaposition of General Dyer's deed in Amritsar and the Reforms Act was purely accidental. The need was to remove distrust that had grown "between the English and ourselves".

Paying tribute to the work of Secretary of State Montagu in this regard, Gandhiji said that he had laboured for India without for a single moment turning back . "He has been a true friend of India. He has earned our gratitude." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.360-61]

Gandhiji, therefore, could not swallow C. R. Das's resolution as phrased. He moved an amendment omitting the word "disappointing" in paragraph 2, and adding a paragraph at the end to the following effect:



(4) Pending such introduction this Congress begs loyally to respond to the sentiments expressed in the Royal Proclamation, namely, "let it (the new era) begin with a common determination among my people and my officers to work together for a common purpose' and trusts that both the authorities and the people will cooperate so to work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government and this Congress offers its warmest thanks to the Right Hon 'ble E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with them. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.363-64]

Gandhiji's argument was that if the Congress was going to work the Reforms, it could not call them disappointing. The Reforms must be worked, furthermore, in a spirit of cooperation. [*Ibid*, pp.366-67]

C.R. Das and, to an extent, Tilak, were not disposed to accept the amendment. They were of the view that the Reforms must be rejected. There thus appeared, at one stage, no way out but to put the amendment to vote. But this was a difficult matter to arrange. [*Autobiography*, pp.484-85]. The open session was a large assembly, with an attendance of some 36,000. Of these 6,000 were ordinary delegates and about 1,200 peasant delegates. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.180]. Lala Harkishenlal undertook to make the necessary arrangements for voting, but in the end a compromise formula produced by Bepin Chandra Pal was accepted by both parties. [*Autobiography*, p.485]. It said:

Pending such introduction, this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full responsible Government, and this Congress offers its thanks to the Right Hon'ble E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with



the Reforms. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.180]

3

Writing later in *Young India* on the deliberations in the Congress with regard to the Reforms Gandhiji said: "Lokmanya Tilak represents a definite school of thought of which he makes no secret. He considers that everything is fair in politics. We have joined issue with him in that conception of political life. We consider that political life of the country will become thoroughly corrupt if we import Western tactics and methods. We believe that nothing but the strictest adherence to honesty, fair play and charity can advance the true interests of the country." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, p.484]

Tilak wrote to Gandhiji complaining that Gandhiji had not correctly represented his view. He then explained: "Instead of the maxim अवकोधेन जिने वकोधे (win anger by absence of anger) as preached by Buddha, I prefer to rely on the maxim: ये यथा मांप्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् (I think of them in the same spirit in which they surrender to me). That explains the whole difference and also the meaning of my phrase 'responsive cooperation.'" [*Ibid*, pp.490-91]

Gandhiji again wrote in *Young India*:

For me there is no conflict between the two texts quoted by the Lokmanya. The Buddhist text lays down an eternal principle. The text from the *Bhagavad Gita* shows to me how the principle of conquering hate by love, untruth by truth, can and must be applied.... I had in mind his oft-repeated phrase शठं प्रति शाठ्यं (give back to the evil man in his own coin)....The true law is शठं प्रत्यपि सत्यम् (to the evil man too truth). [*Ibid*, pp.490-91]



The Congress had so far been run according to a few rules framed by Gokhale. There was no limit set to the number of delegates each province could send and as a consequence the sessions became much too unwieldy as forums for discussion of public affairs. There was, further, no machinery for carrying on work between sessions. There was provision for three secretaries, of whom not even one worked whole time.

The Congress entrusted Gandhiji with the task of revising the constitution. In order to ensure the support and cooperation of Tilak and C. R. Das, the two most important leaders in the Congress, Gandhiji suggested that N. C. Kelkar, representing Tilak and I. B. Sen, representing Das, should be included as members of the Constitution Committee. [*Autobiography*, pp.487-88]

The three members of the Committee could never manage to meet [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.428] and the burden of drafting the constitution fell on Gandhiji.

For much of the time during his Punjab sojourn in late 1919 and early 1920 Gandhiji was the guest of Sarla Devi Choudhrani, wife of the popular Punjab leader Rambhuj Dutt Choudhary, who was then in jail. Considerations of propriety made Gandhiji hesitate a little about accepting Sarla Devi's invitation, but she soon put him at his ease. In his letters and writings he spoke glowingly of the affection showered on him by Sarla Devi. She occasionally also accompanied him on his tours. When he visited Gujrat and Jalalpur Jattan she was with him. A couple of months later Rambhuj Dutt was released along with other prisoners in the course of general amnesty.

Gandhiji wrote in *Young India*:

Where earlier I had seen a woman separated from her husband and living alone, the image of a lioness, I saw today a happy couple. Pandit



Rambhuj Dutt Choudhary was long since out of jail. I saw a new glow on Smt. Sarla Devi's face.

Gandhiji had first been introduced to Sarla Devi in Calcutta in 1901, when he had been on a short visit to India from South Africa. He had again met both Sarla Devi and her husband during the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar in 1915.

A niece of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarla Devi was heir to the rich artistic heritage of the Tagore family. She was a graduate and an accomplished singer. She had set to music her husband's compositions, for Rambhuj Dutt too was a poet. A song of his which became very popular had the refrain: **असां नहीयों हारना भांवे साडी जान जाये** – "Never shall we own defeat, though life we may lose!"

Gandhiji was much impressed by this song and called it the Satyagrahis' song. During our imprisonment in the Aga Khan Palace (August 1942 - May 1944) more than once he mentioned it to us. Even as late as June 1947 at a prayer meeting in Delhi he reverted to this song. [C.W.M.G., Vol.LXXXVIII, p.145]

Taking the word of Gandhiji as law, Sarla Devi had plunged into the work of Swadeshi with all her zeal. She was among the first women to dress in khadi sari and blouse during the National Week (6-13 April) in 1920. She called Gandhiji the Law-giver and he signed himself as such in his letters to her.

When the work of the Congress Enquiry into the Punjab Martial Law atrocities was over and Gandhiji returned to Sabarmati, Sarla Devi visited him there and remained at the Ashram till the last week of April when she returned to Lahore for stepson Jagdish's marriage, scheduled for 5 May.

Gandhiji had continued in poor health ever since his serious illness in early 1919 and was advised to go to Sinhgarh for rest and recuperation. He was there



in the last week of March and again from 30 April to 5 May 1920. Sarla Devi's son Deepak had accompanied him to Sinhgarh. Sarla Devi had promised to come back after Jagdish's wedding. On 30 April 1920 Gandhiji wrote to Sarla Devi from Sinhgarh:

I posted a pencil letter just before leaving Poona for Sinhgarh. The doctor [told me that I] was too pulled down to attempt walking up. I in my infatuity [sic] thought I could do it. So Mahadev, Deepak, and I began climbing up. But you will be sorry to learn that I could not move up even half a furlong when I felt an unbearable strain on the left thigh and I had to give up the attempt. I felt humiliated and deeply cut up to find myself so much reduced in strength. But I must be cheerful even under reverses. I shall try to be.... If the marriage is over or postponed, I expect you to join the party and enliven it with your music and your hearty laughter.

Deepak climbed up with Mahadev without any chair. He is none the worse for it. He had milk on starting and cake on reaching. He is now sleeping heavily. Prabhudas is looking much better and more active. Balkrishna had come half way to receive us.... I can go on writing, but I must stop. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.359-60]

On 2 May he wrote to her:

You still continue to haunt me even in my sleep. No wonder Panditji [Rambhuj Dutt] calls you the greatest *shakti* of India. You may have cast that spell over him. You are performing the trick over me now. But even two swallows cannot make a summer. If you are the greatest *shakti* you will enslave India by becoming her slave in thought, word and deed. [*Ibid*, p.375]



He sent to her verses from *Ashtavakra Gita* and newspaper cuttings about music and exhorted her to give her music to India and make India sing. He wrote to her almost every day. Mahadev Desai writes that there were seven or eight letters from her during their Madras tour of about two weeks.

With her irrepressible enthusiasm Sarla Devi became about this time a little too excessively attached to the person of Gandhiji. 'Possessive' perhaps would better describe her attitude to him. It showed in her letters. They became at times, as Gandhiji put it, "decidedly despondent, sceptical and suspicious". She complained to Gandhiji regarding his circle, accusing some of its members of denying her access to Gandhiji. Rajaji, Mathuradas Tricumji, Maganlal Gandhi, Devadas and Mahadev Desai had strongly opposed the idea of any special relationship.

On 23 August Gandhiji wrote to her:

It is my claim that I have selected as my companions my superiors in character, superiors, that is to say, in their possibility.... They are jealous of their ideal which is my character. I and ... you must give everything to retain or deserve their love and affection. Their love uplifts me and keeps me on the square. They are my sheet-anchor as I am theirs. You should be proud of their jealousy and watchfulness. They want to run no risks and they are right. You and I are in duty bound to satisfy every lawful requirement. And we shall have well met. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.191]

Gandhiji seemed concerned about Sarla Devi's excessive demands. In his letter of 24 August he wrote to her:

Your letters have caused me distress. You do not like my sermons.... If my love is true it must express itself in sermons so long as you do not realize the ideal accepted by you as worthy.... What can be the reward of



always speaking and practising Truth even at the peril of one's life? What can be the reward of dying for one's country? What is the reward of your having given years to acquiring perfection in piano-playing? You give all for the cause you represent because you cannot do otherwise. [*Ibid*, p.193]

Sarla Devi, as everyone knew, was of course an artist and Gandhiji had great admiration for her talents. But Gandhiji did not concede that being an artist could be made an excuse for erratic behaviour. He wrote to her:

I refuse to call an indefinable complexity a piece of art. All art yields to patient analysis and shows a unity of design behind the diversity on the canvas. You are hugging your defects even when they are pointed out by a friend in a friendly manner.... What art can there be in moods, in fits and starts? The simplest natures are certainly complex in a sense.... In you I have an enigma to solve.

As in all other matters, in his attitude to Sarla Devi also, absolute openness characterized Gandhiji.

Gandhiji wrote to her, enclosing quotations from scriptures, especially the *Ashtavakra Gita*, explaining the implications of spirituality. Then on 17 December 1920 he wrote her a long letter, in keeping with a promise he had made to her. He said:

I have been analyzing my love for you. I have reached a definite meaning of spiritual wife. It is a partnership between two persons of the opposite sex where the physical is wholly absent. It is therefore possible between brother and sister, father and daughter. It is possible only between two *brahmacharis* in thought, word and deed. I have felt drawn to you, because I have recognized in you an identity of ideals and aspirations and a complete self-surrender. You have been 'wife' because



you have recognized in me a fuller fruition of the common ideal than in yourself. For this spiritual partnership to subsist, there must be complete coincidence not from faith but from knowledge. It is meeting between two kindred spirits. This partnership can take place whilst either party is physically married to another, but only if they are living as celibates. Spiritual partnership is possible even between husband and wife. It transcends physical relations and persists beyond the grave. It follows from what I have stated that spiritual partners can never be physically wedded either in this life or a future, for it is possible only if there is no carnality, latent or patent. Are you spiritual wife to me of that description? Have we that exquisite purity, that perfect coincidence, that perfect merging, that identity of ideals, that self-forgetfulness, that fixity of purpose, that trustfulness? For me I can answer plainly that it is only an aspiration. I am unworthy to have that companionship with you. I require in me an infinitely higher purity than I possess in thought. I am too physically attached to you to be worthy of enjoying that sacred association with you. By physical attachment I here mean I am too much affected by your weaknesses. I must not be teacher to you, if I am your spiritual husband, if coincidence or merging is felt. On the contrary there are sharp differences between you and me so often. So far as I can see our relationship, it is one of brother and sister.... [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.138]

From now onward Sarla Devi figures less and less in Gandhiji's life and work and references to her in his writings are rare and casual. Soon thereafter, Sarla Devi said good-bye to the centre of events in Gandhiji's life. But she was to remain part of the circle of kinship till her death on 19 August 1945. [C.W.M.G., Vol.LXXXI,



pp.143-45]. Deepak Choudhary, the only son of Rambhuj Dutt and Sarla Devi, married Maganlal Gandhi's daughter Radha after Sarla Devi's death.

5

While the Congress, under Gandhiji's influence and effective guidance was thus preparing itself for cooperation with the Government over the constitutional reforms embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919, trouble was already building up over the question of Khilafat.

On 19 January 1920, a joint Khilafat deputation including Gandhiji, Rambhuj Dutt Choudhary, Swami Shraddhanand, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Motilal Nehru, in addition to the Muslim leaders, such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, the Ali Brothers, Abdul Bari, Maulana Azad and M. A. Jinnah, waited on the Viceroy and presented to him a statement of the Khilafat case. The statement referred to the wishes cherished by Indian Muslims on the Khilafat and cognate questions, such as those relating to Muslim control over every portion of the Zazirat-ul-Arab, the Khalifa's stewardship of the holy places, and the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. It went on to say that in order to give timely warning to the Imperial Government the Khilafat Conference held earlier in Amritsar had decided that a Khilafat deputation "should proceed at the earliest possible opportunity to England" to place the submissions of the Indian Muslims before His Majesty's Ministers. The deputation sought the Viceroy's assistance in this. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVI, pp.552-57]

Gandhiji found the statement "vague and in general terms" whereas it should have been "dignified, brief, precise" and as unargumentative as possible. Since the statement had already been sent to the Viceroy's office it was too late for it to be revised. Gandhiji thought of an addendum going with it. and drafted one, but the Viceroy's office did not accept it. [*Ibid*, pp.489-90]



The Viceroy was courteous to the deputation, but behind the courtesy was the "determination to punish Turkey". The Viceroy also told the deputation that the matter was not in the hands of Great Britain alone.

The interview with the Viceroy thus came to nothing. Gandhiji offered to the Muslim leaders non-cooperation as the remedy. But non-violence was an indispensable condition of non-cooperation. The Muslim divines were puzzled. The question was, were non-cooperation and non-violence in accord with the dictates of Islam?

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who had just been released from detention at Ranchi, was one of the members of the deputation. He had vast learning and matchless powers of eloquence and persuasion and he had a modern outlook. More than any other ulema, Maulana Azad, though he was the youngest of them all, became a tower of strength to Gandhiji. At the request of Mahadev Desai, his biographer, he wrote down the details of discussions which led to the acceptance of non-cooperation by the Muslim divines and then by Muslim masses. Says Maulana Saheb:

I happened to meet Gandhiji for the first time in Delhi on 18 January 1920. All Hindu and Muslim leaders had assembled there in order to wait in deputation upon the Viceroy and place before the Government the sentiments of the Indian Muslims with regard to Turkey. Lokmanya Tilak, too, was in Dehli. As a member of the deputation I had already put my signature on the memorial to be submitted to the Viceroy. But I could not bring myself to consent to go to Government House. The late Maulana Mohammed Ali and other friends were insistent that I should join the deputation but my feeling was that the deputation could not serve any useful purpose.



The deputation did wait on the Viceroy, however, and as was but to be expected, with little result. The only assurance that the Viceroy gave was that if it was decided to send the deputation to London, the Government of India would provide all facilities. It was thereupon decided that the late Maulana Mohammed Ali should lead the deputation to London. He was ready to go. But another question now arose: whether the Mussalmans should be content merely with sending this deputation or whether there was anything more to be done. I was of the opinion that these old methods of begging, petitioning, waiting in deputation and so on could not be of much avail.

We had to try to find some means of exerting direct pressure. But most people fought shy of this line of thinking. They had no constructive suggestion to offer, but were ready to pick holes if anything concrete was proposed.

The matter was discussed for six long hours in the late Hakim Ajmal Khan's drawing-room, but without any result. Gandhiji thereupon proposed that a sub-committee of two or three people should be appointed to decide the matter in consultation with him. Their decision would then be placed before the bigger committee. Hakim Saheb and I were selected to form this sub-committee. We accompanied Gandhiji to the late Principal Rudra's house and were closeted with him for three hours. It was there that non-cooperation was conceived. Gandhiji placed before us a detailed programme, and I had no difficulty in agreeing with him in every detail. It was quite clear to me that there was no other effective or correct line of action than this.

The next day the members of the deputation met again, and Gandhiji explained to them his proposal. There was still hesitancy on their part. The late Hakim Saheb, however, gave me his full support. About this time the Khilafat Conference was being held in Meerut, so Gandhiji and I proceeded from Delhi to



Meerut, and the non-cooperation programme was placed before the public for the first time at this conference [held on 22 January 1920]. The second Khilafat Conference was thereafter held towards the end of February [29 February] in Calcutta under my presidentship, and I recommended in my presidential address the same programme for the acceptance of the Muslims. [Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Azad*, Agra, 1946, pp.41-43]

The atmosphere for the Special Congress at Calcutta and the Annual Congress at Nagpur was thus prepared, and the resolution on the various items of non-cooperation – boycott of Councils, schools and law courts – was carried by an overwhelming majority.

On 19 March 1920 the country observed the Khilafat Day, with fasting, prayer and hartals in various places. In Bombay it was a magnificent demonstration of discipline and self-restraint. There was a mammoth public meeting.

But there was difference of opinion among political leaders on the question. The Liberal League, the political party formed by those Moderate leaders who had separated from the Congress, for instance, condemned the hartal in advance. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.111-12]

In an article published in *Navajivan* of 21 March 1920 Gandhiji was already hinting that non-cooperation with the Government on the Khilafat question might take the form of resignation of Hindus and Muslims from Government services. [*Ibid*, p.107]

The Conference of the Allies at San Remo finalized the Turkish peace terms on 20 April 1920. These were conveyed to Turkey and published in the *Gazette of India* on 14 May.



The terms were most cruel and humiliating. They totally broke up the Ottoman Empire and made deep cuts into the temporal and spiritual powers of the Caliph.

The boundaries of Turkey were made the responsibility of a Boundary Commission, the authority over the waters along the mouth of the Black Sea was entrusted to a Commission of the Straits. Local self-government was promised to Kurdistan. Portions of Smyrna were given to Greece, the rest being made into an autonomous state. Eastern Thrace, except for Constantinople, was ceded to Greece. The Armenian districts of Turkey were added to the existing Armenian Republic. Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine were recognized as independent states and placed under mandates – Syria under France and Mesopotamia and Palestine under the British. Hedjaz was recognized as an independent state, with the king of Hedjaz being made responsible for the access of pilgrims to Mecca and Medina. Turkey was deprived of all rights in Egypt, Sudan and Cyprus. Morocco and Tunisia were made French protectorates.

The military forces of Turkey were restricted to the Sultan's body-guard at Constantinople and a police force for maintenance of internal security, the two being limited respectively to 700 and 50,000. Alexandretta, Busrah, Constantinople, Dedeagatch, Haief, Hailad Pasha, Smyrna and Trebizond were declared international ports.

There were various other restrictions and obligations which Turkey had to accept. [*Ibid*, pp.541-42]

Thus under the terms of the treaty, "Turkey, which was dominant over two million square miles of Asia, Africa and Europe in the 17th century," had, according to the *London Chronicle*, "dwindled down to little more than 1,000 square miles." [*Ibid*, pp.458-59]



The Viceroy, in a message to the Muslims of India, said that though the terms offered to Turkey were "in full accordance with high principles", they nevertheless would be painful to Muslims. He appealed to them to accept the peace terms "with resignation, courage and fortitude". At the same time repressive moves were commenced for dealing with the Khilafat movement. The Seditious Meetings Act was brought into operation and the Muslim press was muzzled. [*Ibid*, pp.388-89]

In the first week of June the Khilafat Committee organized a series of meetings in Allahabad. At one of these Hindu leaders, such as Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru and C. Y. Chintamani were among those present. Mrs. Besant was also present and she and Sapru strongly dissuaded the Muslims from the policy of non-cooperation, fearing complications, including possible invasion by Afghanistan. Some of the Muslim speakers said that any invasion from without, undertaken to uphold the prestige of Islam, would have their full sympathy, if not actual support. Gandhiji was certain that the only way the Muslims could secure justice in the matter was non-cooperation in which the Hindus must support them. "No Government can possibly withstand the bloodless opposition of a whole nation," he wrote. [*Ibid*, pp.484-85]. The meeting "unanimously reaffirmed the principle of non-cooperation and appointed an executive committee to lay down and enforce a detailed programme". [*Ibid*, pp.484-85]

Sections of nationalist opinion in the country as also liberal opinion in England and elsewhere were unable to reconcile themselves to Gandhiji so openly and decisively lending the support of all his authority to a cause so patently obscurantist and reactionary as the Khilafat.



There were three reasons for Gandhiji to do so. The first was Gandhiji's concern for Hindu-Muslim unity in action. The second reason was that whatever the justice or otherwise of the Muslim demand, Gandhiji felt certain that British and other imperialists were up to no good and that the argument of self-determination that they had advanced in the context of Khilafat was specious and dishonest. Thirdly, Gandhiji was sympathetic to the Muslims because Khilafat was a religious matter for them.

Ever since the birth of the Congress, Indian Muslims, under the influence of leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, had kept themselves apart from the national mainstream, and were used again and again by the British to breach the solidarity of the national movement. The doctrine of separatism first brought into play in the Morley-Minto Reforms had in the end received sanction of the Lucknow Congress when it conceded to the Muslims not only reservation of seats but also separate electorate.

Gandhiji wanted to weld Hindu and Muslim masses into one political force and this remained one of his chief missions throughout life.

Explaining his stand on Khilafat he wrote in *Young India*:

I have already stated that if I were not interested in Indian Mohammedans, I would not interest myself in the welfare of the Turks any more than I do in that of the Austrians or the Poles. But I am bound as an Indian to share the sufferings and trials of fellow Indians. If I deem the Mohammedan to be my brother, it is my duty to help him in his hour of peril to the best of my ability if his cause commends itself to me as just.... I cannot regulate the Mohammedan feeling. I must accept his statement that the Khilafat is with him a religious question in the sense that it binds him to reach the goal even at the cost of his own life. [*Ibid*, p.475]



Moreover Gandhiji was convinced that there was as much justice in the demand for the upholding of the Caliph's suzerainty over Arabia, Syria, Armenia and Palestine as there was in the demand that these areas should have freedom from Turkish rule, which had been tyrannical.

Gandhiji reproduced in *Young India* the letter of an English correspondent who thought that in the non-Turkish possessions of Turkey there was so much hostility against Turkish rule that the idea of any restoration of Turkish rule in Syria and Arabia was not within the bounds of possibility. He pointed out that in this matter the Indian Muslims had to face not so much British Imperialism as the mass of English liberal and humanitarian opinion.

Gandhiji said that the writer's attitude was based on "insufficient or false information". The Muslims had not asked for "Turkish rule in Arabia in opposition to the Arabs". All they asked for was "Turkish suzerainty over Arabia which would guarantee complete self-rule for Arabia". They wanted the Caliph's control of the holy places of Islam, which Lloyd George had guaranteed. [*Ibid*, pp.409-12]

C. F. Andrews did not find the argument convincing. He did not think that guarantees of self-rule to Arabs and others could mean anything. Gandhiji wrote:

The unfortunate position in which I find myself is that I thoroughly distrust Lloyd George. Somehow or other I distrust the Armenian case as I distrust the Arabian case and I am so prejudiced against the present British diplomacy that I scent the foul hand of the deceitful diplomat in Armenia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria.... Why should Armenia have to complain if it has full autonomy with a Turkish Resident there? ...

The Peace Treaty is an abomination, a sin against God and man. Remember, too, that the Allied Powers, which simply mean England writ large, speak from a consciousness of their brute strength....



Gandhiji added:

Shaken as I was by this Peace Treaty, the Hunter Report had taken away all my faith even in the good intention of the Ministry and the Viceregal Council.... [*Ibid*, pp.499-500]

With regard to Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine whose separate national status the British were so keen to recognize, Gandhiji asked whether the extinction of Turkish suzerainty would not mean "the introduction of European Christian influence under the guise of Mandates. Have the Muslims of Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine been consulted or are the new arrangements being superimposed upon them by Powers conscious of their own brute strength rather than justice of their action? ... I shudder to think what will happen to them under the schemes of exploitation of their country by the greedy capitalists protected as they will be by the mandatory powers."

Gandhiji asked whether if Turkey had not made the mistake of joining Germany, the principle of nationality would have still been applied to Armenia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Palestine. [*Ibid*, pp.456-60]

He wrote:

The fact is that neither the Mussalmans nor the Hindus believe in the English ministerial word. They do not believe that the Arabs or the Armenians want complete independence of Turkey.... Nobody has ever ascertained that either the Arabs or the Armenians desire to do away with all connections, even nominal, with Turkey....

...Mandates have been unscrupulously established in Syria and Mesopotamia and a British nominee has been set up in Hedjaj under the protection of British guns. This is a position that is intolerable and unjust.



Apart, therefore, from the question of Armenia or Arabia, the dishonesty and hypocrisy that pollute the peace terms require to be instantaneously removed. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.73-74]

The All-India Khilafat Committee met in Bombay on 28 May 1920 and after much discussions adopted Gandhiji's programme of non-violent non-cooperation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, p.478 fn]. But, as mentioned earlier, it had not been easy to persuade them, especially as they felt some misgivings in accepting non-violence as a guiding principle of policy. In fact the entire spectrum of political opinion outside the Congress was opposed to the idea of non-cooperation for different reasons. Neither Tilak, nor Annie Besant nor the Liberals saw anything good in the programme.

8

In pursuance of the non-cooperation resolution a representation signed by 90 prominent Sunni Muslims was submitted to the Viceroy on 22 June, pleading that he should take up the advocacy of their claim on Khilafat "even to the point of resignation of your high office," failing which the Muslims "would be obliged as from the 1st of August next to withdraw cooperation from the Government" and ask the Hindus to do likewise. [*Ibid*, pp.586-87]

Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, supporting the Muslim claim and intimating that non-cooperation might become inevitable. He admitted that even though practised by the mass of people it was attended with grave risks. "But in a crisis such as has overtaken the Mussalmans of India, no step that is unattended with large risks can possibly bring about the desired change," he added. Two other courses were open to the Muslims, namely, resort to violence and emigration on a wholesale scale. But Gandhiji had succeeded in persuading the Muslims that



non-cooperation was the only dignified and constitutional form of direct action possible. [Ibid, pp.502-04]

In a *Navajivan* article published on 4 July, Gandhiji elaborated the programme of non-cooperation to be started on 1 August. This was:

1. Titles and honorary positions will be renounced;
2. Parents will withdraw their children from Government schools;
3. Legislatures will be boycotted;
4. Lawyers will give up practice and help people to settle their civil disputes among themselves;
5. Invitations to Government functions, parties, etc. will be politely refused, non-cooperation being given as the sole reason for doing so. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.5]

Lajpat Rai had declared that legislatures should be boycotted if justice was not done in the matter of the Punjab wrongs. "So it could be taken that Punjab too had joined the Khilafat agitation," said Gandhiji. Gandhiji wrote to the Press: "Needless to say I am in entire accord with Lala Lajpat Rai on the question of the boycott of the reformed Councils. For me it is but one step in the campaign of non-cooperation." [Ibid, p.12]

On the question of the boycott of Councils the leaders were speaking in many voices. Rambhuj Dutt Choudhary was against the step. Madras was divided, most of the Nationalist leaders were against the boycott. Gandhiji noted two reasons for the disapproval of boycott by the Nationalists: "(1) If the Nationalists refrain, the Moderates will get all the seats; (2) through the Legislative Councils we have made some progress by reason of larger powers having been granted to popular representatives." [Ibid, p.41]



But Gandhiji was coming round to the view that boycott of Councils was the most important programme before the country. He could not sympathize with the view that elections to the Councils should be contested with a view to carrying on a programme of obstruction from within. "What is this programme of obstruction after all?" asked Gandhiji, "Making long and stinging speeches, calling the Government names even and refusing our vote when needed." No good could come of this, he felt, since the whole administration was "a poison tree". [Ibid, pp.55-57]

Gandhiji also expressed himself in favour of boycotting the scheduled visit of the Prince of Wales to India. "Our loyalty," he wrote, " requires us to make it clear to His Majesty's Ministers that if they send the Prince to India, we shall be in no mood to join any receptions they might arrange."

9

While Gandhiji was reiterating his call to Hindus and Muslims through writings and speeches to prepare themselves for non-cooperation, to be launched on 1 August, sections among the Muslims were setting out on *hijrat*, for India ruled by the British had become a land of sin. The movement started in Sind and soon spread to the N.W.F.P. Special trains were arranged for people who were leaving their hearths and homes for an unknown land, impelled by nothing more than a religious impulse. They were cheered *en route* and presented with cash, food and other gifts. Gandhiji drew the attention of the readers to a report in the newspapers about a party of *muhajarin* "containing a barrister, with sixty women, forty children including twenty sucklings, all told 765, having left for Afghanistan by a special train." [Ibid, pp.76-77]. The trickle soon became a stream. In the month of August it was estimated that 18,000 people were on their way to Afghanistan. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.199]



It did not prove a smooth going. There were unpleasant encounters with British troops, as at Kacha Garhi, where a *muhajir* was killed in the firing. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.77]. In Afghanistan also the immigrants were not welcome and soon the Afghan authorities forbade their admission.

In an article in *Young India* of 28 July Gandhiji said that the hopes he had entertained of the British when he pleaded for cooperation with the Government at the Amritsar Congress had not been realized and that the representatives of the Empire had "become dishonest and unscrupulous". He declared: "I can no longer retain affection for a Government so evilly mannered as it is nowadays." His speeches, consequently, were intended to create "disaffection" for a Government which it was a shame to assist and which "had forfeited all title to confidence, respect or support". [*Ibid*, pp.88-89]

10

On 1 August 1920, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak passed away. "A giant among men has fallen. The voice of the lion is hushed," wrote Gandhiji in an obituary appearing on the front page of *Young India*. "Tilak," he wrote, "could not and would not put up with an inferior status for India in the Empire. He wanted immediate equality which he believed was his country's birthright." [*Ibid*, pp.110-11]

Madan Mohan Malaviya, as well as Tilak's *Mahratta*, counselled Gandhiji to suspend non-cooperation till the Congress had pronounced upon the move. Gandhiji argued that every Congressman, every public body had the right, it was even their duty, to express their opinion, even act upon it and thus anticipate the verdict of the Congress decision. They must act at once. They could only expect the Congress to ratify their action and share their sorrows and their burdens.



There were also other voices raised against non-cooperation. *The Bombay Chronicle* of 30 July 1920 carried a manifesto signed by Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar, Gokuldas K. Parekh, Pheroze Sethna, C. V. Mehta, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, K. Natarajan, H. P. Modi, Uttumlal K. Trivedi, B. C. Dalvi, Mawji Govindji, N. M. Joshi, Kanji Dwarkadas and others, dissuading the people from joining the non-cooperation movement. Their argument was that non-cooperation was against the religious tenets and traditions of the country.

Gandhiji asserted that non-cooperation with unjust men and kings was as much a duty as cooperation with just men and kings. Prahlad had dissociated himself from his father, Mirabai from her husband and Vibhishana from his brother. Throughout history, Gandhiji pointed out, non-cooperation, sometimes non-violently and sometimes with violence, had been employed to fight injustice. As for the risk of possible violence, Gandhiji said he would risk violence a thousand times rather than risk the emasculation of a whole race. [*Ibid*, pp.115-17, 125-27]

On 1 August 1920, when the Non-cooperation movement was inaugurated, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, returning the medals awarded to him. These were the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal, the Zulu War Medal and Boer War Medal. "The Imperial Government," he told the Viceroy, "have acted in the Khilafat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their immorality. I can retain neither respect nor affection for such a Government." [*Ibid*, p.104]

Addressing a meeting organized by the Central Khilafat Committee at Bombay on the same day, Gandhiji called upon the people to renounce all titles, medals and honorary posts. To begin with, they should ask Honorary Magistrates



to resign their posts. Lawyers, similarly, should give up practice and parents should withdraw their children from Government schools.

Another thing necessary was for people to take up the work of swadeshi. This was essential to the success of the movement. [*Ibid.* pp.107-08]

From 12 to 23 August, Gandhiji, accompanied by Shaukat Ali, toured Madras presidency, educating the people in non-cooperation. In an interview to *The Madras Mail* on 12 August, he said he did not fear violence this time because people were better disciplined than before, and also because in non-cooperation no civil disobedience of laws was involved. [*Ibid.* pp.138-42]

Everywhere at meetings Gandhiji explained that non-cooperation was intended to secure justice in the matter of Khilafat and to right the Punjab wrongs and that non-cooperation was a wholly constitutional fight. He emphasized the need for non-violence. "The true thing for any human being on earth," he said, "is not justice based on violence but justice based on the sacrifice of self." He pleaded for boycott of the Councils – not after the elections but before the elections – giving up of practice by lawyers, withdrawal by parents of their children from Government schools and renouncing of titles by title-holders without delay. [*Ibid.* pp.143-54]

Writing to Andrews during his Madras tour, Gandhiji was all praise for the restraint and non-violent spirit shown by crowds everywhere. He was also full of praise for Shaukat Ali who had accompanied him on the tour as "one of the most sincere of men I have met. He is generous, frank, brave, and gentle." [*Ibid.* p.190]

Calcutta Special Congress

A special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta from 4 to 9 September 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai to consider the



question of Khilafat and Non-cooperation. The special session had before it the views of the various Provincial Congress Committees. They had, by and large, expressed themselves in favour of the policy of Non-cooperation. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.200]

The resolution on Non-cooperation placed by Gandhiji before the Subjects Committee stated that in view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments had signally failed in their duty towards the Mussalmans of India, and in view of the fact that in the matter of events of April 1919, both the Governments had failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and to punish the guilty officials, the Congress was of the opinion that there was no course left open for the people of India but to adopt non-violent non-cooperation until the said wrongs were righted and swaraj established.

The resolution advised :

- (a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies;
- (b) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour;
- (c) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government and in place of such schools and colleges establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces;
- (d) gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts with their aid, for the settlement of private disputes;
- (e) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;



(f) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the reformed Councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election;

(g) boycott of foreign goods.

The resolution further advised adoption of swadeshi on a vast scale and of hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of millions of weavers who had abandoned their calling for want of encouragement. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.230-31; Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, pp.202-03]

The resolution was hotly debated in the Subjects Committee and strenuously opposed by C. R. Das, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, Bepin Chandra Pal and others. Amendments were moved by Swami Shraddhanand, Sri Prakasa, Motilal Nehru and others. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.232-35]. In the end the resolution was carried by a majority of 7 votes. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.200]

The opponents of the resolution carried on their battle in the open session. Mrs. Besant, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Madan Mohan Malaviya and M. A. Jinnah had serious objections to the programme. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar even cast aspersions on Gandhiji, saying he was trading on his reputation. The voting on the motion lasted six hours and went overwhelmingly in favour of Gandhiji's motion. The province-wise break-up for/ against was as follows: [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.260]

	For	Against
Bombay	243	93
Madras	161	135
Bengal	551	395



U. P.	259	28
Punjab	254	92
Andhra	59	12
Sind	36	16
Delhi	59	9
Bihar	184	28
Burma	14	4
Central Provinces	30	33
Berar	5	28
	_____	_____
Total	1855	873
	_____	_____

Madan Mohan Malaviya, having strenuously opposed the motion on Non-cooperation and lost, declared that notwithstanding the resolution he would seek election to the Council and continue to attend AICC meetings, unless forbidden to do so. Annie Besant declared that she would cease to attend the meetings of the AICC till the next Congress. [*Ibid*, pp.256-57]. Gandhiji said the minority had a right to pursue its own course.

In accordance with the resolution, Congressmen who had, pursuant to the Amritsar decision, announced their candidature for the Assembly and spent considerable amounts of money preparing for the elections, now withdrew their candidature. As for the voters, about 80 per cent abstained from voting and many booths returned empty ballot boxes. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.204]



Gandhiji had made such a deep impact on the deliberations of the Congress at Amritsar that friends again pressed him to join the All-India Home Rule League. He had earlier refused to join that organization because of his differences with Annie Besant. He had in the meantime come into closer contact with leaders of the Home Rule League, such as B. G. Horniman, Omar Sobhani, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Shankerlal Banker in course of the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation. In that campaign he had made the fullest use of the resources and cadres of the Home Rule League. Expressing his willingness to join the League now, he made it clear that he would only join it "to affect its policy and not to be affected by it".

In a letter to Srinivasa Sastri of 18 March 1920, he outlined the programme he wished to pursue through the League. This was: 1) acceptance of truth as the creed; 2) propagation of swadeshi; 3) acceptance of Hindustani as the national language of intercourse in the immediate future; 4) acceptance of the principle of redistribution of provinces on linguistic basis; and 5) acceptance of Hindu-Muslim unity as an article of faith. The League, Gandhiji said, could only work, "as it is now doing to further the interests of the Congress". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVII, pp.96-97]

On 28 April 1920, Gandhiji joined the All-India Home Rule League and accepted the office of its president. In a letter addressed to the members of the League, he re-emphasized the causes he expected the Home Rule League to advance: swadeshi, Hindu-Muslim unity, acceptance of Hindustani as the lingua franca and a linguistic redistribution of the provinces. [*Ibid*, pp.347-48]

With the Special Session of the Congress in Calcutta having given its approval to the Non-cooperation programme, the programme was also formally



adopted by a meeting of the All-India Home Rule League held in Calcutta on the occasion of the Congress. In a circular letter towards the closing days of September, Gandhiji requested the members of the League to enforce the Non-cooperation resolution, concentrating "for the next two months principally upon complete boycott of the reformed Councils." They were further asked in this connection to canvass signatures from voters for a declaration saying that they did "not wish to be represented at the Provincial Legislative Council...until justice had been granted in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab and Swaraj is established in India." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.285-86]

Gandhiji had not been happy with the name of the organization, and accordingly had moved at the Calcutta meeting of the Home Rule League held on 4 September that the name be changed to Swarajya Sabha. There was some doubt as to the legality of the proceedings and so the change was effected at another meeting of the League held in Bombay on 3 October. [Chandulal Dalal, *Gandhijini Dinwari*, (Gujarati), Ahmedabad, 1970, pp.108 & 110]

Giving his reason for the change, Gandhiji explained that the expression "Home Rule", besides being English, did not have the force of "Swarajya". Moreover, while the aim so far had been to secure Home Rule within the British Empire like what the Colonies enjoyed, the aim in future would be "to strive for swarajya of people's choice", by "peaceful and legitimate" means.

The changes, in the constitution and the name, were not to the liking of some of the Home Rulers, such as Jinnah, who objected particularly to the "clause defining the means to be employed for winning swaraj" on the ground that it lent itself to the interpretation that it permitted the Swarajya Sabha to carry on unlawful activities. Accordingly on 6 October, he, along with nineteen others, resigned from the Swarajya Sabha. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.365-68 and "*Chronology*"]



On 22 September, a sub-committee appointed by the All-India Congress Committee, with Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel as members, issued detailed instructions for the Congress organizations, on the programme to be taken up by way of Non-cooperation. The key word in the programme was boycott.

It was explained that though the Congress had approved Gandhiji's full programme of progressive non-violent non-cooperation, the following items had been taken up for immediate implementation.

Boycott of Titles: This was thought to be a difficult part of the programme, as it applied to the class of people who had hitherto not taken part in active public life. Workers in every town, taluka and district were instructed to complete lists of title-holder s and then call on them in deputation to persuade them to surrender their titles and honours.

Boycott of Government Schools and Colleges: It was observed that there was a “rooted bias” in favour of these schools and colleges. Yet it was to be made clear to all that unless these schools and colleges, and Government employment which college degrees promised, were dispensed with, swaraj would not come for generations. If a truly national culture was to be evolved, National Schools would have to be set up. Congress workers must carry on vigorous propaganda among parents , school teachers and boys above 18 years to promote gradual withdrawal of students from Government-run institutions. Congress workers were asked to prepare lists of parents who had withdrawn their children as well as of boys who had themselves given up schools and send them to provincial headquarters.



Boycott of Law-courts: Government wielded enormous power through the law-courts. National awakening must also be reflected in the diminishing of criminal and civil suits, for people having set their hearts on gaining self-determination would have little time left for private quarrels. Lawyers must give their whole time for providing leadership in the fight for swaraj. Those who, having suspended practice, needed to be supported should be supported by the nation. Lists of lawyers who gave up practice should be prepared and deputations of workers should call on others to persuade them to do so.

Boycott of Foreign Goods: This clause, Gandhiji said, was an interpolation and he had not been in favour of it. But non-cooperators were duty bound to simplify their wants and dispense with luxuries dependence on use of foreign articles.

Swadeshi: The use of all foreign cloth must be eschewed. Since Indian mills did not produce enough for all, resort must be had to hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Spinning-wheels should be manufactured and training classes for spinners should be organized.

To finance the above programme of work funds would be needed. A Swaraj Fund was, therefore, instituted and Provincial and District Congress Committees were asked to take up collections for the Fund and submit monthly reports of the receipts and expenditure. [*Ibid*, pp.279-84]

In pursuance of the programme of Non-cooperation, Vithalbhai Patel, on 14 September resigned from the Viceregal Council. [*Ibid*, "*Chronology*"]

No sooner was the business of the Special Session over than Gandhiji set out on a country-wide tour to spread the message of Non-cooperation. He



addressed innumerable meetings. He visited Santiniketan, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Nadiad. In the beginning of October he opened a National School at Surat. Then travelling North, he visited Delhi, Moradabad, Chaudasi, Aligarh, Hathras, Etah, Kasganj, Kanpur, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly and other places in U.P., where he addressed public meetings and meetings of students and of women. From 18 to 22 October he was in the Punjab, where he spoke to college students at Lahore and Amritsar.

One now sees expressed in Gandhiji's language his changed attitude towards the Empire and the British connection. In an open letter "To Every Englishman in India", published in *Young India* of 27 October, he listed the evils of British colonial rule in India. These were:

exploitation of India's resources for the benefit of Great Britain; an ever-increasing military expenditure, and a civil service the most expensive in the world;

extravagant working of every department in utter disregard of India's poverty;

disarmament and consequent emasculation of a whole nation lest an armed nation might imperil the lives of a handful of you in our midst;

traffic in intoxicating liquors and drugs for the purpose of sustaining a top-heavy administration;

progressively repressive legislation in order to suppress an ever-growing agitation seeking to give expression to a nation's agony;

degrading treatment of Indians residing in your Dominions, and you have shown total disregard of our feelings by glorifying the Punjab administration and flouting the Mussalman sentiment. [*Ibid*, pp.373-74]



In a speech at Dakore, Gandhiji said:

The present Government is no Ramarajya; it is Ravanarajya. We learn the ways of wickedness under it. [*Ibid*, p.386]

Then in another speech at Broach, Gandhiji said:

I believe that the British Government is Satanic, has the nature of a demon.... For us today there is no dharma except Non-cooperation. [*Ibid*, p.414]

In his campaign to get students out of Government-run or Government-aided schools and colleges, Gandhiji faced stiff opposition from educationists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Srinivasa Sastri and the trustees of Aligarh Muslim University when he called upon them to reject financial aid from the Government and let the institutions be destroyed if necessary. [*Ibid*, pp.368-70]

The crux of the differences between himself and Malaviya and Sastri, Gandhiji said, was that "they believe that there is an element of goodness in this Government. I believe that it is a sinful one." [*Ibid*, p.414]

Most of the Moderate leaders who saw this "element of goodness" in the Government had already by the end of 1919 cut themselves adrift from the Congress and formed themselves into a Liberal Federation. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.189]. In 1920 the lines were still more sharply drawn. C. Y. Chintamani opted out. Surendranath Banerjea accepted a knighthood. Lala Harkishenlal of the Punjab fame accepted a Ministership in the Government. [*Ibid*, p.210]

But it was not the Moderates alone who had trained their guns at the Non-cooperation programme adopted by the Calcutta Special Session of the Congress. Various Home Rulers of Tilak's persuasion, such as G. S. Khaparde, whose position



during the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation too had been ambivalent, came out with a memorandum denouncing the programme as one that “affords no training ground for acquiring the kind of political-mindedness and temper necessary to carry on a substantial struggle in a peaceful and yet firm and orderly manner.” He rejected as futile the three boycotts recommended. He also criticized the change in the name and creed of the Home Rule League, effected at Gandhiji's behest, as “return to autocracy and personal rule”. [*Ibid*, p.205]

Annie Besant and her followers were similarly engaged. In a sustained campaign through public meetings they worked against Non-cooperation. At places Besant had to face hostile crowds and rowdiness, and Gandhiji had to raise his voice against the disrespect being shown to her. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.456-58]

15

In a communique published in *The Gazette of India* on 6 November, the Government spell out its policy towards the movement. Describing the movement as “a visionary and chimerical scheme, which, if successful, could only result in widespread disorder, political chaos, and the ruin of all those who have any real stake in the country,” the communique expressed the intention of the Government not to “interfere with the liberty of speech and the freedom of the press.” The Government, therefore, had “instructed Local Governments to take action against those persons only who in furtherance of the movement have gone beyond the limits originally set by its organizers, and have by speech or writing, openly incited the public to violence.” [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.204]

A Home Department note of 27 October 1920 argued that any repressive action



would certainly consolidate opinion in which there are many signs of division, it would weaken Moderates on whom the successful working of the Reforms largely depends, it would jeopardize the elections and inauguration of Reforms and if our experience of last year is to be trusted, might lead to a renewal of general hartals throughout the country followed by disorders comparable with those which occurred last year in the Punjab.... The gradual change from autocratic to responsible government cannot be effected without taking risk. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-Cooperation Movement, 1920-21", in R. Kumar, (Ed.) *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, p.302]

Calling the Government's decision "a triumph of non-violence" Gandhiji wrote in *Navajivan* of 21 November 1920:

I look upon it as a triumph of peaceful war, that is of non-violence. Had we decided to carry on the struggle through secret or open assassinations or by burning down buildings or removing railway tracks, we would not have succeeded in educating public opinion and would not have acquired the strength to speak out the truth courageously.... We have an instinctive feeling that, as we do not intend violence to anyone, no one will use violence against us either. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.10]

16

Along with non-cooperation, Gandhiji had presented to the nation a fourfold constructive programme. It consisted of:

1. Removal of untouchability, which was the worst form of exploitation. If Indians wished the British to cease exploiting them, the Indians must cease exploiting their own brethren, the so-called untouchables.



2. Hindu-Muslim unity was essential for winning swaraj. It implied equal respect for all religions.

3. Promotion of khadi, hand-spinning and hand-weaving was to provide some economic relief to the poverty-stricken masses. They produced their own food and cooked it at home. They produced cotton. Why could they not spin and weave and become self-supporting in clothes also? – Gandhiji asked. The two basic needs of life were food and clothing. To be self-sufficient in these would be a major step in self-rule or swaraj, he said.

4. It was important to put a little money in the poor man's pocket through spinning and weaving but it was still more important to ensure the right use of money. Drinking made beasts of men, it took away the money needed for the basic needs of the family. It led to ill health, accidents and crimes and reduced productivity. It took away power of clear thinking and resolute action. Prohibition of intoxicating drugs and drinks was, therefore, a must.

Gandhiji promised swaraj in one year if this fourfold constructive programme was honestly executed. He took it upon himself to educate the people in this regard. He went all over the country collecting money for the Tilak Swaraj Fund and propagating non-cooperation and the fourfold constructive programme.

Throughout November and December 1920, Gandhiji continued his whirlwind tour of the country, accompanied by the Ali Brothers and other leading Khilafatists like Maulana Azad. During the first fortnight of November he toured in Maharashtra, taking in Bombay, Nasik, Poona, Satara, Nipani, Chikodi, Hukeri, Sankeshwar, Belgaum, Dharwad, Hubli, Gadag, Sangli and Miraj, in that order. He spent the last ten days of the month in the U.P., going to Jhansi, Delhi, Mathura,



Agra, Aligarh, Banaras and Allahabad. [Chandulal Dalal, *Harilal Gandhi*, (Gujarati), pp.110-11]

In all his speeches and talks with groups of people, Gandhiji emphasized not only the importance of the triple boycott of the Councils, schools and colleges and law-courts, but also the positive work that needed to be done to promote Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability, promotion of spinning and weaving, without which the programme of boycotting foreign cloth could not succeed, and ensuring right use of the extra money so earned by prohibiting use of all intoxicants.

As he went along, Gandhiji developed a scathing indictment of British rule in India. At a students' meeting at Benares he explained why he called the British Empire Satanic: "An Empire which has been guilty of the atrocities in the Punjab, which killed children six or seven years old by making them walk in the heat, which dishonoured women, which has said that the officials who did all this had committed no crimes but had saved its rule – to study in the schools of such an Empire is, to my mind, the greatest *adharma* of all." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.28]

Dealing with the decline of education under British rule, Gandhiji went on: "Whereas in 1857 there were 30,000 schools in Punjab, there are 5,000 today. The Government did away with the rest." How could one think of receiving education in the universities of such an Empire? Therefore, he advised the alumni of Benares Hindu University: "Do not remain in this University for a moment longer, do not even breathe its air." [*Ibid*, pp.29-30]

Two hundred students of the University took a pledge not to pursue their education at the University and Gandhiji hoped they would be able to keep the pledge. [*Ibid*, pp. 30-31]. This was very upsetting for Madan Mohan Malaviya who tried his best to dissuade the students from non-cooperating.



Gandhiji advised the students to remain wholly non-violent. "On going out do not become aggressive, do not become wilful. Self-control is your dharma.... Adorn your Non-cooperation with humility." [*Ibid*, p.38]

18

In view of the situation created in India because of the Non-cooperation movement, the scheduled visit of the Prince of Wales had been deferred and instead it had been decided that the new Legislative Assembly would be opened by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, who was expected to arrive in India early in January 1921. Gandhiji wrote in *Young India*, on 1 December 1920:

It is a matter of great sorrow to me that I should have to advise a complete boycott of all public functions held in his honour.... His Royal Highness comes to sustain a corrupt system of government, he comes to whitewash an irresponsible bureaucracy, he comes to make us forget the unforgettable, he comes not to heal the wounds inflicted upon us but to mock us by flinging deceptive reforms at us." [*Ibid*, pp.53-54]

Gandhiji spent the first half of December touring Bihar and Bengal. He spoke at meetings at Phulwari Sharif, Patna, Arrah, Gaya, Chhapra, Muzaffarpur, Motihari, Monghyr and Bhagalpur and then went on to Calcutta and Dacca.

In the course of the campaign for the eradication of untouchability, which was part of the movement of constructive work and Non-cooperation, Gandhiji was faced with the question of legitimacy of the caste system. Answering correspondents who pleaded for the abolition of the caste system Gandhiji wrote in *Young India*, defending the postulates on which the caste system was based. While admitting that the innumerable sub-castes were often a hindrance, and the sooner there was fusion of them the better, he insisted that "the law of heredity is an eternal law and any attempt to alter that law must lead us, as it had



led before, to utter confusion.... Interdining, interdrinking, intermarrying," he went on "are not essential for the promotion of the spirit of democracy. I do not contemplate under a most democratic constitution a universality of manners and customs about eating, drinking and marrying. We shall ever have to seek unity in diversity." At the same time untouchability was "a sin of which the sooner Hinduism purges itself the better.... I know no argument in favour of its retention and I have no hesitation in rejecting scriptural authority of a doubtful character in order to support a sinful institution. Indeed I would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart." [*Ibid*, p.114]

The triple boycott remained the theme of Gandhiji's speeches at every stop in Bihar: "We cannot make our children righteous in schools controlled by unrighteous men. We cannot free our children from slavery by sending them to slave schools." [*Ibid*, p.125]. The rhetoric came straight from the heart. The passion, the fire in his words carried all before him.

19

Gandhiji found it necessary to insist again and again on the non-violent nature of the campaign – non-violent in thought, word and deed. But the ranks of the Non-cooperators were frequently lacking in that spirit. Cases of violence against those opposed to the movement had been reported in Bengal. The ears of a man who had exercised his vote in the Councils' elections had been cut off and night-soil had been thrown into the bed of a man who had stood as a candidate. Gandhiji was pained. Speaking at a meeting in Calcutta he said: "The liberty of faith, conscience, thought and action which we claim for ourselves must be conceded equally to others. Non-cooperation is a process of purification." [*Ibid*, pp.130-31]



Asked whether the Non-cooperation movement was not creating race hatred and whether the words "devilish", "Satanic", etc. used for British rule did not savour of unbrotherly sentiment, Gandhiji answered that the movement was not "creating" race hatred. It was giving "disciplined expression to it". Evil could not be eradicated by being ignored.

As to the words "Satanic" and "devilish", he agreed they were strong. "But they relate the exact truth. They describe a system, not persons. We are bound to hate evil, if we would shun it. But by means of Non-cooperation we are able to distinguish between the evil and the evil-doer." [*Ibid.* p.114]

Speaking to students in Dacca Gandhiji said:

It is a slave-owning state and do you imagine that a slave-owning state can possibly give you education in such a manner that you can break down the shackles that bind you in slavery ?... I am not now attacking the system of education, base as it is, imperfect as it is. I am simply attacking the aegis under which this imperfect, this base instruction is given to the youths of India.... It is disaffection I am spreading throughout the length and breadth of India. I say affection for this Government is disaffection to God. [*Ibid*, p.125]

Answering questions on the purposes of Non-cooperation, Gandhiji said it was self-purification and through self-purification the purification of the other party. He went on: "I want to bring down the Englishman from the superior heights from which he talks and to make him think of even the most ordinary Indian labourer as his equal..... On no other terms can the Englishman have a place in India." [*Ibid*, pp.130-31]

Presiding over an *Antyaja* (untouchable) Conference at Nagpur on 25 December, on the eve of the Congress session, Gandhiji expressed his resolve to



continue his fight against untouchability till the custom was eradicated. "While the practice remains in Hindu society," he said, "I feel ashamed and feel unhappy even to call myself a Hindu."

Yet Gandhiji was not then prepared to support a resolution to the effect that the *Antyajias* should be free to enter all the temples. "How is this possible?" he asked. "So long as *Varnashrama-dharma* occupies the central place in Hinduism, it is in vain that you ask that every Hindu should be free to enter a temple right now.... I am not even prepared to say that this betrays the Hindu's narrow outlook or that it is a wrong they are committing.... If their action is inspired by considerations of discipline, I would not say that everyone should be free to go into any temple." [*Ibid*, p.150]. His ideas on the subject continued to evolve and were to become far more radical a few years later.



CHAPTER XIII: THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT - II

SWARAJ WITHIN A YEAR

1

The Nagpur Congress of December 1920 stands out as a landmark in the history of the Congress organization. It took the commitment of the Congress to the Non-cooperation movement a decisive step further and it approved a constitution for the Congress which had been comprehensively and radically revised by Gandhiji. The Nagpur Congress was a total victory for him.

It was also an immense affair, perhaps the largest ever annual gathering of the Congress. The number of delegates was 14,582, of whom no less than 1,050 were Muslims and 169 women. C. R. Das, determined to put up a fight against the policy of Non-cooperation, had brought from East Bengal and Assam a contingent of delegates numbering 250, whose expenses amounting to Rs. 36,000, he defrayed from his own pocket. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.206]

The Congress was held from 26 to 31 December, 1920 under the presidentship of Vijayaraghavachariar. Jamnalal Bajaj was Chairman of the Reception Committee.

The most important part of the revised Constitution was the reformulation of the Congress creed. Article I of the revised Congress constitution read :

The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swarajya by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means.

The Congress gave one full day to the discussion of the Congress creed as revised by Gandhiji. Gandhiji reminded the delegates that till then the aim of the Congress had been to secure what was called " Responsible Government within



the Empire" and that that aim was sought to be pursued "by means consonant with law," which meant the law of the British Empire. But the Congress did not wish to submit to a Government which had perpetrated such naked injustice. The Congress, however, did not want to achieve its aim "by the power of the sword. We do not want it through falsehood or by sacrificing truth ... our means should be as pure as our aim." The resolution meant "that we pledge ourselves to secure swaraj and to adopt just, truthful and peaceful methods for the purpose." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.164]

A party in the Congress, notably Madan Mohan Malaviya and M. A. Jinnah, "wanted to limit the goal to swaraj within the British Empire only." But they were not able to get many votes and the resolution as moved by Gandhiji was passed. [*Autobiography*, p.501]

The next important innovation concerned the election of the All-India Congress Committee, "making that Committee practically the Subjects Committee, and the redistribution of India for the purposes of the Congress on a linguistic basis." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.430]. The number of members of the All-India Congress Committee, which would be elected by Provincial Congress Committees, was fixed at 350. This body was charged with appointing a Working Committee, consisting of the President, the General Secretaries, the Treasurer and nine others. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.197]

The Constitution also fixed the maximum number of delegates that each province could send to the annual sessions of the Congress. So far there had been no limit laid down to the number of delegates attending. As a consequence their number ran into thousands, frequently tens of thousands, and there was no way of distinguishing delegates from visitors. Now it was laid down that "the number of delegates shall be not more than one for every fifty thousand or its fraction of



the inhabitants of the province of its jurisdiction, including the Indian States therein." [*Ibid*, p.192]

The Congress passed the revised constitution, drafted by Gandhiji in pursuance of the decision taken at the Amritsar Congress the preceding year. The draft had been submitted to the A.I.C.C. in September and the delegates, therefore, had had enough time to study and debate it. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.288-90. For a summary of the Constitution, see Appendix III]

2

The resolution on Non-cooperation was moved by C. R. Das, who had opposed the programme at the Calcutta Special Session. It was supported, among others, by Lala Lajpat Rai, who had also been among its opponents earlier. This gives a measure of the success of Gandhiji's campaign, in the meantime, for public education and promotion of Non-cooperation and constructive work.

Men and women were seen in thick khadi clothes. The width of khadi in those days being insufficient for *saris*, women joined two pieces to make *saris*.

There were bonfires of foreign cloth and picketing of liquor shops, along with fraternization with untouchables.

The following extracts set out the main points in the Non-cooperation resolution passed at Nagpur:

This Congress, while reaffirming the resolution on Non-violent Non-cooperation passed at the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta, declares that the entire or any part or parts of the scheme of Non-violent Non-cooperation, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the present Government at one end and the refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put



in force at a time to be determined... and that in the meanwhile... effective steps should continue to be taken

1) to persuade students above 16 years of age and the parents of students below 16 years to boycott schools and colleges run or controlled by the Government;

2) to persuade trustees, managers and teachers of Government affiliated or aided schools and municipalities and local boards to help nationalize them;

3) to persuade lawyers to make greater efforts to suspend their practice and devote their attention to national service;

4) to persuade merchants and traders to carry out a gradual boycott of foreign trade and to encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving;

5) to organize Congress committees in each village or group of villages for the purpose of accelerating the progress of Non-cooperation;

6) to organize a band of national workers for a service to be called the Indian National Service; and

7) to take effective steps to raise a national fund to be called the All-India Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund.

The resolution went on to say:

This Congress congratulates the nation upon the progress made... especially with regard to the boycott of Councils by the voters... and claims... that the new Councils do not represent the country and trusts that those who have allowed themselves to be elected... will see their way to resign their seats.... The electors will studiously refrain from asking for any political service from such Councillors.



This Congress recognizes the growing friendliness between the police and the soldiery [on the one hand) and the people [on the other], and hopes that the former will refuse to subordinate their creed and country to the fulfilment of orders of their officers

And this Congress appeals to all people in Government employment, pending the call... for resignation of their service... openly to attend all popular gatherings while refraining from taking any active part therein....

This Congress desires to lay special emphasis on NON-VIOLENCE being the integral part of the Non-cooperation resolution... and this Congress is of opinion that the spirit of violence is not only contrary to the growth of a true spirit of democracy but actually retards...Non-cooperation.

The resolution concluded by calling upon all public bodies, in order that the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs might be repressed and *swaraj established within one year*, to devote their exclusive attention to the promotion of non-violence and Non-cooperation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, pp.576-78]

Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the historian of the Congress, writes:

The Nagpur Congress really marked a new era in recent Indian history. The old feelings of impotent rage and importunate requests gave place to a new sense of responsibility and spirit of self-sacrifice. People realized that if they would be free they must strike the blow themselves. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.210]

The response to the call for Non-cooperation, now so stridently raised by the Congress at its Nagpur session, was widespread and enthusiastic. The Deccan Nationalists, late converts to Non-cooperation, took up the constructive



programme in right earnest. Justice of the Peace Haji Yusuf Sobhani and Haji Mohammed Maneyar, gave up all connection with the Government. Many lawyers, led by L. B. Bhopatkar, gave up their practice and took up work for National Education. N. C. Kelkar led a band of young men to take up work against untouchability and against the drink evil.

In the Punjab Lala Lajpat Rai and Saifuddin Kitchlew threw themselves heart and soul into the work. They collected funds and started national schools.

In the U. P. Motilal Nehru was endeavouring to direct the widespread peasant unrest into constructive channels. In Bihar Rajendra Prasad was similarly engaged in pursuing the programme.

Early in 1921, in pursuance of the resolution passed by the Students Conference held at Nagpur in December 1920, students everywhere began to demand nationalization of education. By this they meant that educational institutions should forgo Government aid and break off any connection with the Government. All over Calcutta there was a spate of strikes. Bangbasi College, Ripon College, City College, were all affected. The students held meetings which were addressed by Bepin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das, Shyam Sunder Chakravarti and Wahid Hussain among others. They called upon the students to rise in thousands and win swaraj. They must not go back to their colleges until those institutions had become their own.

Throughout January 1921 the ferment in Calcutta continued. The stir spread to other areas. In Mymensingh, Faridpur, Pabna, Dacca and other towns students organized strikes and picketing and forced the colleges to close down.

[*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.136-39]



On 23 January 1921 Gandhiji paid a visit to Calcutta and addressed what newspapers described as "a monster meeting of students" at Mirzapur Park. C. R. Das presided at the meeting.

Gandhiji congratulated the students of Bengal "on the very magnificent response" they had returned to the call of the country. He, however, felt grieved that "the professors and educationists and the trustees of the great educational institutions" were not providing any lead to the students. The reason, he said, was that they were sceptics, they had not the religious fire of the people and the masses.

Referring to the National College C. R. Das proposed to set up, Gandhiji told the students:

You will not look to brick and mortar. You will not look to benches and chairs for inspiration, you will look to character.... And I promise you that you will then not be disappointed.

He called upon the students to take up spinning and learn Hindi. [C.W.M.G. Vol.XIX, pp.264-74]

In the Punjab Lajpat Rai, in a series of articles in his Urdu paper *Bande Mataram*, exhorted students to boycott university examinations and leave colleges. On 25 January, striking students of D.A.V. College, Lahore, joined by students from other colleges, marched from Lahore to Gujranwala, a distance of 40 miles.

That was because, the students said, Lahore had been placed under the Seditious Meetings Act and so Non-cooperation leaders could not address a meeting in that town. At Gujranwala Lajpat Rai and Rambhuj Dull Choudhary



addressed the students, and exhorted them to leave their schools and colleges forthwith.

The stir spread to other colleges of Lahore, such as Foreman Christian College, Sanatan Dharma College, Government College and the Law College. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.141-43]

As a concomitant of the boycott of schools and colleges run or aided by the Government, national educational institutions came up in many centres.

" In the course of less than four months," writes Pattabhi,

the National Muslim University of Aligarh , which was later named Jamia Millia Islamia and shifted to Delhi, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Bihar Vidyapeeth, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Bengal National University, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyalyaya and a large number of national schools of all grades, with thousands of students on the rolls, were started in all parts of the country as a result of the great impetus given to National Education. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.211]

Some of these institutions, like the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and the Kashi Vidyapeeth, are s till continuing. Some of the students who left their studies at that time, became outstanding life-long workers in the service of the nation. The names of Nagindas Parekh, Gulzarilal Nanda, Lal Bahadur Shastri, T. N. Singh, Maganbhai Desai and Pyarelal may be mentioned as illustrations.

The Gujarat Mahavidyalaya, which Gandhiji inaugurated on 15 November 1920 as a constituent college of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, had on its staff such luminaries as A. T. Gidwani, J. P. Bhansali, Kaka Kalelkar, S . P . Patwardhan and others.



The Gujarat Vidyapeeth played a very important role in promoting national education in Gujarat. Later, many more national colleges were affiliated to it and in 1923 the number of students on its rolls was 30,000.

The Civil Disobedience movements of 1930-31 and 1932 and the Quit India Movement of 1942 temporarily interrupted the work of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth. Later, after independence, it became one of the national universities with a charter from the Government of India. It continues to impart craft-centred and service-oriented education. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, pp.483-88 and 493]

The National College, Calcutta, established through the efforts of C. R. Das and J. L. Banerjee and opened by Gandhiji on 4 February 1921 [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, pp.319-22] and the Kashi Vidyapeeth, Benares, started by Shivaprasad Gupta and Dr. Bhagavandas and inaugurated by Gandhiji on 10 February 1921 [*Ibid*, p.347] similarly developed into great institutions.

The collection for the Tilak Swaraj Fund also proceeded apace. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had renounced his title of Rao Bahadur and who had been Chairman of the Reception Committee at the Nagpur Congress, donated one lakh rupees for the fund, while another donor, Bomanji, promised to contribute Rs. 10,000 every month till swaraj was attained. The Working Committee, which had been meeting every month, laid down rules for the disbursement of the Fund, providing that 25 per cent of the collection in a province would be sent to the Working Committee. Lawyers giving up practice and needing support would be paid out of the Fund sums in no case exceeding Rs. 100 a month; members of the National Service, set up at the Nagpur Congress would be paid Rs. 50 a month.

On 10 January 1921, the Duke of Connaught landed at Madras to begin his 40-day visit to India to inaugurate the Central and Provincial Legislatures formed



under the Montford Reforms scheme. He was welcomed by the newly-formed Government, led by the Governor, with great pomp and ceremony. But the city of Madras observed a complete hartal on the day and a mammoth meeting of citizens was held on the beach to declare boycott of the Duke's visit. A resolution called upon the people not to take part in functions and festivities arranged in honour of the Duke.

On 1 February 1921, the Duke inaugurated the new Bengal Council. As in Madras, Non-cooperators organized demonstrations against the visit. Meetings were held at no less than eight different places in the city where speakers expressed their disappointment over the Reforms. Gandhiji, Mohammed Ali and Motilal Nehru had specially come to address these meetings. The meetings passed resolutions declaring that the newly-elected Council did not represent the country and calling upon those elected to it to resign their seats immediately.

In a letter Gandhiji wrote to the Duke of Connaught shortly afterwards, he said:

For me it is no joy and pleasure to be actively associated in the boycott of Your Royal Highness's visit. I have tendered loyal, voluntary assistance to the Government for an unbroken period of nearly 30 years in the full belief that through that lay the path of freedom for my country....

We are not at war with individual Englishmen.... We do desire to destroy the system that has emasculated our country in body, mind and soul....

Your Royal Highness has come, not to end the system I described, but to sustain it by upholding its prestige....



The Non-cooperationists have come to the conclusion that they must not be deceived by the reforms that tinker with the problem of India's distress and humiliation, nor must they be impatient and angry.... He who will may see that this is a religious, purifying movement. We are leaving off drink. We are trying to rid India of the curse of untouchability. We are trying to throw off foreign tinsel splendour and, by reverting to the spinning-wheel, reviving the ancient and poetic simplicity of life....

We desire to live on terms of friendship with Englishmen but that friendship must be friendship of equals both in theory and in practice, and we must continue to non-cooperate, i.e., purify ourselves till the goal is achieved. [*Ibid*, pp.310-12]

On 7 February the Duke arrived in Delhi, where he was welcomed by the Viceroy and an assortment of Indian Princes and high officials in all imperial splendour.

On 8 February the Duke inaugurated the Chamber of Princes and on the 9th the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. In his speech the Duke, while admitting that on occasion force had been used to quell disturbances, repudiated in a most emphatic manner the idea that the administration of India had been or ever could be based on the principle of force or terrorism.

Making a personal observation the Duke said that since he had landed he had felt around him bitterness and estrangement between those who had been and should be friends. The shadow of Amritsar had lengthened over the fair face of India. He appealed to all, British and Indians, to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, "to forgive, and to join hands and to work together to realize the hopes that arise from today."



From Delhi the Duke went to Rawalpindi and on to Bombay on 21 February. Wherever he went, the masses observed complete hartal.

In Bombay, as in Calcutta, numerous meetings were held and resolutions passed appealing to the people not to associate themselves with the official functions of welcome to the Duke. The bullion merchants and the Sindhi Merchants' Association suspended their business. Handbills were distributed asking the people to boycott the visit. 1

5

Writing in *Young India* of 30 March 1921, Gandhiji proposed that Congressmen should concentrate their attention up to 30 June on getting:

1. One crore rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund;
2. One crore members on the Congress resister;
3. The spinning-wheel introduced in twenty lakhs of homes.

This programme, Gandhiji suggested, must be taken up without detriment to the other activities of Non-cooperation.

In order to register one crore members, Gandhiji estimated, workers would have to visit at least twenty lakh homes, counting five members to a family. These families could certainly be persuaded to take up one wheel each. [19 C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.492]

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bezwada (Vijayawada) on 31 March 1921 to review the work accomplished since the Congress at Nagpur and to chalk out the future programme. The meeting was a unique gathering, held against the background of tremendous mass upsurge. From villages far and near, no less than 200,000 people poured into Bezwada just to have a *darshan*



(glimpse) of Gandhiji. It looked not so much as a committee meeting as a special session of the Congress.

Gandhiji moved the first resolution laying down the programme as enunciated by him in the *Young India* article. In his speech he pointed out that in respect of those aspects of propaganda upon which they had so far concentrated, namely, giving up of titles, boycott of Legislative Councils, educational institutions and courts, there was no need for further concentration as the success already achieved therein had been in every way satisfactory. The Congress might, therefore, well trust to time for the movement to work its way fully.

In order to achieve the programme of swaraj within one year as laid down in the Nagpur Congress resolution, the Congress should concentrate on those parts of the programme that would lead the masses to the desired goal. The awakening among the masses, Gandhiji said, was phenomenal. They had come to realize that without swaraj their condition could not be improved. A direct means of improving their condition was to enable them to feed and clothe themselves. Hence the need to concentrate on the spinning-wheel movement.

The A.I.C.C. then passed the resolution, calling upon Congressmen to concentrate upon collecting one crore rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, putting on Congress registers one crore members, and introducing into villages 20 lakhs of charkhas, the whole programme to be accomplished before 30 June 1921.

The Committee considered the widespread repression let loose by the Government and the expediency and propriety of offering civil disobedience. There were vociferous demands from younger members of the Committee that civil disobedience should be started at once.

Gandhiji pointed out that civil disobedience as such had not been recommended in the Non-cooperation resolution passed at the Nagpur



Congress. He admitted that there had been repression in various provinces, which was quite unjustified. Yet he felt that civil disobedience could not be started till the country was ready. The fact was that notwithstanding the great progress made in non-violence there was still an element of what he called "mob law" operating.

The resolution as passed stated that "apart from the fact that civil disobedience is not expressly comprised in the Congress resolution relating to Non-cooperation, the country is not yet disciplined, organized and ripe for the immediate taking up of civil disobedience." [*Ibid*, pp.494-97]. The resolution advised those on whom orders might be served to conform to them. [*Ibid*, pp.494-97]

As soon as the A.I.C.C. meeting ended, the leaders hastened back to their respective provinces to take up the work chalked out by the A.I.C.C. and to build up district and village organizations.

Gandhiji proceeded on a hectic tour of South India, speaking at meetings at Cocanada, Rajahmundry, Ellore, Masulipatam, Chirala, Nellore and Madras. Everywhere he called upon people to work to fulfil the programme laid down by the Congress. At Madras he said:

If we want one crore rupees before the 30th June, we want it not in order to promote deputations to England or America or any part of the world, not for any foreign propaganda, but we want that money and more for introducing the spinning-wheel into every home in India. We want that money in order to pay a mere livelihood to the workers who will come out throughout the length and breadth of Dravid land to introduce the spinning-wheel.... I therefore hope that if you are going to be instrumental in attaining swaraj during this year, you will make.... a fixed determination



to throw away all the foreign cloth that you may possess. I hold it to be a crime to see an inch of foreign cloth in our temples, in our mosques....

Non-cooperation in the language of medicine is a kind of aseptic treatment. Antiseptics are necessary only when we first gather dirt and we want to introduce other germs to destroy that dirt; but aseptic treatment presupposes purity from within. Our non-cooperation with the Government, therefore, simply means we have done away with dirt and uncleanness. [*Ibid*, pp.543-48]

Gandhiji also used *Young India* and *Navajivan* to carry the Bezwada message to the people. At one place he wrote:

Men, money and munitions – these were the words in which Mr. Das summed up the All-India Congress Committee's resolution about one crore members, one crore rupees and twenty lakhs of spinning-wheels. This programme is neither elaborate nor intricate. It requires practically no sacrifice. It does require organization, will and industry. We have twenty-one Congress provinces, and, happily, each province has workers capable of organizing their respective provinces for the Congress programme. I would strongly advise them to devote themselves to the work of registering members, collecting subscriptions and introducing spinning-wheels.... We must be able to reach every adult male and female in our respective provinces and give them a chance of coming to the Congress register. [*Ibid*, p.556]

Mahadev Desai told us in the Aga Khan Palace how hectic was the touring of Gandhiji in those days. They often ended their last meeting past midnight and then there was the counting of money, sorting of coins and notes, entries to be made and proper arrangements made for its safe deposit. He narrated, "Bapu



asked me as I was completing this work one day, 'Mahadev, let us have prayers.' I looked at my watch; it was near 3 a.m. I asked him, 'Bapu, should I recite the morning prayer or evening prayer?' Bapu had not realized how late it was."

6

A parallel movement with an anti-Government thrust was the Akali movement going on in the Punjab at the time. The movement had actually started in 1919 with the formation of a Sikh League, and had as its object the securing of communal rights for the Sikhs. With the launching of the Non-cooperation movement the agitation among Sikhs also intensified. In October 1920, at a Sikh Conference, resolutions were passed demanding control of the Sikhs' religious and educational institutions. In November 1920 the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Comtnittee came into being. Determined to manage their gurdwaras and educational institutions themselves, the Sikhs were able, after some tussle with the Government, to secure control of the Golden Temple at Amritsar and the management of Khalsa College. But other gurdwaras in Amritsar, Lyallpur, Sheikhpura, Attock and Lahore still remained in the hands of Mahants who were by and large corrupt and creatures of the British rulers. The Akalis, the party of reformers, made it their mission to free these shrines from the hands of the corrupt Mahants. In most cases the Akalis were able to seize control of the gurdwaras without too much trouble. In several others they had to face resistance. In Taran Taran in January 1921 two parties of Sikhs clashed over the possession of the Gurdwara, resulting in two deaths.

One of the more important gurdwaras that the Akalis were determined to free was that of Nankana Saheb, at a distance of about 40 miles from Lahore. It was then in possession of Narandas, a Mahant of the *Udasi* sect and a thoroughly



degenerate individual. He carried a great deal of influence among the officials and the police, for he spent temple money to keep them in good humour.

Narandas was determined to resist by force any Akali attempt to take over the shrine and had been quietly smuggling arms into the Gurdwara. He also stored large amounts of petroleum and engaged as chowkidars some 500 *goondas* [hooligans] and Pathans.

On 23 February there was to be a *Khalsa Dewan* at the Gurdwara and parties of Sikhs started gathering for it a few days in advance.

On 20 February, an Akali *jatha*, led by Lachhman Singh and Dulip Singh quietly made its entry into the Gurdwara, and sat down to a recitation from the *Granth Saheb*. Immediately all the gates of the Gurdwara were shut, and according to a witness:

Attack began on the members of the *jatha* with rifles, *chavies*, *takwas*, revolvers, etc. by Mahant Narandas and his men who were hidden on the roofs and in the verandahs of the temple.... Most bodies were dragged to the North side of the Gurdwara, where they were burnt with wood and kerosene oil. The heads of many were cut. In these burnt heaps there were traces of arms, heads, legs and other parts of the bodies chopped into small bits. Practically the whole compound was full of blood where persons appear to have been cruelly and brutally butchered....

In all I believe about 150 brave and noble hearts sacrificed their lives to enable their other brethren to achieve their cherished wish of purging their oldest Gurdwara of the infamous Mahant.

Afterwards a party of 1,000 Akalis, led by Jathadar Kartar Singh, marched to the Gurdwara and insisted on being given charge of it. After some resistance they were able to take possession of it.



Narandas and seven of his men were tried and sentenced to death a few months afterwards. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.144(b-e)]

Gandhiji visited Nankana Saheb on 3 March and saw the ghastly scene. In a message to the Lahore Sikhs he said:

India weeps today over the awful tragedy. I am ashamed to find that there are men today who are capable of the crime committed by sons of India in that holy temple.

Gandhiji advised the Sikhs to refrain from any show of force in carrying on the Gurdwara movement.

He wrote:

There is no doubt that a large party proceeding to a gurdwara to take possession does constitute a show of force even though no violence is contemplated or intended. And in a well-ordered society no individual, except under a process of law, is permitted to dispossess by a show of force or any undue pressure, even a wicked man who has been ostensibly in possession of public property such as temples. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, pp.399-402]

7

The Government had declared that it would permit freedom of speech and freedom of the press in dealing with the Non-cooperation movement, so long as there was no incitement to violence. But this declaration largely remained on paper. As the Non-cooperation movement gathered momentum, repression in various provinces was let loose. The Seditious Meetings Act remained in force. [*Ibid*, p.144]. Important and responsible leaders were served with notices restricting their movements. In Bihar Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul Haq, Maulana Safi and Ram Binod and in the Punjab Rambhuj Dutt Choudhary and Dr. Saifuddin



Kitchlew were prohibited from attending public meetings under the Defence of India Rules. In Bengal, similarly, leaders of the movement were being served with notices not to deliver "public harangues". [*Ibid*, p.112]. In the Central Provinces, Lala Bhagwandin, Superintendent of the Swaraj Ashram at Nagpur, was tried, and on having declined to defend himself, sentenced to 18 months' hard labour. [*Ibid*, p.560]

In the U.P. widespread economic distress fuelled the fire of agrarian discontent. There were sporadic riots, provoked by the attempts of the landlords to levy illegal cesses on an impoverished peasantry with the help of local officials. The Government, which now had ministers drawn from the rural aristocracy, instead of redressing the grievances of the peasants, sided with the landlords. As a result the kisans rose up in revolt. Early in January a riot raged in the districts of Rae Bareilly and Fyzabad. In Rae Bareilly peasant demonstrators protesting against the arrest of three of their leaders were fired upon by the police. Seven persons were killed and many more wounded. Hundreds of kisans in the following days were thrown into prison. Jawaharlal Nehru, who hurried to the area with the intention of bringing peace to the restive countryside, was served with orders under Section 144 Cr. P .C. to leave the area. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.70-71, 145]

On 7 January, at Munshiganj, 10,000 peasants stormed the jail and looted the property of a zamindar. Throughout the month, intermittent rioting continued in Fyzabad, Rachrawan and Gosainganj. On hearing that one of the arrested peasant leaders was being taken away by the police by train, a crowd of 1,000 people lay flat on the railway track. The police fired buckshot to disperse it.

Motilal Nehru, Purushottamdas Tandon and other leaders set up the Kisan League and were able to bring the situation under control. [*Ibid*, p.145]



The U.P. Government declared in a communique that the Non-cooperation movement was revolutionary and anarchical and called upon Government servants to counter it. The communique was followed by circulars requiring the subordinate staff to fight the movement openly and with all their power. A circular dated 6 April addressed to all Commissioners said:

Orders already issued have authorized an extensive use of the restrictive powers conferred by the ordinary law. District officers are permitted to enforce the total prohibition of inflammatory meetings.... There is no reason why Collectors should not attend and address meetings of Reform Leagues and Liberal Leagues designed to oppose the movement.

In Lucknow, the Deputy Commissioner tried unsuccessfully to inaugurate an Anti-Revolutionary League. Later, an organization called the League of Peace and Order was set up under official auspices.

Section 144 and the Seditious Meetings Act and other such measures were used indiscriminately to gag expression of opinion. [*Ibid*, pp.17, 19, 21 and 160]

Gandhiji wrote:

Non-cooperation is a process of purification.... Its suppression, therefore, would amount to cooperation by coercion. Orders to kill the movement will be orders to destroy or interfere with the introduction of the spinning-wheel, to prohibit the campaign of temperance, and an incitement, therefore, to violence.... We must not retort. Inaction on our part will kill Government madness. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.488]

That no pains were to be spared to kill the Non-cooperation movement is further shown by the ludicrous counter-propaganda against the anti-drink programme of the Non-cooperation movement, launched by the Bihar



Government. It may be mentioned that Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, who had been made a Peer and had presided at the Bombay Congress in 1915, was the Governor of the Province. The Government propaganda emphasized "the value of wine both as a food and as a medicine. Many great men were wine drinkers, Moses, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Watt, Gladstone, Tennyson, Bismarck, etc." [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, p.160]

The story of police atrocities was repeated everywhere. In the Punjab the Seditious Meetings Act remained in force in most districts and in April a notification was issued declaring the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Sheikhpura as proclaimed areas.

In Nagpur, in the last week of March, at a Non-cooperation meeting people burnt their caps made of foreign cloth. This brought them into confrontation with the police. On 27 March some elements among the Non-cooperators looted and burnt liquor shops. On the 28th a police party under a European magistrate opened fire on the people. [*Ibid*, pp.17-18]

In February Maulvi Yakub Hasan, an eminent Khilafat and Muslim League leader, along with a few other Non-cooperation workers, was prevented from entering Malabar or holding meetings. Yakub Hasan defied Government orders and was imprisoned. This led to a hartal in Madras and other places.

In April, at a students' conference at Ottapallam, Non-cooperation workers were assaulted and beaten up by the police. At the end of the conference a large procession headed by T. Prakasam went through the streets of the city. The shopkeepers observed complete hartal. Two first-class magistrates resigned in protest against the police high-handedness. [*Ibid*, p.144(b)]



The immediate occasion for the Non-cooperation Movement was provided by the Government's attitude to the demands of Khilafat and the maintenance of the integrity of the Turkish Empire, and redress of the Punjab wrongs. Its larger purpose was to secure swaraj for the country. Regrettably, however, it was borne in upon Gandhiji and the Congress that Muslims, as a community, were not as enthusiastic about swaraj as about Khilafat. Nor did they share the faith in *ahimsa* (non-violence) as the underlying motive force of the movement, except as an expedient. There remained, therefore, mutual distrust between the two communities.

Gandhiji wrote:

The Mussalman masses do not still recognize the same necessity for swaraj as the Hindus do. The Mussalmans do not flock to public meetings in the same numbers as the Hindus.... Sufficient time has not passed for the national interest to be awakened among the Mussalmans. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.436]

The inadequate Muslim representation in the Congress was also a cause of worry and Muslims were demanding that for filling executive posts in the organization, the principles of the Lucknow Pact should be applied. Gandhiji supported this viewpoint. He wrote:

It [the Congress] must be the common meeting ground for all races and religions. Where Mussalmans do not come forward at all in spite of entreaty, the seats can be left vacant for want of candidates or filled in by others pending the appearance of suitable Muslim candidates. Some friends urge that we should just now think not of special claims, but only



of efficiency. Efficiency is undoubtedly admirable, but we can easily make of it a fetish.... Unity is more important than efficiency. [*Ibid*, pp.289-90]

Some among the Muslim leadership certainly looked upon the Non-cooperation Movement, not as a movement of communal unity, but as a movement of communal alliance to further a communal cause. At the conference of Majlis-ul-Ulema, held at Erode in South India between 2 and 4 April 1921 and attended by 5,000 Ulemas, Mohammed Ali was reported to have declared that should the Afghans invade India, Indian Muslims would side with the invaders and declare a *jehad* or holy war. A section of the Congress leadership was quite disturbed by the report. Lajpat Rai wrote three articles in his paper *Bande Mataram* condemning the view that Muslims should assist the Afghans should they choose to invade India. Gandhiji, defending Mohammed Ali, said that the Maulana could not have meant anything more than what he himself stood for, namely, that it would be a crime to help a Government which had lost the confidence of the people. He could not have meant that Indian Muslims should raise levies for the Amir. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.169-70; C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.58]

Nevertheless, the impression in Moderate circles and in the Anglo-Indian press was becoming stronger that the utterances of the Ali Brothers came very near to inciting violence. The matter also came to be raised in the British Parliament and Secretary of State Montagu promised to communicate with the Viceroy about it. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.169-70]

When Lord Reading, who had taken charge as Viceroy on 2 April 1921, was approached by Madan Mohan Malaviya with the suggestion to see Gandhiji, the Viceroy agreed and Gandhiji met Lord Reading in Simla several times between 13



and 18 May. According to an agreed statement issued by Lord Reading and Gandhiji, the conversations related to the causes of discontent in India.

In the course of the talks the Viceroy referred to the speeches of Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali and said they were inciting violence. Gandhiji was shown passages from the speeches and Gandhiji admitted that they were capable of bearing the interpretation that the Viceroy put upon them. He promised the Viceroy that he would see to it that the Ali brothers publicly expressed their regrets for the unintended incitement contained in the passages. The Viceroy said he would like to be shown the text of the statement intended to be made in this connection because the Government proposed to institute criminal proceedings against the Ali brothers in respect of the passages. Gandhiji showed the Viceroy a draft he had prepared and the Viceroy said if the Ali brothers signed the statement and had it published without delay, the proceedings would not be taken up. The Ali brothers' statement was published on 29 May. It read:

Friends have drawn our attention to certain speeches of ours which, in their opinion, have a tendency to incite to violence.... We therefore sincerely feel sorry and express our regret for the unnecessary heat of some of the passages in these speeches and we give our public assurance and promise to all who may require it that so long as we are associated with the movement of Non-cooperation, we shall not directly or indirectly advocate violence at present or in the future.

The Government of India in a communique the following day declared that "in view of the publication of these expressions of regret and promises for the future" they had decided to refrain from instituting criminal proceedings against them. [*Ibid*, pp.165-68; C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, pp.536-38]



Although Gandhiji publicly defended the Ali brothers against charges of violence of speech brought against them, not only by the bureaucracy but also by the Moderates and others, such as C. F. Andrews, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai, the fact remained that the Khilafat propaganda as carried on by the Muslim leadership was having a most deleterious effect on the behaviour of the Muslim masses everywhere, leading to mob violence and disturbance of peace.

One such outburst of violent passion occurred on 25 April 1921 at Malegaon in Nasik district. The population of this town consisted for the most part of Momins. A few of the local Khilafatists were arrested for carrying arms to a public meeting. They were convicted and fined, and failing to pay the fines were sent to prison. This led to a disturbance. When a city Sub-Inspector of Police with one or two other officials and four or five armed constables, tried to subdue the crowd, they were attacked and chased through the streets of the town. The Sub-Inspector and his men took refuge in a house. The crowd demanded that the owner of the house surrender the policemen. On his refusing to do so, some men from among the crowd brought ladders and climbed up the windows. The entrapped policemen fired in self-defence, killing several persons. The mob then brought kerosene and set fire to the house which harboured the policemen. Several other houses and a temple which stood in the area were burnt. The Sub-Inspector and one or two constables were caught, murdered and thrown into the fire.

The rioters then cut the telegraph wires and on the following day went on a rampage, plundering and burning houses. They marched to the *kutchery* (local court) and demanded the release of the six men imprisoned for not paying the fine, failing which they threatened to burn down the place. The official



capitulated and released the six men. Incendiarism continued, the houses of Hindus especially being made the targets. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.144(e-f)]

Gandhiji condemned the mob brutalities in the severest terms and said that the violence had put back the clock of swaraj. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, pp.54, 68, 171 and ff]

9

Tagore had been full of misgivings as regards the Non-cooperation Movement as a whole. In March 1921, he came out strongly against the boycott of schools and colleges. He wrote:

Our students are bringing their offering of sacrifices to what? Not. to a fuller education but to non-education. It has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation which at its best is asceticism, and at its worst is that orgy of frightfulness in which human nature... finds a disinterested delight in an unmeaning devastation.... The desert is as much a form of *himsa* (negligence) as is the raging sea in storm; they both are against life. [*Ibid*, p.539]

Answering Tagore in *Young India* of 1 June, Gandhiji wrote:

The present struggle is being waged against compulsory cooperation, against one-sided combination, against the armed imposition of modern methods of exploitation masquerading under the name of civilization.

Non-cooperation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil.



The Poet's concern is largely about the students. He is of opinion that they should not have been called upon to give up Government schools before they had other schools to go to. Here I must differ from him. I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training. I am firmly of opinion that the Government schools have unmanned us, rendered us helpless and Godless. They have filled us with discontent, have made us despondent. They have made us what we were intended to become – clerks and interpreters.... And if it was wrong to cooperate with the Government in keeping us slaves, we were bound to begin with those institutions in which our association appeared to be most voluntary....

But the Poet's protest against the calling out of the boys is really a corollary to his objection to the very doctrine of Non-cooperation. He has a horror of everything negative....

The Poet has been unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of Non-cooperation. We had lost the power of saying 'no' to the Government.... Non-cooperation is the nation's notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage [*Ibid*, pp.161-64]

Later, in October 1921, when the programme of swadeshi and boycott of foreign cloth was going strong and plying the charkha was more and more becoming the *mantra* for swaraj, the Poet again raised his voice. He deprecated the popular enthusiasm that was manifested as "slave mentality" and "blind surrender", and advised his readers to "reject anything and everything that does not appeal to our reason or heart."



Answering him again Gandhiji wrote:

When a house is on fire, all the inmates go out, and each one takes up a bucket to quench the fire. When all about me are dying for want of food, the only occupation permissible to me is to feed the hungry.... India is a house on fire.... It is dying of hunger because it has no work to buy food with. Khulna... the Ceded Districts... Orissa... Our cities are not India India lives in her seven and half lakh villages and the cities live upon the villages....

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appeal, is work and promise of food as wages.... Hunger is the strongest argument that is driving India to the spinning-wheel. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.287-91]

10

Gandhiji had promised swaraj within one year if the people all over the country would honestly implement the fourfold constructive programme. He called this fourfold programme, viz., Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability, khadi and prohibition, the four pillars of swaraj.

Hindu-Muslim unity implied equal respect for all religions and living one's religion rather than talking about it or fighting in the name of religion.

Removal of untouchability was essential to put an end to the worst form of exploitation in the name of religion. If India wanted Britain to stop exploiting India, Indians must stop exploiting their own weaker brethren.

Khadi was necessary to put a little more money into the pockets of the poor.



Prohibition was essential to ensure that the little extra money that came to the family would be used to meet the basic needs of the family and not be squandered on toddy (country liquor). Moreover, drinking took away the capacity for clear thinking and determined action, which were necessary if India was to become free and manage her own affairs.

The impact of the anti-drink campaign carried on by Non-cooperators was considerable. In a number of places picketers came under attack by the police. Such clashes occurred, for instance, at Dharwar and Matian. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.214]. At Dharwar the police opened fire on an unarmed crowd of picketers, killing several persons.

Gandhiji warned the Minister in charge of the transferred departments including excise under the new scheme of Dyarchy "that they will belie the traditions of the great party to which they belong if they do not courageously face the grave crisis that is overtaking the country and summarily close every liquor shop and refund the money paid in advance by the poor licence-holders." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.327]

On 6 July the Thana District Board passed a resolution, moved by Vithalbhai Patel, welcoming the movement for the abolition of the drink evil and appointing a committee, which would assist the movement by undertaking picketing on its own responsibility and also help liquor dealers who voluntarily closed their shops. Welcoming this initiative of the Thana District Board, Gandhiji called for a "simultaneous move on the part of the local boards and municipalities all over India," for the purpose of prohibition. [*Ibid*, pp.558-59]



On 8 July 1921, the 8th Khilafat Conference met in Karachi. The Conference was attended by 5,000 delegates and lasted three days.

Speaking at the Conference, Mohammed Ali referred to the "so-called apology of the Ali Brothers" and said the apology was primarily meant for the public, more specifically for Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who had entertained fears of an Afghan invasion of India, and was concerned with violence in general and not regarding any particular speeches.

The Conference passed numerous resolutions. One particular resolution, which provided the Government ground for action against the Ali Brothers, *inter alia* said :

... This meeting clearly proclaims that it is in every way religiously unlawful for a Mussalman at the present moment to continue in the British army and it is the duty of all the Mussalmans in general and the Ulemas in particular to see that these religious commandments are brought home to every Mussalman in the Army.

Furthermore this meeting also announces that if the British Government were to take any military measures against the Angora Government directly or indirectly, openly or secretly, then the Mussalmans of India will be compelled to commence the breaking of laws, that is, civil disobedience, with the concurrence of the Congress and to proclaim complete independence of India and the Indians and the establishment of a Republic for the Government of India. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.171-73]



CHAPTER XIV: THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT - III

1

On 28 July 1921, the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay to review the success achieved in working the Bezwada Programme which had held the field for three months from April to June, and to formulate the future course of action. In all 229 members from different parts of India attended the meeting which lasted three days.

The members expressed much jubilation over the fact that the Bezwada Programme had been an unqualified success. The amount of work done by Congress organizations throughout India during this period of three months was unparalleled in the history of the organization. The total collection for the Tilak Swaraj Fund amounted to one crore five lakh rupees. Province-wise collections were: Bombay Rs. 40 lakhs, Bengal Rs. 25 lakhs, Gujarat and Kathiawar Rs. 25 lakhs, Madras Rs. 4 lakhs, C. P. and Berar, Maharashtra and Bihar each Rs. 3 lakhs, U.P. Rs. 2^{1/2} lakhs, Sind and Delhi Rs. 2 lakhs each.

The boycott of foreign cloth had not been marked with the degree of success expected and the Committee, upon Gandhiji's urging, passed a resolution desiring "that all Congress organizations and those who sympathize with the national aspiration should concentrate their attention upon attaining complete boycott of foreign cloth by the 30th of September next, and manufacture of khaddar by stimulating hand-spinning and hand-weaving."

The resolution directed Congress organizations "to collect foreign cloth from consumers for destruction or use outside India at their discretion." [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.176-79]

Civil disobedience, as Gandhiji remarked, was on the lips of everyone of the members of the Committee. Gandhiji, however, felt that there was not yet the necessary atmosphere for such action. As he later wrote:



A full grasp of the conditions of successful civil resistance is necessary at least on the part of the representatives of the people before we can launch out on an enterprise of such magnitude. The quickest remedies are always fraught with the greatest danger and require the utmost skill in handling them. It is my firm conviction that if we bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no Government can resist. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.466]

The A .I.C.C., therefore in its resolutions expressed the opinion that civil disobedience should be postponed till after the completion of the programme referred to in the resolution on swadeshi, after which the Committee would not hesitate, if necessary, to recommend a course of civil disobedience. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, p.180]

2

In pursuance of the decision of the A.I.C.C., Congress workers set about earnestly collecting articles of foreign cloth from consumers to make a public bonfire of it on 31 July, the day decided upon for the purpose.

On 31 July in Bombay there was, according to an account, a tremendous gathering of some two to three hundred thousand people to witness the bonfire. The pile of foreign cloth collected had been ranged in an enormous circle about a mile in diameter and some three feet high. All sorts of foreign clothing, from rich brocade and silk saris to torn hats, coats, neckties and collars, were thrown into the pile. All the prominent provincial leaders who had gone to Bombay for the Congress meeting were present. Mahatma Gandhi came in the evening and at once applied a lighted match. The fire leapt up and went round the circle in a few minutes, and in about a couple of hours the huge pile worth crores of rupees had been burnt to ashes. As the flame leapt up and enveloped the whole pyramid,



shouts of joy resounded from every corner of Bombay, and a glow of freedom lit up the faces of the vast concourse. [*Ibid*, p.182]

Referring to the event Gandhiji wrote in *Navajivan*:

Bombay paid homage to Tilak Maharaj in a befitting manner. On Sunday, 31 July, about two lakhs of people performed a *yajna* and set fire to their filth.... Innumerable people, who had doubts as to the propriety of burning, doubted no longer. Not less than one and a half lakh articles were burnt. Those who still had black caps of foreign make on their heads felt ashamed when the sacrificial fire was lit and there followed a rain of caps.

The enthusiasm of the people on that day can hardly be described. The whole ground, overflowing with men and women dressed handsomely in white khadi caps and khadi clothes, gave one the impression that the entire population of Bombay had assembled there.

The flame that was kindled on that day symbolized the flame that is aglow in the country's heart today. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.472]

Gandhiji returned to the theme again and again. In *Young India* he wrote that it had been a noble act nobly performed. It had struck the imagination of the people as nothing else could have, so far as swadeshi was concerned. It had been as well that it was not rags that were burnt but some of the finest saris, shirts and jackets were consigned to the flames. Gandhiji was sure that it had been all for the good of the country. It would have been a crime to have given such things to the poor. The fact was that the majority of articles burnt had no correspondence with the lives of the poor. He hoped that the burning process would continue and spread from one end of India to the other and not stop till every article of foreign clothing had been reduced to ashes or sent out of India. [*Ibid*, p.486]



Jamnalal Baja] and Janakidevi, his wife, on that day consigned to the flames their finest clothes embroidered with gold and silver. The precious metal recovered from the ash heap weighed one and a half seers (3 lb.). Janakidevi writes: "Even the clothes of the idols in the family temple were not spared." [Janakidevi Bajaj, *Meri Jivan Yatra* (Hindi), Sasta Sahitya Prakashan, Delhi, 1956]

3

Burning of foreign cloth now more and more became the central theme in Gandhiji's speeches and writings as the country rallied with enthusiasm to the call. "If you wish to end the sufferings of workers," he told a meeting in Dibrugarh, "if you wish to guard the chastity of women and the ancient culture of India, then burn foreign cloth." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, p.21]

Writing in *Navajivan* on 7 August 1921, under the title "New Pledge" Gandhiji had given the call for giving up of foreign cloth before 30 September. But if this target was to be achieved, it was necessary that people revised their taste, reverted to simplicity and cut down their wants to a minimum. No Non-cooperator could afford to wear more than three articles of dress.

He wrote:

The Congress must cease to be a debating society of talented lawyers who will not leave their practice, but it must consist of producers and manufacturers, and those who would understand them, nurse them and voice their feelings. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.494]

There were protests from well-meaning friends against the programme of burning. C. F. Andrews gave expression to his intense shock at the picture of Gandhiji lighting the pile of foreign clothes in Bombay. He saw in the word "foreign" a subtle appeal to racial feeling. Besides, the success of the boycott call



was bound to result in the rising of the price of indigenous mill cloth, which would hit the poor. Andrews continued:

I was supremely happy when you were dealing great giant blows at the great fundamental moral evils, drunkenness, drug-taking, untouchability, race arrogance, etc But lighting bonfires of foreign cloth and telling people it is a religious *sin* to wear it, destroying in the fire the noble handiwork of one's fellow men and women.... I cannot tell you how different all this appears to me.

Writing in *Young India* under the title "Ethics of Destruction" Gandhiji wrote in answer:

I remember having thrown into the sea a pair of beautiful field-glasses, because they were a constant bone of contention between a dear friend and myself.... I can remember having broken to bits, when a young man, the loved bangles of my own dear wife, because they were a matter of difference between us. And if I remember right, they were a gift from her mother....

If the emphasis had been on foreign things, he said, it would have been racial, parochial and wicked. But the emphasis was on all foreign cloth. The restriction made all the difference in the world. He went on:

India is racial today. It is with the utmost effort that I find it possible to keep under check the evil passions of the people. The general body of people are filled with ill will.... I am transferring the ill will from men to things.

Love of foreign cloth had brought foreign domination, pauperism and shame to many a home. If destruction of foreign cloth was a sound proposition from the highest moral standpoint, the possibility of a rise in the price of swadeshi



cloth need not frighten anyone. Destruction was the quickest method of stimulating production. By one supreme effort and swift destruction, India had to be awakened from her torpor and enforced idleness. Gandhiji concluded:

... India is today nothing but a dead mass movable at the will of another. Let her become alive by self-purification, i.e., self-restraint and self-denial, and she will be a boon to herself and mankind. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.41-44]

4

Gandhiji had been thinking of simplifying his dress for some time. He was afraid that Muslims, especially Muslim women, might object to his wearing a loin-cloth, thus exposing his legs below the knees. On his way to Madras, Gandhiji had sounded Mohammed Ali and also taken his mother Bi Amma's permission earlier for making a drastic change in his dress. He wanted to do it in order to make his identification with the famishing millions of India even closer. On the early morning of 23 September 1921 he went to address a meeting of weavers in Madura, clad only in a loin-cloth. He explained that in Indian climate one hardly needed more clothing to protect the body during the warm months of the year. Gandhiji said:

Let there be no prudery about dress.... In order therefore to set the example I propose to discard at least up to the 31st of October my *topi* (cap) and vest and to content myself with only a loin-cloth and a *chaddar* (upper cloth) whenever found necessary for the protection of the body. I adopt the change because I have always hesitated to advise anything I may not myself be prepared to follow.

Gandhiji considered the renunciation to be also necessary for him as a sign of mourning and a bare head and a bare body was such a sign in his part of the



country. That the country was in mourning was more and more being brought home to him as the end of the year approached and there was still no swaraj. [Ibid, p.375]

The change in dress was indicated, Gandhiji told us in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp, to meet the argument of shortage of cloth. If most of the men could do with as little cloth as he, then there would be enough khadi for women. In the meantime production of khadi was to be increased by an all-out effort.

On 31 October 1921 Gandhiji took a further vow to spin for half an hour every day before the second meal, and forgo the meal in case he failed to do so. [Ibid, p.375]

Propaganda against liquor and picketing of liquor shops also formed an important item in the Non-cooperation programme. Gandhiji addressed numerous meetings of liquor contractors in Bombay and appealed to them to give up trade in liquor. He warned that the volunteers picketing liquor shops would not give up "their adopted task of picketing liquor shops" even at the risk of being imprisoned or shot.

5

On 14 September 1921, Maulana Mohammed Ali, while on his way to Madras in the company of Gandhiji, was arrested at Waltair. Shortly afterwards, on 17 September, his elder brother Maulana Shaukat Ali was arrested in Bombay.

Gandhiji did not then know why the brothers had been arrested. But his immediate protest rang throughout the country :

In imprisoning Maulana Mohammed Ali [and Shaukat Ali] the Government have imprisoned Khilafat, for the two brothers are the truest representatives of Khilafat.... Let us imitate the courage, the faith, the



fearlessness, the truthfulness and the vigilant incessant activity of the brothers. [*Ibid*, pp.98-99, 119 and 177]

The Governor of Bombay issued a communique a day or two later explaining that the arrest was in connection with the speeches made by the brothers at the Khilafat Conference held at Karachi on 8 July. The brothers were to be prosecuted for tampering with the loyalty of the sepoys. The Governor declared that the Government were no longer going to put up with such a thing and meant business. Gandhiji in a sharply worded article under the title "Tampering with Loyalty" – which was one of the three articles which featured in his prosecution later – challenged the Government, saying that the Governor of Bombay,

evidently does not know that the National Congress began to tamper with the loyalty of the sepoys in September last year, that the Central Khilafat Committee began it earlier, and that I began it earlier still, for I must be permitted to take the credit or the odium of suggesting that India had a right openly to tell the sepoy and everyone who serves the Government in any capacity whatsoever that he participated in the wrongs done by the Government. The Conference at Karachi merely repeated the Congress declaration in terms of Islam.... How can anyone having a spark of humanity in him and any Mussalman having pride in his religion feel otherwise than the Ali brothers have done? ... His Excellency's reference to the sedition of the Ali brothers is only less unpardonable than his reference to the tampering. For he must know that sedition has become the creed of the Congress. Every Non-cooperator is pledged to preach disaffection towards the Government established by law. [*Ibid*, pp.221-23]



On 4 October a manifesto signed by some 50 leaders headed by Gandhiji was issued. It said:

We, the undersigned, speaking in our individual capacity, desire to state that it is the inherent right of everyone to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to, or remaining in the employ of the Government, whether in the civil or the military department.

We, the undersigned, state it as our opinion that it is contrary to national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian and more especially as a soldier, under a system of government which has used the soldiery and the police for repressing national aspirations; as for instance at the time of the Rowlatt Act agitations, and which has used the soldiers for crushing the liberty of the Arabs, the Egyptians, the Turks and other nations who have done no harm to India.

We are also of opinion that it is the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood. [*Ibid*, pp.235-36]

The very second signature to this manifesto, after Gandhiji's, was Maulana Azad's. This manifesto was repeated from countless platforms by countless men and women. No action was taken by Government, which seemed to be stunned. They were, it would appear, quite unprepared for this country-wide defiance.

The diehards in the Government of India suggested that this defiance amounted to an open challenge to the Government which could not be overlooked. They demanded immediate arrest of Gandhiji.



When rumours of the impending arrest, which were well founded, reached Gandhiji, he wrote:

... I cannot conceive a more logical step than to arrest the author of the movement. The people will show their true courage and appreciation of non-violence and of imprisonments for the sake of one's religion and one's country as an honour to be prized not only by remaining absolutely peaceful but by refraining from hartals or any such demonstration.

He also called for more vigorous prosecution of the programme of swadeshi on the part of the people. [*Ibid*, pp.237-38]

But the arrest did not come, largely because of the intervention of Tej Bahadur Sapru who was then Law Member in the Viceroy's Council. In a note to the Home Department he advised that the Government should wait

for Mr. Gandhi to put himself palpably in the wrong, so as to make it impossible for anyone to say that the Government should ignore what he was doing.... We may reach a stage when a considerable body of opinion will have detached itself from Mr. Gandhi and the situation will then have become easier. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-Cooperation Movement, 1920-21" in R. Kumar (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, p.306]

But so far as the Ali brothers were concerned, the authorities went ahead with the trial. The accused were the two brothers, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Bharati Krishna Tirth, Shankaracharya of Sharada Peeth, Maulana Nisar Ahmed, Pir Ghulam Mujahid and Husain Ahmed Madni. The charges were criminal conspiracy under Section 120 B and abetment under Section 505 of the Indian Penal Code to cause Mussalman officers or soldiers to disregard their duty. The trial commenced on 26 September 1921 and ended on 1 November.



The accused refused to defend themselves and refused to recognize the court. They, however, made statements to explain their position.

The jury found the accused not guilty of the charge of criminal conspiracy. But they were variously found guilty of minor offences under Section 505 and other sections. While the Shankaracharya of Sharada Peeth was acquitted, the other accused were sentenced to terms of two years each under each of the charges. [H. N. Mitra, *op.cit*, pp.192-205]

Gandhiji called upon the people to "reiterate from a thousand platforms the formula of the Ali brothers, regarding the sepoys, and we must spread disaffection openly and systematically." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.221-23]

On 5 October 1921, the Congress Working Committee met in Bombay and passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee congratulates the Ali brothers and companions upon their prosecution, and having considered the Karachi Khilafat Conference resolution regarding military service under Government, the Working Committee is of opinion that the resolution virtually reaffirms the principle laid down by the Calcutta Special Congress and the Nagpur Congress last year that it is contrary to national dignity and national interest for any Indian to engage or remain in Government service in any capacity whatsoever. The Working Committee has been only deterred from calling out soldiers and civilians in the name of the Congress because the Congress is not yet ready to support those Government servants who may leave Government service and who may not be able themselves to find means of livelihood. The Committee, however, is of opinion that in pursuance of the spirit of the Congress Non-cooperation resolution, it is the clear duty of a Government employee, whether soldier



or civilian, who can support himself without Congress assistance, to leave such service.

The resolution regretted that the programme of the boycott of foreign cloth had not been fully carried out and said civil disobedience could not be authorized in any district or province where effective boycott of foreign cloth had not been brought about.

The Government on 27 July had made an announcement regarding the visit of the Prince of Wales in November. The Working Committee gave a call for "a general voluntary hartal throughout India" on the day of landing of the Prince. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, p.191]

On the instructions of the Working Committee, Mohammed Ali's speech at the Khilafat Conference at Karachi was repeated on 16 October 1921 from thousands of platforms in India.

6

While Gandhiji had been touring in the North-East, spreading the message of non-violent non-cooperation, in Malabar in the South, the Moplahs, a fanatically religious Muslim community of about a million, had on 20 August, risen up in revolt. The revolt, to begin with, was against British rule, of a kind which had sporadically been breaking out ever since its inception. The Khilafat agitation, and more particularly the Karachi resolutions of July 1921, had led the Moplahs to conceive of the movement as a *jihad* against *kaffirs*.

Some unjust changes by Hindu zamindars in land dispositions also created much hardship for the Moplah peasantry, leading to riots. The authorities sided with the Hindu zamindars.



On 20 August when the district authorities surrounded a mosque at Tiruvangadi and arrested three Muslim clergy, a crowd of 3,000 Moplahs at once collected. Firing had to be resorted to to disperse it. Another crowd collected demanding the release of the priests. In the scuffle two British officers were murdered. The mob then looted a railway station, uprooted the rails, burnt railway buildings and demolished railway culverts. Ernad Taluk rose in armed revolt and declared Khilafat Raj. Within the next few days 10,000 Moplahs raided Tirur, set fire to police stations and court buildings and plundered arms and ammunition. There was also slaughter of people. Regular looting of treasuries and police stations commenced in Nilambur, Manjari, Malapuram, Tirur, Palghat and other places.

T. Prakasam and T. V. Venkatarama Iyer, who had been sent to enquire into the outbreak, reported:

The existence of agrarian disputes in Malabar between landlord and tenant on account of the oppression caused to the tenants by rack-renting and ejection is a notorious fact.

In Malabar Muslim population is 30 per cent. In Ernad, the centre of the struggle, Muslims are 60 per cent.... Moplahs are a simple and honest people and their love of their religion is of a transcendental character. Fanaticism, which was a common characteristic of a Moplah in ancient days, had died out in most of the important centres. The outbreak was due to the blunder committed by the district authorities in besieging the mosque in Tirurangadi for seven hours. This enraged the fanatic section of Moplahs in Ernad, which had been kept away from the non-violent programme of the Congress and the Khilafat movement. The news about



desecration of a place of worship spread like wildfire and in the course of a few hour reached Tanur, Tirur and other places. [*Ibid*, pp.825-27]

Several Europeans were killed. Hindu houses and temples were desecrated, blackmail was levied and there were widespread reports of forcible conversions. On the 25th a sum of six lakh rupees was looted from the Ernad treasury. On the 26th there was the "battle of Pookootur" which lasted for five hours, the Moplahs having dug themselves into trenches, fully armed with modern weapons. Of a thousand strong mob some 400 lay dead as a result. The British regiment also sustained losses.

On 26 August Martial Law was declared. More British troops poured into Malabar. Gradually the rebels began to surrender. But in the interior the trouble continued, with pillage, arson and forcible conversion of the Hindus.

In all about 4,000 Moplahs were killed and tens of thousands were injured and captured, while fewer than a hundred British troops were killed. [*Ibid*, pp.186-88]

Gandhiji believed that one of the reasons for the Moplah violence not having been quickly controlled was that "Non-cooperators were deliberately prevented from going to those parts by the authorities" and that

it was open to the Government...to invite Ali brothers and me to enter the disturbed area and give us an opportunity to procure calmness and peace in that disturbed land. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, p.120]

He went on:

The desolation of the Hindu households shows clearly to me that the message, the healing message, of non-violent Non-cooperation had not penetrated Moplah households in that area. [*Ibid*, p.356]



"The Moplahs," Gandhiji wrote on another occasion, were never particularly friendly to the Malabar Hindus. They had looted them before. Their notions of Islam were of a very crude type. They were kept in utter darkness by the Government and neglected by both Mussalmans and Hindus. Being wild and brave but ignorant, they have mistaken the mission of the Khilafat and acted in a savage, inhuman and irreligious manner. [*Ibid*, p.120]

The Hindu conscience was of course outraged by the Moplah atrocities and especially by the forcible mass conversions of Hindus and some were crying for the Moplahs' blood. Gandhiji appealed to them to be calm, for "their religion does not teach them to condemn whole classes of people for the faults of a few." [*Ibid*, p.513]

While Gandhiji could pacify the Hindus he could do nothing to protect the Moplahs from Governmental vengeance. He reproduced a letter in *Young India* reporting how Moplah prisoners, according to Government's own admission, were transported in sealed goods wagons. The correspondent cited an instance when 127 full-sized men were pushed into an iron van 18 ft. by 9 ft. and 7½ ft. high and sealed up without door or windows open, covered goods fashion. The dimensions yielded an area of 162 sq. ft. for 127 men. They could not possibly sit down. All standing, they could just fill the space tight. This crucifixion lasted not much over six hours. [*Ibid*, pp.542-43]

The Non-cooperation movement was a programme of education of the masses and inculcation among the people of a spirit of defiance of authority, which was now in evidence all over India.



Chirala-Perala in Andhra was a case in point. Chirala-Perala was a small coastal village with a population of about 15,000. The Government, or more precisely the Minister for Local Self-Government, the Raja of Panagal, decided that the village should have a municipality. The villagers resisted. The municipality meant for them "certainly not better sanitation, for the place was unusually well kept by the people themselves; certainly not more education, for the people were Non-cooperators. It meant more taxation, more interference with their liberty. This was an intolerable evil for the people." [*Ibid*, pp.16-17]

On Gandhiji's advice they left the village and put up huts on a piece of ground outside the municipal limits. The Minister thereupon imposed a penal cess on every shed raised by the people. The people lived in these huts for about ten months. In the meantime their leaders, including Gopalakrishnaiyya, a prominent Andhra Congressman, were imprisoned one after another. Some of them were coaxed and cajoled into accepting the idea of the municipality. In the end the people had to give in. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.219]

8

When the A.I.C.C. met in Delhi on 4 November 1921, the issue of civil disobedience again came up. Gandhiji conceded that tremendous headway had been made in the course of carrying out the non-violent Non-cooperation programme. Even so, he felt, mass civil disobedience was a gigantic step, a civil revolution, and it could only be undertaken after full and careful preparation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, p.229]

The A.I.C.C. passed a resolution, moved by Gandhiji to the following effect:

Whereas there is not much over one month for the fulfilment of the national determination to establish swaraj before the end of the year... and



whereas it is desirable for the nation to demonstrate its capacity for further suffering and discipline... the All-India Congress Committee authorizes every province on its own responsibility to undertake civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes... subject to the following conditions:

1. In the event of individual civil disobedience, the individual must know hand-spinning, ... he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only hand-spun and hand-woven garments, must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity... as an article of faith, must believe in non-violence... and if a Hindu, must by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon nationalism.

2. In the event of mass civil disobedience, a district or a tehsil should be treated as a unit, and therein a vast majority of the population must have adopted full swadeshi... and must believe in and practice all the other items of non-cooperation.... [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.412-13]

The members from Maharashtra, such as Abhyankar, M. S. Aney and Jamnadas Mehta, were not whole-heartedly in favour of the programme of civil disobedience. [*Ibid*, pp.413-14]

Gandhiji called the decision to launch civil disobedience momentous , for it was a declaration of rebellion, a non-violent rebellion. He wrote:

An out and out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the State. He becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every unmoral state law. Thus...he may refuse to recognize the authority of the State in his daily intercourse. He may refuse to obey the law of trespass and claim to enter military barracks in order to speak to the soldiers. [*Ibid*, p.414]



The omens, however, did not appear favourable for the starting of civil disobedience. While the Non-cooperation movement had been a success, it had not been an unqualified success, for at places it had been marred by rowdiness and violence. In Malegaon, in April 1921, delirious crowds, protesting against the arrest of Khilafat activists, had clashed with the police and murdered a Sub-Inspector and four constables. Gandhiji described it as a heinous crime and said it had caused a setback to swaraj. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, pp.54, 68, 70-72 and ff]. Then in July a mob had indulged in incendiarism at Aligarh, provoking the police to resort to firing, with resultant casualties. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.415-16]

Hence Gandhiji's admonition to the Provincial Congress Committees, notwithstanding the A.I.C.C. resolution authorizing civil disobedience, to put due emphasis on the words "its own responsibility" in the resolution and not start civil disobedience with a light heart. He wrote:

Every condition must be given its full effect. The mention of Hindu-Muslim unity, non-violence, swadeshi and removal of untouchability means that they have not yet become an integral part of our national life. If an individual or a mass have still misgivings about the necessity of non-violence for the attainment of our triple goal, if they have not yet enforced swadeshi in its completeness, if the Hindus among that mass are having still the poison of untouchability in them, that mass or that individual is not ready for civil disobedience. [*Ibid*, pp.415-16]

The visit to India of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII), which was scheduled for September 1921 and was then postponed, took place in the third week of November.



In a message to the people of Bombay, where the Royal visitor was to land on 17 November, Gandhiji made an appeal that:

1. Not even a child should attend any celebration arranged in honour of the Prince of Wales;

2. No one, young or old, should attend any entertainment programme even if admission to it was free....

3. No man or woman should stir out of the house at all on the 17th without some unavoidable work.

4. Even by mistake one should not go out of curiosity to see what was happening, in the direction of the place where a celebration in honour of the Prince had been arranged.

5. Everyone should stay at home and spin and, if one did not know spinning, concentrate on it for eight hours and learn it from someone.

6. Everyone should spend some time at any rate in singing devotional songs or in prayer....

At the hour when the Prince landed, a bonfire of foreign cloth should be lighted. For this purpose collection of foreign cloth should be started.

8. If the trains, etc., were running, no passenger should be forcibly dragged out.

9. Workers must not stop work without obtaining prior leave.

Gandhiji concluded: "We can be fit for swaraj only if everyone is free to do what he chooses in every matter...." [*Ibid*, pp.435-36]



When the Prince landed, the bonfire of foreign cloth was duly lighted as planned. There was complete hartal in the city and a large public meeting was held at which Gandhiji also spoke. [*Ibid*, pp.459-61]

But even as the meeting proceeded, elsewhere in the city violent rioting started. A little while later in the day Gandhiji was writing to a conespondent:

It grieves me to tell you that. a violent riot has broken out in Bombay. Wine shops have been burnt down. One of them is still burning as I write this. Innocent people have been harassed and their clothes forcibly removed. A tram has been smashed and lamps have been broken. Personally I feel that the people have crossed all bounds. Six policemen have lost their lives. A few of our people have also died. We have had a foretaste of swaraj. I have been put to shame. [*Ibid*, p.461]

The following day, writing under the caption "A Deep Stain", Gandhiji expressed his shock that at the very time that the Prince had been passing through the decorated route and the pile of foreign cloth had been burning, in another part of the city the mill-hands had been, in criminal disobedience of the wishes of their masters, emptying the mills one after another by force, that a swelling mob had been molesting peaceful passengers in the tram-cars and holding up the tram traffic. They had burnt tram-cars and a motor, smashed some liquor shops and burnt two.

He continued :

... I motored with some friends to the area of disturbance and heard the most painful and the most humiliating story of molestation of Parsi sisters. Some were assaulted and even had their saris torn from them....



As I reached the Two Tanks I found a liquor shop smashed, two policemen badly wounded and lying unconscious on cots without anybody caring for them....

The crowd did not consist of hooligans only or boys. It was not an unintelligent crowd. They were not all mill-hands.... And it was not a crowd but several crowds numbeaing in all not less than twenty thousand. It was bent upon mischief and destruction. [*Ibid*, pp.462-65]

On the very first day of the rioting six policemen and a few volunteers lost their lives. [*Ibid*, p.461]

The rioting continued for several days, "resulting in the death of 53 persons and the wounding of 400 approxmalely." [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.221]. Sarojini Naidu, Azad Sobhani, M. R. Jayakar, Jamnadas Mehta, Dr. D. D. Sathye, Mozam Ali and a large number of other workers tried their best to stem the violence and bring peace to the city, but their efforts were largely unavailing .

It seems that Parsis, Christians and Jews had joined to welcome the Prince. This had angered the Khilafat and Non-cooperation volunteers, who had therefore taken to violence.

In a letter to Bombay citizens, written at 3.30 a.m. on 19 November, Gandhiji gave vent to his agony and declared that he would not eat or drink anything but water till Hindus and Muslims made peace with Parsis, Christians and Jews and the Non-cooperators with the cooperators. He continued :

The swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils, Hindu-Muslim unity has been a menace to the handful of



Parsis, Christians and Jews. The [so called) non-violence of Non-cooperators has been worse than the violence of cooperators.

Gandhiji addressed a special word to the Muslims :

The Mussalmans have to my knowledge played the leading part during the two days of carnage. It has deeply hurt me. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, p.469]

The fast was broken on the 21st, following assurance of good behaviour from, and in the presence of, members of the various communities. [*Ibid*, pp.466-67]

The rioting in Bombay had underscored the fact that, let alone the moral necessity of non-violence, people had not understood even the political wisdom of it. Rioters had used the mass awakening resulting from the Non-cooperation Movement for their own lust for plunder and rapine and even indulged in their worst animal appetites. [*Ibid*, pp.468-69]

This certainly did not provide a suitable climate for the pursuit of the programme of civil disobedience.

During the Bombay disturbances the Congress and Khilafat volunteers had been very much in evidence in the streets. So far as the Congress volunteers were concerned, they had done commendable work in restoring peace even at the risk of their own lives. Paying tribute to their exemplary behaviour Gandhiji wrote :

Workers have lost their lives or limbs, or have suffered bruises in the act of preserving peace, of weaning mad countrymen from their wrath. These deaths and injuries show that, in spite of the error of many of our countrymen, some of us are prepared to die for the attainment of our goal. [*Ibid*, pp.492-93]



The Khilafat volunteers were, however, a different organization. They were somewhat flashy, parading in uniforms. They "drilled and marched in mass formation" [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.221] and they showed a militant streak. The Government charged that they were assemblies to use force, not to keep peace.

10

Unlike in Bombay, in Calcutta the hartal on 17 November in response to the Congress call was most successful and peaceful. The city wore a deserted look. All bazars were closed. There were no trams or any other vehicles running. All mills were closed and the mill-hands occupied themselves with singing *bhajans* or bathing in the river. The courts and Government offices remained closed. Even the High Court did not function because the lawyers abstained from attending courts. Railway stations and goods sheds were similarly deserted. Doctors took permits from the Congress office to ply their cars to attend to emergencies. No riot or street brawl was reported from any quarter. In controlling crowds the functions of the police were completely taken over by Congress and Khilafat volunteers.

There were similarly peaceful hartals in all the major towns of India and no violent incidents were reported.

This demonstration of the power of non-violent Non-cooperation made C. R. Das and Maulana Azad happy and they wrote about it to Gandhiji but it made the Europeans and Eurasians jittery and vengeful. The European Association of Calcutta and the Bengal Chamber of Commerce demanded action.

The Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Government :

The organization which has taken upon itself to exercise control over the city should be broken up, and the wearing of its uniform and badges



should be prohibited. The police should be given fuller powers to deal with provocative exhibitions of insolence such as the display of Khilafat banners and the placarding of motor-cars with the words 'On National Service'.

The Government were all too ready to oblige. On 19 November 1921, the Governor of Bengal issued a proclamation asserting that in the opinion of the Governor "the movement has now gone beyond all limits of permissible agitation" and declaring "the Bengal Non-cooperation Volunteer Corps, the Central Mohammedan Volunteer Corps, the Congress Committee Corps and other associations existing in the presidency of Bengal" unlawful associations.

Raids on Congress and Khilafat offices followed. Papers, documents, account books, etc. were taken away by the police. On 30 November, the Commissioner of Police by proclamation suppressed all public assemblies and processions for three months in and around Calcutta.

On 21 November, Governor Ronaldshay (later Lord Zetland) declared in the Bengal Council :

The time has come when men have got to come down on one side of the fence or the other. Those who are not on the side of law and order are on the side of revolution: and revolution means anarchy. The Government of Bengal will not hesitate to make use of all the powers which it possesses to quell disorder .

Enrolment as volunteers was made illegal.

In defiance of the official proclamation thousands of Calcutta nationalists signed a manifesto calling upon people to enrol themselves as members of the Bengal National Volunteer Corps.



The other Provincial Governments quickly followed the lead of Bengal. On 23 November the Seditious Meetings Act was brought into force in Delhi, while simultaneously the Volunteers' Association was declared illegal. Similar steps followed in the Punjab, the U.P. and Assam. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.226-34]

11

The Congress Working Committee met in Bombay on 23 November to take stock of the situation. C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Lala Lajpat Rai, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Umar Sobhani and N. C. Kelkar were among those present. The most important resolution passed by the Committee was one concerning the Volunteers. It ran as follows :

This Committee considers it of national importance that all Non-cooperation Volunteer Corps, Khilafat Corps and other non-official volunteer bodies should be brought under national control and named the National Volunteer Corps, and, therefore, advises Provincial Congress Committees to appoint Central Boards in their provinces....

The duties of volunteers shall be to preserve order, regulate meetings, hartals and processions, and to render social services in emergencies in accordance with the instructions given to them. No volunteer shall be enlisted who is known to be a bad character.... The Khilafat volunteers should also form part of the National volunteers and be subject to control of the Central and Provincial Boards. No one under eighteen shall be enlisted as a volunteer.

The volunteers were required to sign a pledge that so long as they remained in any volunteer organization they would faithfully and diligently carry out all instructions and adhere to non-violence in word and deed. [*Ibid*, pp.236-37]



Taking up the theme in *Young India*, Gandhiji wrote:

The notifications of the Bengal, the U.P., the Punjab and the Delhi Governments disbanding volunteer organizations are an answer to Bombay.... If we are ready for the Government challenge, we can have an immediate trial of strength. It is one of the beauties of civil disobedience that a civil resister can choose his own time of battle....

Gandhiji added that if the Provinces where the notifications had been issued were ready, they had merely to refuse to disband and every one of the volunteers would find himself in jail. But the volunteers must be sure of their ground. The allegation against the Corps was that they were assemblies to use force and not to keep peace. Their first duty was to examine the charge and purge themselves of guilt if there was any in them.

Gandhiji at the same time made it clear that no province would be justified in taking the risk of an outbreak of violence and precipitating imprisonments by disregarding the orders of disbandment. "We shall lose nothing," he wrote, "by waiting to stabilize non-violence." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.414-15]

The leaders, as soon as they returned from Bombay, took up the work of reorganization of volunteers in their respective provinces.

In a message to Congress workers on 2 December C. R. Das said:

The Congress work is done and can only be done by volunteers. Let it be clearly understood that every worker, young or old, man or woman, is a volunteer. I offer myself as a volunteer in the service of the Congress. I trust that within a few days there will be a million volunteers for the work of the Province....



My first word and my last word to you is never to forsake the ideal of non-violent Non-cooperation.

But Government action to suppress the movement was already underway. In the Punjab when Pandit K. Santhanam on 1 December informed the Government that the people of Lahore had decided to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales, Government struck at once, arresting Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr. Gopichand Bhargava, Malik Lal Khan, Pandit K. Santhanam, S. E. Stokes and others. The offices of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee were searched and papers and documents taken away.

In Bengal on 6 December Chiraranjan Das, the young son of C. R. Das, went out with a few other young men and raised slogans calling for a hartal on 24 December, when the Prince of Wales was expected in Calcutta. He was promptly arrested and beaten up by the police.

The following day, Basanti Devi, wife of C. R. Das, along with a few other ladies went out, hawking khadi and calling for a hartal on the 24th. They were immediately placed under arrest. They were released the same night under orders of the Governor.

On 8 December, the Governor having made one last effort to persuade C. R. Das to withdraw the boycott call and Das having expressed his inability to do so, he was arrested on 10 December. Other leaders to be arrested were Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, B. N. Sasmal, Subhas Chandra Bose and Ambika Prasad Bajpai. The offices of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were searched and the local Congress and Khilafat offices were raided. Armed police and European sergeants paraded the streets of the city and the Indian quarter of the town looked as if it had been placed under martial law.



In the U. P., where the Prince of Wales was scheduled to arrive on 12 December, the story was the same. To make the visit smooth, the Government on 6 December put Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Shamlal Nehru, Mohanlal Nehru and George Joseph under arrest. Motilal Nehru was summarily tried the next day and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru and others were similarly sent to prison for six months. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.236-48]

When on 12 December, the Prince arrived in Allahabad, there was complete hartal in the town, all shutters of houses remained closed. Streets were deserted, except for the Anglo-Indian crowd and children from Government schools. [*Ibid*, p.46]

The Nation and the Athenaeum wrote:

... the Prince, when he reached Allahabad, was greeted by five miles of deserted streets, and by scarcely any bunting. He is said to have resented the insult.... He ought to have known that such an insult was possible at any moment of the tour. The spirit of self-sacrifice in Indians is often spasmodic and temporary, but while it lasts it is supreme, nothing can stand against it, and at the moment of writing most of the educated population is ready to go to jail. [*Ibid*, p.271]

The trial of both Deshabandhu C. R. Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad dragged on for over three months. C. R. Das was given two years' imprisonment. Maulana was sorry that he had been awarded only a year's imprisonment. Before his conviction he made a telling statement before the court. It was in the Maulana's chaste and polished Urdu the beauty of which no translation could



convey. It covered over thirty-three closely typed foolscap sheets. A few passages are quoted as a sample:

The iniquities of courts of law constitute an endless list and history has not yet finished singing the elegy of such miscarriages of justice. In that list we observe a holy personage like Jesus, who had to stand in his time before a foreign court and be convicted even as the worst of criminals. We see also in the same list Socrates, who was sentenced to be poisoned for no other crime than that of being the most truthful person of his age. We meet also the name of that great Florentine martyr to truth, the inventor Galileo, who refused to belie his observations and researches merely because their avowal was a crime in the eyes of constituted authority.... When I ponder on the great and significant history of the convicts' dock and find that the honour of standing in that place belongs to me today, my soul becomes steeped in thankfulness and praise of God.

The bureaucracy in India is nothing more nor less than the domination which powerful individuals will always normally attain over a nation decaying by its own neglect and internal weaknesses.... Such dominant authority cannot possibly countenance any nationalistic awakening or agitations for progress, reform or justice. And as such an agitation would spell the inevitable downfall of its dominant power, it seeks to kill all agitation by declaring it a crime against constituted authority.... An awakened nation aspires to attain what it considers its birthright, and the dominant authority would fain not budge an inch from its position of unquestioned sway.

... I fully admit that I am not only guilty of such agitation, but that I belong to that band of pioneers who originally sowed the seed of such



agitation in the heart of our nation and dedicated their whole lives to the cherishing and breeding of this holy discontent.

It is my belief that liberty is the natural and God-given right of man. No man and no bureaucracy consisting of men, has got the right to make the servants of God its own slaves. However attractive be the euphemisms invented for 'subjugation' and 'slavery', still slavery is slavery, and it is opposed to the will and the canons of God. I therefore consider it a bounden duty to liberate my country from its yoke Liberty being the primary right of man, it is nobody's personal privilege to prescribe limits or apportion shares in the distribution of it.

Such is my duty as a man and as an Indian, and religious injunctions have imposed upon me the same duty. In fact, in my view the greatest proof of the truth of my religion is that it is another name for the teaching of the rights of man. I am a Mussalman, and by virtue of being a Mussalman this had become my religious duty. Islam never accepts as valid a sovereignty which is personal or is constituted of a bureaucracy of a handful of paid executives. Islam constitutes a perfected system of freedom and democracy. It has been sent down to get back for the human race the liberty which has been snatched away from it.

The sovereignty of the Prophet of Islam and of the Khalif was a perfected conception of democratic equality, and it could only take shape with the whole nation's free will, unity, suffrage and election. This is the reason why the sovereign or president of a republic is like a designated Khalif; Khilafat literally means nothing more nor less than a representation, so that all the authority a Khalif possesses consists in his representative



character, and he possesses no domination beyond this representative authority.

If then Islam defines it as a duty of Mussalmans to refuse to acknowledge the moral justification even of an Islamic government if full play is not granted in it to the will and franchise of the nation, it is perfectly superfluous to add what under Islam would be the ruling given about a foreign bureaucracy. If today there was to be established in India an Islamic government, but if the system of that Government was based upon personal monarchy or upon bureaucratic oligarchy, then to protest against the existence of such a government would still be my primary duty as a Mussalman. I would still call the Government oppressive and demand its replacement.

The holy Prophet of Islam has preached the following doctrine to the Mussalmans : 'That man is blessed with the best of deaths who proclaims the truth in the face of a tyrannical administration and is slaughtered in punishment for this deed.' [Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, pp.49-53]

Gandhiji hailed the statement "as an eloquent thesis giving the Maulana's views on Khilafat and Nationalism," and "an oration deserving penal servitude for life."

On 1 December Harilal Gandhi and some others courted imprisonment. It was yet another attempt on the part of Harilal to return to his father's fold. If only the father could have spared time for his unfortunate son and made him feel secure in his affection and esteem, the subsequent course of Harilal's life might have been different. But the father was too busy and too big. He could make no distinction between his own sons and other colleagues.



Many more arrests soon followed: Shanti Swarup of Farukhabad, Harkaran Nath of Lucknow, Gupta from Andhra, Yakub Hasan from Madras, Dr. Saufuddin Kitchlew, and Neki Ram from the Punjab, Pandit Sunderlal, Bhagwandin, Pir Badshah Mian, J. M. Sen Gupta and a host of others. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, p.565]

Gandhiji's joy was of course conditional upon perfect peace and non-violence being observed while the leaders were taken away one after another. He wrote: We are out to be killed without killing." [*Ibid*, p.550] "The pace" he said "must be kept up."

Our work must continue with clockwork regularity. Each province must elect its own succession of leaders.... The chairman and the secretary must be given in each province emergency powers. [*ibid*, p.551]

December became the month of mass arrests of civil resisters all over India. By the middle of the month Gandhiji was announcing:

Five hundred fighters in Bengal have been arrested within the last ten days. Between two and three hundred persons must have been arrested in U .P. and about a hundred have been arrested in the Punjab.... Hundreds are ready in every province to make the pilgrimage to jail. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.41]

Meanwhile Bardoli Taluka of Surat district, being groomed under the leadership of Kunwarji Mehta and Vallabhbhai Patel for mass civil disobedience, had been showing considerable progress in fitting itself for the honour. Bardoli had 140 villages and a population of about a lakh. Gandhiji paid a visit to Bardoli on 2 and 3 December along with Omar Sobhani and was greatly impressed by its achievements. Out of 65 Government schools in the Taluka, 55 had become



National Schools, with over 6,000 children on their registers. The majority of men wore khadi. There was complete harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Untouchables could attend meetings and mix with caste people. Many liquor shops had closed down. There was also considerable progress in spinning. Gandhiji congratulated the people of the Taluka upon their achievement. He did not any more doubt Bardoli's courage or the readiness of its people to go to jail. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, pp.532-34, 560-63]

Gandhiji now began to consider the feasibility of launching a mass civil disobedience movement, "which may bring the desired result early, while individual civil disobedience may mean some delay." But only Bardoli and Anand could undertake mass civil disobedience, he declared, while in other places individual civil disobedience might be offered.

Gandhiji called upon Bardoli, Anand and Nadiad to get ready: "In every village, those who are willing to court imprisonment should get their names enrolled in the local village Congress committee register." The Village Committee should send them to the Taluka Committee from where they would be sent to the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. The volunteers must fulfil the qualifications laid down, he said, and must not expect the Congress to maintain them. The test was to come in January, 1922. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.41-43]

The insensate and indiscriminate repression shook the Moderates out of their complacency. In the beginning they had as a body opposed Non-cooperation. But now many from their ranks began to give open support to the movement. Srinivasa Iyengar gave up his seat in the Council. Dewan M. O. Parthasarathy Iyengar gave up his title.



On 10 December, Raza Ali, member of the Council of State, in a wire to the Viceroy protested strongly against the repression unleashed by the Government and warned: "The new policy, it is my duty to state, will be met with opposition by united India. How can any self-respecting Indian stay at home when our ladies are being put under lock and key in the name of law and order." [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.248-56]

On 13 December in Bengal the National Liberal League, the Ministerial party, sent memorials to the Viceroy and the Governor of Bengal complaining of the behaviour of the military and the police in the streets of Calcutta and the grievances voiced by the people on that account.

On 15 December the Lucknow Liberal League similarly lodged its protest against the "new policy of the Government in pursuance of which Volunteer and similar organizations of the Congress and Khilafat have been declared unlawful" and warned that the measures being adopted would have the effect of aggravating the very evil which it sought to remedy.

On 18 December, the Madras Liberal League passed a resolution expressing strong disapproval of the policy of repression.

The Government treated all such protests with supreme indifference and disdain. Many Moderate leaders felt disillusioned.

More than a thousand prominent Moderates issued a manifesto, categorically stating that the policy of the Government had instead of easing the situation only increased the gravity of it, inasmuch as all classes of people had condemned the relentless repression and suppression of the legitimate wishes and activities of the people. The manifesto called upon the rulers to "cry an immediate truce and offer an opportunity to the people, both Non-cooperators



and others, to meet in a conference to consider the situation and find a reasonable settlement by their common consent."

It was against this background of ruthless repression and determined non-violent resistance being offered to it by Congress volunteers, that the scheduled visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta on Christmas eve was to take place. The Congress having given a call for the boycott of the visit, the prospect of the event passing off peacefully appeared to the Government somewhat gloomy, especially as Moderate opinion was more and more distancing itself from the tyranny of the repressive measures being resorted to by the Government.

This being so, when Lord Reading (who had come down to Calcutta with his entire Council on 20 December) was approached by the Moderate leaders on the following day to settle the details of the proposed round table conference, he appeared more than receptive. The Deputation to the Viceroy was led by Madan Mohan Malaviya and included Annie Besant, P. C. Ray, Fazlul Haq, G. D. Birla, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and a few others.

The proposal that the deputation placed before the Viceroy was that His Excellency "should be pleased to invite the leading representatives of the people to a conference, under your leadership, to take counsel together and make practical suggestions and recommendations concerning the remedies which should be adopted." The deputation also urged the Viceroy to withdraw the various notifications issued under the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act.

The Viceroy, as a *quid pro quo*, asked for assurances that the Non-cooperation movement would be withdrawn, especially the scheduled hartal in Calcutta on 24 December. Only then could the Government consider withdrawing the repressive measures and releasing the prisoners. He also uttered a warning:



"Every man who lends himself to an affront to the Prince of Wales is doing incalculable injury to India and her fortunes in the future." [*Ibid*, pp.260-64]

D. A. Low, in a study of the movement, cites evidence to suggest that if he had had his way, Lord Reading might have considerably enlarged the scope of the conference to include possibility of some constitutional advance. In a telegram of 18 December 1921 to the Secretary of State the Viceroy had said: "because I want you to understand clearly what will be, or may be, the effect of our entering into a conference," he could, he said, "conceive proposals for the amendment of the present Act with the object of improving the constitutional machinery and advancing on the road to the ultimate goal of Dominion Status."

The Cabinet in London was flabbergasted. Montagu telegraphed to the Viceroy:

We cannot see how it is possible to stop such a conference developing into a simple demand for swaraj, and for proclaiming [unsatisfactory] a scheme of government approved by Parliament only two years ago and in operation for less than a year.

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Gandhiji's response to the proposal had not yet been received, though the Viceroy proceeded on the assumption that the conference would come off. On 19 December he informed the Provincial Governors. The Governors Willingdon (Madras), William Marris (Assam), George Lloyd (Bombay) and Harcourt Butler (U.P.) objected most strongly to any arrangement which would set the prisoners free. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperative Movement, 1920-21", pp.310-11]

Gandhiji was under considerable pressure to agree to the conference. To the voice of the Moderates like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jamnadas Dwarkadas



and H. N. Kunzru had been added the voice of Maulana Azad and C. R. Das, who, from prison telegraphed to Gandhiji on 19 December recommending calling off hartal on 24 December if the Government called a conference to consider Congress demands, withdrew repressive orders and released all prisoners under the new law. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.55]

Gandhiji insisted that the release should also include prisoners of other categories, such as the "Fatwa" prisoners, and those in jail for speeches made at the Karachi Khilafat Conference, such as the Ali brothers. Then there were prisoners held under the Seditious Meetings Act, such as Lala Lajpat Rai. Unless all these prisoners were released and the composition and the date of the proposed round table conference were determined beforehand, Non-cooperation would continue. [*Ibid*, pp.55, 59 and ff]

In a telegram on 21 December, 1921, to Shyam Sunder Chakravarty Gandhiji said:

We are not offering aggressive civil disobedience. If Government mean well, they should retrace steps by unconditionally withdrawing notification of disbandment [of volunteer organizations] and [prohibiting] public meetings and [agree to] doing partial reparation by discharging those unwarantably imprisoned.... Let them put down violence, veiled, open or intended, but we must resist with our lives this wanton violent suppression of freedom of opinion. [*Ibid*, p.60]

Lord Reading would not give any guarantee that he would retrace his steps by desisting from the general course of repression on which the Government had entered, even while expressing some willingness to accede to the wishes of the Moderate leaders regarding a round table conference which it was proposed



should discuss all outstanding issues between his Government and the non-cooperating Congress.

Neither would Gandhiji agree to desist from or suspend the course of the Non-cooperation movement (including the hartal or the boycott of the Prince's welcome) until and unless Lord Reading's Government had definitely made up its mind to suspend the whole policy of repression.

This upset the Moderates. C. R. Das was very unhappy and so was Malaviya. They felt that Gandhiji's insistence had robbed the country of a golden opportunity of reaching an understanding with the Government. Gandhiji, however, felt that Government's acceptance of his condition was a test of their sincerity.

It may be recalled that when Reading's name had been announced as Viceroy, Gandhiji had written:

Lord Reading has declared his intention to do the right. I have no doubt that he means it. But the system which he is coming to administer will not permit him to do what is right..... If he succeeds in doing the right, I promise he will also succeed in destroying the system or radically reforming it. Either he will swallow the system or the system will swallow him. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.235]

The system was obviously swallowing Lord Reading.

Subsequent events confirmed Gandhiji's estimate of Lord Reading. Madan Mohan Malaviya in a statement on 30 June 1923, more than a year after Gandhiji's imprisonment, wrote:

I cannot conclude this note without adding that subsequently more than one attempt was made to persuade the Government of Lord Reading



to call a round table conference. The Bardoli and Delhi decisions [to suspend Satyagraha], the definite abandonment of the proposal to start aggressive civil disobedience and the atmosphere of undisturbed non-violence which has prevailed during all the period which has since intervened, have long demanded that the Government should call a conference of representatives of all sections in order to restore normal relations between it and the people. It is deplorable that Government has not done so, but has kept up a regime of repression for which there is no justification. The Government has made the sorriest demonstration of its despotic strength by keeping in imprisonment the most honoured Indian living, who is loved and revered not only by millions of his countrymen but by a considerable number of people even outside India – the man to whose preaching and influence is due the existence of non-violent atmosphere in the country during a period of great stress and storm. [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.II, Gandhi Kutir, Dighwara (Bihar), 1928, pp.194-95]

17

The attempt of the Moderates for a truce between the Congress and the Government having failed, the decision for the boycott of the Prince's visit remained unaltered and the repression continued. During the ten days preceding 24 December no less than 2,500 volunteers were put behind bars. On the 23rd, some 750 volunteers courted imprisonment.

The hartal, except in the European area, was complete. All shops were closed and the streets were deserted. Houses had their blinds drawn. No trams, taxis or other vehicles plied on the roads. Civil guards paraded in the streets.



24 December thus passed off peacefully. But the behaviour of some European sergeants the following day led to panic. One person was shot and several injured. A policeman was also shot.

Gandhiji blamed the violence on the civic guards and Europeans generally, who had been enraged by the peaceful hartal. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.267-68]

In Madras, however, where the Prince of Wales went on 13 January 1922 after having spent ten days in Burma, things did not pass off quite as peacefully as in Calcutta. The Madras politics reflected the schism between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The latter tended to side with the Government rather than with the Congress. They were consequently quite enthusiastic in their welcome for the Prince, while the Brahmins and Muslims observed a complete hartal. Street urchins hooted the loyalists and threw stones at them. P. Theagaraya Chetty, a non-Brahmin leader was molested. Pedestrians were attacked, motor-cars were stoned and streets were barricaded with dustbins. Decorations put up for the Prince's welcome were torn down. Electric fittings were destroyed, liquor shops were looted and burnt. Some girl guides and lady students were spat at and abused. Scouts were deprived of their turbans. [*Ibid.* pp.269-70]

Gandhiji was deeply pained. We wrote:

The Non-cooperators and their friends have certainly not left man, woman or child free from their unholy attention. It was bad augury of swaraj to have interfered with women, to have molested the poor scout boys and otherwise played havoc with the liberties of the people....

We have more to fear from ourselves than from the violence or mistakes of the Government.... If we are not able to set our own house in



order, we shall certainly destroy ourselves....Non-cooperation will be a byword of execration and reproach. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.98]

In the same strain Gandhiji had written earlier:

I can now see that we are not yet ready for civil disobedience. To start it in Bardoli at present will only mean losing the game.... If we start civil disobedience in Bardoli and Anand and consequently Bombay turns violent, a little reflection is enough to show that not only will Bombay not help us, but that actually it will harm the cause.... No amount of discipline exhibited in an atmosphere of violence will avail us. We must first create an atmosphere of discipline and peace throughout the country.

Gandhiji called upon the people of Anand not to give up hope and meanwhile to "press on with your preparations". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXI, p.492]



CHAPTER XV: PREPARING FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ARREST AND TRIAL

1

The thirty-sixth session of the Indian National Congress was held in Ahmedabad on 27 and 28 December 1921 amid unique circumstances. More than 20,000 Congress Workers were in jail, including the President-elect, C. R. Das, the General Secretaries and most of the stalwarts of the Non-cooperation movement. Nevertheless as many as 4,726 delegates from all provinces attended the Congress. As for the visitors, while the Reception Committee had made arrangements to admit one hundred thousand of them, more than two hundred thousand turned up, making it difficult at times for discipline to be maintained.

In the absence of C. R. Das, who was in jail, Hakim Ajmal Khan presided at the session. However, the address of C. R. Das, which he had sent in instalments to Gandhiji before he was arrested, was read out at the Congress by Sarojini Naidu.

The proceedings of the Congress on the first day were taken up by the addresses of Vallabhbhai Patel, Chairman of the Reception Committee, Hakim Ajmal Khan and C. R. Das.

The Congress had before it a resolution standing in the name of Gandhiji, which the Subjects Committee had passed by an overwhelming majority, with only ten persons voting against it. On 28 December, as the session began, the President asked Gandhiji to move it. The resolution read :

... this Congress confirms the resolution adopted at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta and reaffirmed at Nagpur, and places on record the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the programme of non-violent Non-cooperation with greater vigour than hitherto....



And whereas by reason of the threat uttered by His Excellency the Viceroy in his recent speeches and the consequent repression started by the Government of India in the various provinces by way of disbandment of Volunteer Corps and forcible prohibition of public and even committee meetings in an illegal and high-handed manner . . . this Congress resolves that all activities of the Congress be suspended as far as necessary and appeals to all, quietly and without any demonstration, to offer themselves for arrest by belonging to the volunteer organizations to be formed throughout the country in terms of the resolution of the Working Committee

This Congress trusts that every person of the age of 18 and over will immediately join the volunteer organizations.

Notwithstanding the proclamations prohibiting public meetings . . . this Congress advises the holding of committee meetings and public meetings, the latter in enclosed places and by tickets, at which, as far as possible, only speakers previously announced shall deliver written speeches....

This Congress ... advises all Congress workers and others, who believe in peaceful methods, ... to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience, when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence and otherwise

This Congress is of opinion that in order to concentrate attention upon civil disobedience, whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character ... all other Congress activities should be suspended ... to the extent to which it may be found necessary



In view of the impending arrests of a large number of Congress Workers, this Congress, while requiring the ordinary machinery to remain intact,... hereby appoints, until further instructions, Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress and invests him with the full powers of the All-India Congress Committee...such powers to be exercised between any two sessions of the All-India Congress Committee and also with the power to appoint a successor in emergency...

Provided that nothing in this resolution shall be deemed to authorize Mahatma Gandhi... to conclude any terms of peace with the Government of India or the British Government without the previous sanction of the All-India Congress Committee, to be finally ratified by the Congress specially convened for the purpose. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.99-102]

Commending the resolution to the Congress, Gandhiji said that if the Government sincerely wanted an open door, the resolution left the door wide open for it. If the Moderates wished to rally round the standard of Khilafat and for the cause of the Punjab and, therefore, of India, then the resolution left the door wide open for them too. If the Government was sincerely anxious to do justice, if Lord Reading had really come to India to do justice and nothing less, then he had got an open door in the resolution; if he meant well, there was every chance for him to hold a round table conference. But it must be a real conference, He added :

I am a man of peace. I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in stone; I do not want the peace that you find in the grave; but I do want that peace which you find embedded in the human breast.... [*Ibid*, pp.103-04]



Maulana Hasrat Mohani came up with a motion to amend the creed of the Congress, which read : "The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of swaraj or complete independence, free from all foreign control, by the people of India, by all legitimate and peaceful means."

Taking the Maulana sharply to task, Gandhiji said :

It grieves me to see that we have among us delegates who thoughtlessly proclaim that they want this and they want that The time was when the very mention of swaraj frightened us. But today we have the courage to say that we cannot stay in the British Empire and want complete independence... Hasrat Saheb's resolution will frighten away many people. We have not even fully achieved Hindu-Muslim unity.... I hope you will reject Hasrat Saheb's motion.

The Congress rejected the motion. [*ibid*, pp.106-08]

At a meeting with the Bengal delegates, held on 29 December, Gandhiji castigated them for the violence they betrayed in their dealings with those who differed with them. He said : " I still doubt whether your minds are non-violent.... I have not seen so much bitterness amongst ourselves as I have seen in Bengal and, therefore, so much intolerance." [*ibid*, pp.100-04]

The Ahmedabad session of the Congress was noteworthy for more than one reform. Says Patabhi :

Apart from the elimination of the chairs and benches for delegates which had cost the Nagpur session some seventy thousand rupees, the Congress had the shortest address from Vallabhbhai J. Patel, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, as also the smallest number of resolutions –



altogether nine. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.223]

Gandhiji called the Congress week a week of joy and celebration. He wrote:

There was confidence and hope on every face. The Reception Committee had provided for admitting one hundred thousand (one lakh) visitors to the Congress *pandal*. But the lowest calculation put down the figure at two lakhs. The rush was so great that it became impossible to issue either season tickets or entrance tickets. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.131]

The Ahmedabad Congress was also notable for the importance given to khadi – the *pandal* itself was a majestic structure covered with khadi all over ! "The Reception Committee," wrote Gandhiji, "used only khadi manufactured in Gujarat." It was worth three hundred and fifty thousand rupees. The Committee paid Rs. 50,000 for the use of the khadi. All the tents including a big kitchen and store-house were covered with khadi. [*Ibid*, p.133]

As to sanitation, the work of attending to the trenches was being done not by paid *bhangis* (sweepers) but by unpaid volunteers. Sanitation was very good, and so was the food.

Ramdas Gandhi, Gandhiji's third son, had been keeping indifferent health in India and was taken to South Africa by Kallenbach who had come to visit Gandhiji earlier. Ramdas had tried to earn his own living in South Africa and had learnt tailoring as well as cloth trade and was doing quite well. But the pull of India was there and he felt he had to come back to attend the Ahmedabad Congress. After the Congress he and Kasturba took to khadi work till they were sent to jail.



The Khilafat Conference and the session of the Muslim League were held simultaneously with the Congress. Hakim Ajmal Khan, who presided over the Congress, also presided over the Khilafat Conference in the absence of Maulana Azad. One notable feature of the Ahmedabad session was the prominent part played by the Muslim divines in advising the Congress on political matters coming before it. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.229]

2

Swaraj, Khilafat and the redressal of the Punjab wrongs remained the basic issues before the Congress, but for the time being these had come to have a subordinate place in the programme of civil disobedience. Civil liberties became the central issue. "We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal," wrote Gandhiji. "To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster."

If the Government was allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they might be to its existence, even the Moderates' work must come to a standstill. In the general interest, the refore, elementary rights must be defended. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.142]

Gandhiji went on : "We must speak the truth under a shower of bullets. We must band together in the face of bayonets. No cost is too great for purchasing these fundamental rights. And on this there can be no compromise, no parleying, no conference."

There was assault on the freedom of the press, too. The *Democrat* and *Pratap* of Lahore and Tilak's paper *Kesari* of Poona ceased publication. Lala Lajpal Rai's paper *Bande Mataram* also had been asked to furnish security.



The *Independent* of Allahabad, started by Motilal Nehru, was no exception. The strong articles written by George Joseph were likely to land him in jail and Gandhiji had, therefore, loaned to Motilal the services of Mahadev Desai to take over from George when he went to jail. Later he also sent Devadas and then Pyarelal to Allahabad, to replace Mahadev if it became necessary.

George soon went to jail. The *Independent* was asked to deposit Rs. 2,000 as security. This was done. Mahadev Desai became the editor. The security was forfeited. The paper refused to give fresh security.

The editor of the *Independent* took to issuing handwritten sheets and Gandhiji asked newspaper editors to emulate the example. "Let us break the idol of machinery and leaden type," he wrote. "The pen is our foundry and the hands of willing copyists our printing machine." [*Ibid*, pp.177-78]. Many people made copies of the handwritten *Independent* and distributed them. This became another avenue for civil disobedience.

3

On 14, 15 and 16 January an All-Parties Conference was convened in Bombay by Madan Mohan Malaviya. The Conference was attended by about 300 persons. The purpose of the Conference was to further steps initiated to bring about the cessation of the Non-cooperation movement on the one hand and withdrawal of repressive measures by the Government on the other. Gandhiji said he personally would be willing to attend the conference, but "so far as the Congress and the Non-cooperators were concerned... certain conditions... including the release of political prisoners, besides those imprisoned under the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act ... must necessarily be fulfilled by the Government before the Non-cooperators could accede to the proposal for a round table conference." [*Ibid*, p.179]. Non-cooperators, therefore,



he informed the Conference, would not be party to any resolutions passed by the conference. A committee of 20 was appointed by the Conference to finalize the resolutions, in the drafting of which the Committee was assisted by Gandhiji, who attended as a non-member. The resolutions were to the following effect :

(1) The Conference is strongly of opinion that the policy adopted by the Government within the last few weeks, of extending and applying the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act to various parts of the country...leading to wholesale arrests and imprisonments... constitutes an unwarranted encroachment upon the elementary rights of citizenship, of the freedom of the press and liberty of speech and association...and ought to be reversed without delay.

(2) The Conference is further of opinion that until it is clear...that no other means will secure a redress of the country's grievances...the civil disobedience contemplated by the Ahmedabad Congress ought not to be resorted to.

(3) In response to the sentiment expressed by H. E. the Viceroy... the Conference supports the proposal for a round table conference between the Government and popular representatives, and is of opinion that...all notifications issued and orders passed by the Government under Act 14 of 1908... and Seditious Meetings Act, should be withdrawn and all prisoners...under the aforesaid notification or orders should be released, as also the "Fatwa" prisoners... [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, p .281. For information on "Fatwa" (religious edict.) prisoners, see Ch.XIII, p.39 and Ch.XIV, pp.13-14]

Before the Conference took up the discussion on the resolutions, Gandhiji explained that so far as he was concerned, he did not propose to be party to them



and the Non-cooperators also would not be parties. They would not take part in the discussions either. It was for those who were not Non-cooperators to consider fully the bearing of the resolutions and to accept them or reject them. He assured the Conference that he would advise the Working Committee to suspend general civil disobedience contemplated by the Ahmedabad Congress pending the negotiations that the Conference intended to initiate with the Government. But beyond 31 January 1922, it would not be possible for him to advise the country to suspend general civil disobedience. [*Ibid*, p.283]

Shankaran Nair, who had been elected president of the Conference, did not like the tenor of the resolutions and the position Gandhiji had adopted. He walked out of the meeting. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.230]. M. Visvesvarayya then took the chair at the Conference.

The Congress Working Committee met in Bombay on 17 January to consider the recommendations of the Malaviya Conference. The Working Committee resolved that "the offensive civil disobedience contemplated by the Ahmedabad Congress be not started till the 31st day of January 1922." And further desired that, in order to create a favourable atmosphere for a round table conference,

(a) all notifications banning volunteer corps, public meetings, picketing, etc., should be withdrawn,

(b) all Fatwa prisoners, including the Ali brothers, should be released,

(c) All other prisoners convicted for non-violent activities should be similarly released,

(d) simultaneously with the performance of the foregoing acts by the Government and pending a round table conference, all hartals, picketing and civil disobedience should cease. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.210-11]



This, however, did not preclude continuation of preparations for general civil disobedience. Such preparations consisted in

- 1) the enlistment of volunteers,
- 2) the propaganda of swadeshi,
- 3) the removal of untouchability,
- 4) the training in non-violence in thought, word and deed, and
- 5) unity between diverse creeds and classes.

At the round table conference, if it did come off, the Congress would press its claims regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and swaraj.

Gandhiji elaborated these demands as follows :

1. Full restoration to the Turks of Constantinople, Adrianople, Anatolia including Smyrna and Thrace. Complete withdrawal of non-Muslim influence from Arabia, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria and withdrawal of British troops from these territories.

2. Full enforcement of the report (on Punjab) of the Congress Subcommittee and therefore stopping of pensions of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer and other officers named in the report for dismissal.

3. Full Dominion status. The scheme for such swaraj should be framed by representatives duly elected in terms of the Congress constitution, that is to say, the four-anna franchise, every Indian adult, male or female, paying four annas to the Congress being eligible to vote. Such a scheme to be given effect to by British Parliament without any change.



The Conference would be concerned only with considering methods of execution. There could be no bargaining on the demands. [*Ibid*, pp.216-17]

4

In pursuance of the resolutions passed by the Malaviya Conference, attempts were made in the Central Legislature to make the Government move in the matter. On 18 January 1922, Munshi Ishwar Saran moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly asking the Government to abandon its policy of repression, and in the Council of State on the same day Pheroze Sethna moved that an informal joint sitting of the two Houses should be convened to discuss the modalities of a round table conference between the Government and popular representatives. The Government opposed the motions and, after a prolonged debate, both were lost.

The Bombay Conference leaders kept in touch with the Government, but they soon discovered that there was no hope of the Government of India countenancing the recommendations of the Conference. On 26 January, in answer to various communications from the Conference to the Viceroy, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy regretted that His Excellency was unable to discover in the proposals of the Conference the basis for a profitable discussion in a round table conference and that no useful purpose would be served by entering into any detailed examination of their terms. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.292-93]

The efforts of the Moderates thus proved a damp squib. They could not make the Government relent and give up repression and they could not deflect the course of events that was taking the Congress towards general civil disobedience.



Voices now began to be raised, both in London and in Indian Government circles, for action against Gandhiji. Among the most vociferous crusaders for action against Gandhiji was the Governor of Bombay George Lloyd. In a telegram to the Viceroy on 7 January, he expressed the view that if the policy of Gandhiji was allowed to continue unchecked, it would create a situation ending inevitably in violence which Gandhiji would not be able to control even if he should wish to do so. He also feared defections from the Moderate Party and the corruption of the police and army.

But the Viceroy and the Home Department remained for the time being of the view that time to act against Gandhiji had not yet come. In a note dated 19 January the Home Secretary wrote :

It can no doubt be urged... that the Non cooperation movement has shown great vitality; that its hold upon the country had grown and is growing; and that it is no longer safe to refrain from taking action against the leaders.... But the balance of argument is still in my opinion decisively against a prosecution at this juncture. . . . During the present month moderate opinion has shown distinct signs of veering round in favour of Government. Their leaders have been alienated by the arrogant attitude taken up by Gandhi and his associates.... If a prosecution is now launched against Gandhi at a moment when he has not initiated mass civil disobedience, when his immediate efforts are concentrated on the volunteer issue...the advantages gained by the development for the moment would be lost. The pendulum would swing round...in favour of Gandhi, and the Non-cooperation movement would acquire an additional impetus and additional support.... Sooner or later however he will be forced into proclaiming mass civil disobedience...and then and then only



Government will be in a position to enter on the final struggle with him and his movement without the risk of alienating such support as we have in the country.... [D. A. Low, "The First Non-Cooperation Movement, 1920 -21" in R. Kumar (Ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, pp.312-13]

5

Gandhiji had been planning that if mass civil disobedience became necessary, as it appeared it must, the beginning should be made by a no-tax campaign to be undertaken in Bardoli taluka under his personal guidance. Bardoli had been preparing for the honour under Vallabhbhai Patel for some time.

But quite independently of this contemplated programme conditions were building up in the countryside of Andhra Pradesh for a no-tax campaign being resorted to with the approval of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. On 7 January 1922 at its meeting at Bezwada the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee directed the District Congress Committees to explore possibilities in their areas for such a campaign. Four districts, namely, Krishna, Godavary, Guntur and Cuddapah, sought permission to undertake the campaign and the campaign was actually started in Guntur from 12 January. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.231]

Gandhiji advised caution. In a letter to Konda Venkatapayya on 17 January 1922, he wrote :

I think you are not yet ready for non-payment of taxes. Fifty per cent of the population of the area of experiment has not yet, I apprehend, got rid of untouchability nor is that proportion of population accustomed to ways of non-violence, not to khaddar manufactured in the respective areas.... In any other case, mass disobedience will be not *civil* but *criminal*



and will, therefore, render us unfit to conduct our own affairs as an orderly civilized nation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.211-12]

Konda Venkatapayya reported to Gandhiji the same week about the situation in Guntur :

The movement is far ahead. Village officers, including *Panchama* and Christian *vettians*, are resigning in large numbers. Arrests...are increasing in different places...*Panchamas* and Christians are enlisting. Excepting wells, untouchability is disappearing. The attachments, though very provocative, people are submitting to. Cooking vessels, even with food, are distrained even by Christian officials entering Brahmin kitchens.... The talukas in experiment are self-sufficient in khaddar

The military arrived at Guntur with armoured cars and motor lorries. Advocacy of payment under the circumstances will result in the ultimate effacement of our district from the movement, seriously jeopardizing even other districts.

Gandhiji wired : "Godspeed.... Keep me daily informed." [*Ibid*, p.228]

The campaign in Guntur, therefore, continued. It took the form of withholding payment of land revenue in the plains and of grazing fee in the forest areas and continued in face of police and army brutalities. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.232]

The secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee towards the end of January reported that in nearly fifty villages in the neighbourhood of Pedarandipadu, large numbers of people, including old men, were coming forward to enlist as volunteers; that all were dressed in khadi and had been observing strict non-violence even in the face of provocation by the military



posted there; that movable and immovable property was being attached and carts and bullocks were being taken away. Large numbers of village officials had resigned their jobs.

The Government of Madras threatened that distraint would be followed by immediate attachment and sale of property and that village officials who had submitted resignations would be dismissed if they refused to carry out duties.

Gandhiji commended the heroic spirit shown by the people. But he warned them :

The worst...is yet to come. When the Government military [fire] is opened on them, they are expected to expose their willing breasts, not their unwilling backs, to the bullets and still not harbour revenge or resentment. They must let their utensils and belongings be taken away....

Non-payment is a privilege. It is meant not to enrich the resisters, but by their voluntary poverty to enrich the nation. And they can exercise the privilege only if they have purified themselves. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.283-86]

6

On 1 February 1922, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, giving notice that, in pursuance of a decision taken on 29 January Bardoli Taluka in Surat District (population 87,000) would be embarking on mass civil disobedience.

Bardoli, Gandhiji informed the Viceroy, had been selected by the All-India Congress Committee as "the first unit for mass civil disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government "but that following the 17 November riots in Bombay the step had been postponed .



Meanwhile, Gandhiji continued, repression of a virulent type had been let loose in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Delhi, Bihar, Orissa and elsewhere, including looting of property, assaults on people, flogging in jails, and so on.

The immediate task before the country, Gandhiji said, was, therefore, to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the Press. The proposals of the Malaviya Conference, though they were in keeping with the terms set down by the Viceroy, had been rejected by the Government. In the circumstances there was nothing for the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands.

The Working Committee of the Congress had restricted mass civil disobedience to areas selected by Gandhiji from time to time. It was for the time being confined to Bardoli, Gandhiji informed the Viceroy but he might give his consent also in respect of 100 villages in Guntur, if they conformed to the conditions laid down for civil disobedience.

Gandhiji appealed to the Viceroy to revise his policy, to set free Non-cooperation prisoners and undertake not to interfere with non-violent activities in connection with the pursuit of Khilafat, undoing of the Punjab wrongs and attainment of swaraj. In the event of such a declaration forthcoming, aggressive civil disobedience would not be taken up except when the Government departed from that policy. [*Ibid*, pp.302-05]

The Government of India in a communique of 6 February 1922 refuted Gandhiji's contention that it had resorted to "lawless repression" or suppression of elementary rights of free association, free speech and free Press. It also denied that the proposals of the Malaviya Conference were in keeping with the terms



set down by the Viceroy. It charged Gandhiji of wanting the proposed round table conference merely to register his decrees.

The communique warned :

The issue is no longer between this or that programme of political advance but between lawlessness with all its dangerous consequences on the one' hand and, on the other, the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilized governments. Mass civil disobedience is fraught with such dangers to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity. [*India in 1921-22*, pp.329-31]

Gandhiji, in a rejoinder issued on 7 February, before the news from Chauri Chaura had reached him, cited chapter and verse to prove his allegations of repression and police high-handedness. The evidence cited included shootings, brutalities by the civic guards, forcible dispersal of meetings, assault on volunteers, looting of villages by an army officer and his company in Bihar and midnight searches and arrests.

Gandhiji went on : "It is the physical and brutal ill treatment of humanity which has made many of my co-workers and myself impatient of life itself." He concluded :

I hold that it is impossible for any body of self-respecting men, for fear of unknown dangers, to sit still and do nothing effective whilst looting of property and assaulting of innocent men are going on all over the country in the name of law and order. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.344-50]

The rulers in London were watching the battle with impatience and growing exasperation at the continued freedom being allowed to Gandhiji. The Secretary of State telegraphed to the Viceroy on 6 February :



Every successive telegram adds to the impression that the situation is very serious.... The continued freedom of Gandhi to organize and issue justification of civil disobedience must lead to disaster.... We owe it to those who would otherwise become his tools or dupes to protect them. The situation has already passed beyond the stage where it can be adequately dealt with by press communiques....

The Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that in view of Gandhiji's latest statement he had taken the crucial decision and "instructed the Government of Bombay to take immediate steps for his arrest and prosecution." The date fixed was 14 February. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperation Movement, 1920-21" p.314]

7

Bardoli, in the meanwhile, was going ahead with the preparations for mass civil disobedience and "working for complete self-purification." Gandhiji had made it his concern to lead the taluka in the no-tax campaign to come. He, therefore, left the Ashram on 26 January and went to settle among the farmers of Bardoli. On 29 January the Bardoli Taluka Conference, which was addressed by Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai Patel, unanimously passed the following resolution:

After having fully understood and considered the conditions for the starting of mass civil disobedience, this Conference of the inhabitants of the Bardoli taluka resolves that this taluka is fit for mass civil disobedience.

This Conference is of opinion

(a) That for the redress of India's grievances, unity among Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis, Christians and other communities of India is absolutely necessary;



(b) That non-violence, patience and endurance are the only remedy for the redress of the said grievances;

(c) That the use of the spinning-wheel in every home and the adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven garments to the exclusion of all other cloth by every individual are indispensable for India's freedom;

(d) That swaraj is impossible without complete removal of untouchability by the Hindus;

(e) That for the people's progress and for the attainment of freedom, readiness to sacrifice movable and immovable property, to suffer imprisonment and, if necessary, to lay down one's life is indispensable.

The Conference expressed the hope that Bardoli would have the privilege to be the first to offer the aforesaid sacrifices, and declared that unless the Working Committee otherwise decided or unless the proposed round table conference was held, Bardoli taluka would immediately commence mass civil disobedience under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji and the President of the Conference.

The resolution continued :

This Conference recommends that those tax-payers of the Taluka who are ready and willing to abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress for mass civil disobedience, will refrain, till further instructions, from paying land revenue and other taxes due to the Government.
[C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.296-97]

On 5 February Gandhiji in a leaflet addressed to the people of Bardoli, intended to be the first of a series, appealed to the people not to pay land revenue even if the Government should attach property, impose *chothai* (a tax),



carry away cattle or take away the utensils of daily use. People must be ready to become homeless. [*Ibid*, pp.336-37]

8

Unfortunately, before the contemplated no-tax campaign could be got underway in Bardoli, a mob outrage in North India on 4 February changed for Gandhiji the whole complexion of things. This took place at Chauri Chaura, a police station at a distance of some 15 miles from Gorakhpur. According to accounts received, and confirmed by Devadas Gandhi after a personal visit, the people of the surrounding villages had been much incensed at the misbehaviour of a police officer towards the volunteers picketing foreign cloth shops and liquor booths. The villagers accordingly gathered together and marched in a procession to the police station. The strength of the procession was estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000. The demonstrators raised slogans against police misbehaviour and expressed their determination to continue their programme of picketing.

It was when the crowd turned back after the protest demonstration that the trouble arose. After the main body of the procession had moved some distance, the police beat up some stragglers forming the tail end of the procession. Hearing their cries the mob returned and began throwing brickbats at the police. The police fired and continued firing till their ammunition was exhausted. Two of the demonstrators certainly died.

The policemen, their fire power spent, rushed into the thana to escape being lynched. But the mob was now enraged. It set fire to the thana building. Many policemen perished in the fire. Others who rushed out to escape the fire were cut down by the mob and their mangled limbs thrown into the fire. The victims included a police sub-inspector and 21 constables. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.305-06]



As soon as news of the Chauri Chaura outrage reached Gandhiji, he immediately addressed a confidential note to the members of the Working Committee :

This is the third time that I have received a rude shock when I have been on the eve of embarking upon mass civil disobedience... I am violently agitated by the events in the Gorakhpur district. What has happened in Bareilly and Saharanpur where volunteers have been attempting to take possession of Town Halls has added considerably to the shaking. The civil disobedience of Bardoli can make no impression upon the country when disobedience of a criminal character goes on in other parts of the country.... I personally can never be party to a movement half violent and half non-violent, even though it may result in the attainment of so-called swaraj.

Gandhiji invited the Working Committee for a meeting at Bardoli on 11 February to consider "first whether mass civil disobedience should not be suspended for the time being; and secondly whether, if it is suspended it should not be discontinued for a definite and sufficiently long period to enable the country to organize constructive work and to establish an "indisputably non-violent atmosphere." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.350-51]

According to a witness Gandhiji summoned to Bardoli that day not only the members of the Working Committee, but "the whole body of workers," young and old alike and sought their opinion in the matter. The unanimous view was that if Gandhiji retreated after throwing out his challenge to Lord Reading, the whole country would be disgraced before the world. [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.226-27]



Gandhiji's mind, nevertheless, was made up and he was able to carry the Working Committee with him.

The resolution of the Working Committee, passed on 12 February read:

1. The Working Committee deplores the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura in having brutally murdered constables and wantonly burnt the police *thana* and tenders its sympathies to the bereaved families.

2. In view of Nature's repeated warnings, every time mass civil disobedience has been imminent some popular violent outburst has taken place – indicating that the atmosphere in the country is not non-violent enough for mass disobedience...the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended and instructs the local Congress Committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government...and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature.

3. The suspension of the mass civil disobedience shall be continued till the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure the non-repetition of popular atrocities such as at Gorakhpur or hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras respectively on 17 November 1921 and 13 January last.

4. In order to promote a peaceful atmosphere, the Working Committee advises... all Congress organizations to stop activities specially designed to court arrest and imprisonment....

5. The Working Committee advises... the stoppage of all volunteer processions and public meetings merely for the purpose of defiance of the notification regarding such meetings....



6. Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that ryots are not paying rents to the zamindars, the Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots that such withholding of rent is contrary to the resolutions of the Congress and that it is injurious to the best interests of the country.

7. The Working Committee assures the zamindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights....

With a view to perfecting internal organization of the Congress the Working Committee advised all Congress organizations to take up the following programme :

1. To enlist at least one crore members of the Congress;
2. To popularize the spinning-wheel and organize the manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar;
3. To organize national schools;
4. To organize the Depressed Classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools, and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which other citizens enjoy;
5. To organize the temperance campaign amongst the people by house-to-house visits and to rely more on appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing;
6. To organize village and town panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes;
7. To organize a social service department that would render help to all in times of illness or accident.



8. To continue collections for the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund and to call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathizer to pay at least one-hundredth part of his annual income for the year 1921.

A Committee with Jan Mohammed Chhotani, Jamnalal Bajaj and Vithalbhai Patel was appointed to draw up a scheme to provide employment to those resigning from Government service. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.377-81]

This was necessary, Gandhiji later explained:

The Congress organization is still imperfect.... We have not established Congress Committees in every one of the villages.... We have not probably more than one crore members on the roll.... Suspension of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress, indeed are indispensable to prevent further retrogression. I hope therefore that by suspension [of civil disobedience] every Congressman or woman will not only not feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and of national sin. [*Ibid*, p.418]

On 12 February Gandhiji started a five day fast by way of atonement. "I could not have done less, could I?" he wrote to Devadas. [*Ibid*, p.397]

10

Congress workers everywhere gave expression to surprise and bafflement at the decision to suspend the movement. Syed Mahmud on 14 February wired to Gandhiji : "Working Committee's decision published today greatly surprising. People in Bengal and Bihar are disappointed. Great anxiety prevails. Bengal may not perhaps obey." [*Ibid*, p.400]



Jawaharlal Nehru and Motilal Nehru had been terribly upset by the decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement. Gandhiji wrote to Jawaharlal :

I sympathize with you and my heart goes out to Father. I can picture to myself the agony through which he must have passed but I also feel that this letter is unnecessary because I know that the first shock must have been followed by a true understanding of the situation.... The brutal murder of the constables by an infuriated crowd which was in sympathy with Non-cooperation cannot be denied.... It would have been criminal not to have heeded such a clear warning.

Gandhiji informed Jawaharlal Nehru of the reports he had been receiving from far and near that "our people were becoming aggressive, defiant and threatening, that they were getting out of hand." In Bareilly, Kanauj, Saharanpur and other places in the U. P. volunteers had become unruly. In Gorakhpur out of the 36,000 volunteer enrolled, not even 100 conformed to the Congress pledge. In Calcutta there was utter disorganization, with volunteers wearing foreign clothes and certainly not pledged to non-violence. He went on :

I assure you that if the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle but essentially a violent struggle. It is undoubtedly true that non-violence is spreading like the scent of the otto of roses throughout the length and breadth of the land, but the foetid smell of violence is still powerful, and it would be unwise to ignore or underrate it. [*Ibid*, pp.435-37]

Thinking back on the matter later, Nehru himself conceded that as a matter of fact even the suspension of civil disobedience in February 1922 had not been due to Chauri Chaura alone, that it had only been the last straw. At that time the



national movement, in spite of its apparent power and widespread enthusiasm had been going to pieces. All organization and discipline had disappeared; almost all the good men were in prison, and the masses had so far received little training to carry on by themselves. Any unknown man who wanted to do so could take charge of a Congress Committee. As a matter of fact, large numbers of undesirable men, including *agents provocateurs*, came to the forefront and even controlled some local Congress and Khilafat organizations. There was no way of checking them. [Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, Oxford University Press, 1982, p.85]

The Viceroy's Council considered the Working Committee's resolutions on 13 February and noted that civil disobedience had only been suspended, not withdrawn. The plan to arrest Gandhiji on the 14th must, therefore, stand. Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Law Member, was, however, extremely unhappy and urged the Viceroy not to "lose the moral advantage we have gained over Mr. Gandhi." In a note he said: "I shall respectfully and earnestly beg Your Excellency, not in the interests of Gandhi but in the larger interests of the country and the Government, to consider whether you cannot postpone his arrest tomorrow." Sapru succeeded, because Reading was apprehensive he might resign. When Governor Lloyd of Bombay was informed, he was livid with rage. He wired back his "emphatic protest," saying the Bardoli resolutions afforded no justification for any modification of policy or plan. [D. A. Low, "The First Non-cooperation Movement, 1920-21", pp.315-16]

The All-India Congress Committee, meeting in Delhi on 25 February 1922, confirmed the decision of the Working Committee taken at Bardoli, but at the same time resolved that "individual civil disobedience, whether of a defensive or aggressive character, may be commenced in respect of particular places or



particular laws," with the permission of the Provincial Congress Committee. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, pp.468-69]

Explaining further the implications of the Bardoli decision of the Working Committee, Gandhiji in an interview to the Press on 26 February said that the "resolutions do not in any shape or form mean a reversal of the policy or the modification of the Congress programme of Non-cooperation and that it is merely a suspension, till further instructions, of other activities of an aggressive character." [*Ibid*, p.481]

Nevertheless critical voices were raised on all sides. No one appeared to be happy with the decision taken. Gandhiji wrote :

I was prepared for a certain amount of depression, disappointment and resentment, but I confess I was totally unprepared for the hurricane of opposition. It became clear to me that workers were in no mood to do any serious work of construction. The constructive programme lent no enchantment.... They would not stop to think that even if they could defeat the Government by a childish display of rage, they could not conduct the Government of the country for a single day without serious and laborious organization and construction.... Jails are no gateway to liberty for the confirmed criminal. They are temples of liberty only for those who are innocence personified. The execution of Socrates made immortality a living reality for us – not so the execution of countless murderers. [*Ibid*, p.501]

Gandhiji returned to Ahmedabad from Delhi on 1 March and took up the task of organizing the constructive programme in terms of the Bardoli resolution of the Working Committee, ratified by the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi.



In his weekly *Navajivan* of 5 March 1922 he wrote that if India or Gujarat carried out the constructive programme for a month it could secure the release of prisoners within that period. The programme as laid down in the Working Committee's resolution was :

1. Every man or woman should take the Congress pledge and get his or her name enrolled at a Congress office, paying four annas;
2. Contributions should be collected for the Tilak Swaraj Fund;
3. National schools should be started and run;
4. People who wear foreign cloth should be persuaded to wear khadi and the spinning-wheel should be introduced into every home;
5. The homes of liquor addicts should be visited;
6. *Antyajas* should be helped ;
7. Panchayats should be set up;
8. Any person who suffers from a disease or injury should be nursed irrespective of whether he is white or black.

Gandhiji proceeded :

To my mind this programme is a test for the people. If they really desire victory through non-violence, they will carry it out enthusiastically....

It is only by following the path of non-violence that India can win freedom in a few months. I believe that it cannot do so even in a hundred years by following the path of violence. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.7-9]

According to Krishnadas, [Krishnadas was sent to Gandhiji by Satish Chandra Mookerji, his guru, who was a deeply religious man. Mookerji had been a prosperous lawyer. A client, after he had won a difficult case for him, informed



him that all that he had told him (Mookerji) had been lies. This shocked Satish Babu so much that he gave up practice of law and became the disciple of Vijayakrishna Goswami, who advised him to live on whatever might be brought to him. He moved to Benares and lived as a sannyasi. Gandhiji once sent him Rs. 100. He returned the money; he had no use for it.], who had then been acting as Gandhiji's secretary after Mahadev and Pyarelal were sent to Allahabad. Gandhiji decided to have with him workers such as Shuaib Qureshi, Dr. N. S. Hardiker, Sundaram of the *Independent* and a worker from Sind, and bring out a supplement to *Young India*, to be called "Congress Bulletin," devoted solely to the furtherance of constructive work. The Bulletin was to contain first-hand information gathered by workers, who would be constantly moving around the country for the purpose, on the progress of the various items of the programme and would also serve to establish contact between constructive workers all over the country. [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, p.390]

To finance intensification of the constructive work programme Gandhiji issued an appeal to the readers of *Navajivan*, whose member he estimated at 1,05,000, assuming that each copy of the paper, which enjoyed a circulation of about 35,000, was read by three persons, to send through *Navajivan* one per cent of their income for the previous year to the secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee. This money was to be earmarked by the donors for popularizing khadi, or for education or for work among the *Antyajias*. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.13-14]

Thus Gandhiji was proceeding on the path of self-purification through constructive work. He gave a lead to his colleagues in the Congress to go along the same path. Time would show to what extent Congressmen would take to constructive work with the same enthusiasm. It was clear to Gandhiji that this



was the only way to imbibe true non-violence and inculcate it on mass scale in order to prevent repetition of tragedies like at Chauri Chaura.

The Government, however, had other plans.

13

With the civil disobedience movement thus most definitively suspended and Gandhiji appealing to the workers to turn their attention to less exciting and wholly peaceful constructive work, one would have thought the Government would abandon their plan to arrest Gandhiji. Though on Sapru's plea, the Government had held their hand on 14 February, the date originally decided upon for his arrest, they had not given up the decision to arrest him.

Rumours again became rife that Gandhiji would be arrested on 26 February, immediately after the A.I.C.C. meeting at Delhi. This date, too, came and went. It appears that there was a school of thought in the Government that held that the arrest of Gandhiji would add to his prestige, while on the other hand failure to get swaraj within one year would make the people lose faith in him. In the meantime there was pressure from London to take action and the Government's mind was now made up in favour of arresting Gandhiji. Rumours of his impending arrest became stronger.

On 7 March, Shankerlal Banker, returning from Bombay brought reliable information that Gandhiji would be arrested within a week. Gandhiji wrote to T. Prakasam the same day: "I have persistent rumours being thrust upon me that my leave is now more than overdue, and I am also told that I shall be relieved of my burdens inside of 7 days."

Gandhiji continued :



If I am arrested, I look to you and all who are out to keep absolute peace. It will be the best honour that the country can do me. Nothing would pain me more, in whatever jail I may find myself, than to be informed by my custodians that a single head had been broken by or on behalf of Non-cooperators, a single man had been insulted or a single building damaged. If the people or the workers have at all understood my message, they will keep exemplary peace. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, p.21]

Writing under the title "If I am arrested" in *Young India* of 9 March 1922, Gandhiji referred to the renewed rumours of his impending arrest and how it was regarded as a mistake by some officials that he had not been arrested, as originally intended, on 11 or 12 February; that the Bardoli decision suspending civil disobedience movement ought not to have been allowed to affect the Government's programme. It was being said, he wrote, that it was no longer possible for the Government to withstand the ever-rising agitation in London for his arrest and deportation. He himself could not see how the Government could avoid arresting him if they wanted a permanent abandonment of civil disobedience, whether individual or mass.

Gandhiji advised all provincial workers to suspend even individual civil disobedience, because he knew that any disobedience at that stage would not be civil but criminal.

He had been told, Gandhiji further wrote, that the Government was planning to destroy his three weeklies, viz., *Young India*, *Gujarati Navajivan* and *Hindi Navajivan* and expressed the hope that the rumour had no foundation. However, even if the journals should be closed down, he hoped the public would remain unmoved. He would consider it humiliating if the Government refrained from arresting him for fear of an outbreak of universal violence and slaughter



which might result. He pleaded with the Congress and Khilafat workers to strain every nerve to show that all such fears entertained by the Government were unfounded.

Gandhiji concluded : " There should, therefore, be no hartals, no noisy demonstrations, no processions. I would regard the observance of perfect peace on my arrest as a mark of high honour paid to me by my countrymen." [*Ibid.* pp.56-59]

According to Krishnadas, Gandhiji wrote the above article on the morning of 8 March immediately after the prayer.

The Government had a few days earlier introduced a Finance Bill enhancing the duty on salt to two rupees and eight annas a maund and also imposing a duty on kerosene, the duties to be effective from 1 March. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, p.593]

Gandhiji commented in an article headed "The Death Dance" :

Why is there this chorus of condemnation of the doubling of the salt tax and other taxes on the necessities of life? Wonder is expressed that now there is no apology even offered for the terrific military charges of sixty-two crores. The fact is, it is impossible to offer apology for the inevitable. The military charges must grow with the growing consciousness of the nation. The military is *not* required for the defence of India. But it is required for the forcible imposition of the English exploiters upon India....

It is the same thing whether it is done with the kid glove on or without it. The Councils are the kid glove. We must pay for the glove. The reforms hang upon us like an incubus....



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.... It is a giddy dance from which no one cares to free himself. But it is a death dance and the exhilaration is induced by the rapid heartbeat of a patient who is about to expire .

.... non-violence is the way to freedom – not the forced non-violence of the slave, but the willing non-violence of the brave and the free. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.54-56]

Krishnadas reports that as soon as Gandhiji finished the article he called out to him and rapturously exclaimed : "Krishnadas, see what a beautiful article I have written : It is indeed a piece of beauty; see how I have described the condition of present-day India." [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, p.256]

14

The same day, 8 March, Gandhiji received a wire informing him of the arrest of Konda Venkatapayya. In a telegram to T. Prakasam he said : "Glad to learn Venkatapayya's arrest. Hope there will be no hartal, no demonstration, no civil disobedience, not even mental anguish, but a grim determination to pursue the constructive programme." [*Ibid*, p.257]

According to a message from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, of 5 March 1922, the Government of Bombay had decided that the prosecution of Gandhiji should be proceeded with under the Indian Penal Code, Section 124 A, in respect of four articles published in *Young India*, and that Shankerlal Banker, as printer of *Young India* should also be prosecuted under the same charge. The



Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that the arrests would probably take place on Thursday, 9 March. [*The Indian Annual Register*. 1922, p.352]

However on 8 March Gandhiji had to proceed to Ajmer to attend a conference of the *Ulemas* the following day on the pressing invitation of Seth Chhotani. Presumably for this reason the arrest could not be effected on 9 March as scheduled. However a number of people had come to know of the Government's plan and assumed that Gandhiji would have been arrested on the 9th. Anxious telegrams came from Jawaharlal Nehru from Allahabad and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj from Wardha asking whether the arrest had taken place.

Krishnadas writes : "In the evening we learnt that a Government code telegram containing 150 words had been received at the Central Telegraph Office at Ahmedabad, but had been redirected to Ajmer."

On 10 March, Shankerlal Banker, accompanied by Gulzarilal Nanda, a young Punjabi who had been attracted by Gandhiji's call for Non-cooperation and was active in the Ahmedabad Mill-Workers Union, went to meet Gandhiji at Mehsana, on his journey back from Ajmer, and travelled with him up to Ahmedabad. They shared with him such rumours as they had heard of his impending arrest. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti* (Gujarati), p.138]

When Gandhiji's train reached Sabarmati at 2 p.m. there was a big crowd waiting there to welcome him. Krishnadas writes that as Gandhiji was leaving the station along with the Ashram inmates and others who had come to receive him, a British soldier who had been watching Gandhiji with curious eyes, stretched out his hand and said : "Mr. Gandhi, I must shake hands with you." Gandhiji offered his hand, which was grasped by the soldier with great feeling.

Gandhiji left the station in a car along with Shankerlal Banker. Krishnadas and the others walked.



Arriving at the Ashram, Gandhiji wired to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj: "Thick rumour arrest. You Ramdas should come if not required there." To the Congress office at Bombay he sent a cryptic message: "Weather permitting going Bardoli Sunday." [*C.W.M.G., Vol. XXIII, p. 79*]

After the evening prayer at which Gandhiji was, according to Krishnadas's account , in a " happy and hilarious mood", Gandhiji dictated several letters: to Maganlal Gandhi, M. R. Jayakar, Paul Rickhard, N. C. Kelkar, Gopala Menon and Dr. Bhagavandas.

To Jayakar Gandhiji wrote :

As you know my arrest is reported to be imminent, but if I am not arrested I shall look forward to our meeting. Just one thing I would like to say in order to correct what seems to me to be a misapprehension. I should be sorry if anything I have written has led you to infer that I have in any shape or form altered my view about the efficacy of imprisonment for our salvation.

I have not lost faith in the responsiveness to sacrifice by those who compose the Government. Only those who have courted imprisonment have not all been the right sort. I certainly expect no response whatsoever to the imprisonment of those who are full of violence in their hearts, and my reason for suspending even civil disobedience for the time being is to see if it is at all possible to produce an atmosphere of real non-violence.
[*Ibid, pp.83-84*]

To Gopala Menon Gandhiji wrote :

The only message that I can send in the midst of overwhelming work is for both Hindus and Moplahs to realize their future responsibility, and



not to brood over the past. How to reach the Moplahs as also the class of Hindus whom you would want to reach through your newspaper is more than I can say. But I know that Hindus should cease to be cowardly. The Moplahs should cease to be cruel. In other words, each party should become truly religious. [*Ibid*, pp.81-82]

Gandhiji did not have the opportunity to sign these letters. They were posted the following day without his signature.

Benarsidas Chaturvedi, who was then staying at the Ashram, records that it was nearly 10 O'clock and Gandhiji told everybody to retire, while he himself got ready for bed. Just then Hasrat Mohani dropped in and Gandhiji was glad to see him.

Anasuyabehn and Shankerlal Banker then left in the car. They had not gone far when they met the Superintendent of Police, who was on his way to the Ashram in his car. He informed Shankerlal Banker that he (Shankerlal) should consider himself under arrest. He then took him in custody to the Ashram. The Superintendent did not enter the Ashram, but sent word to Gandhiji through Anasuyabehn that he had come to arrest him, adding that Gandhiji could take as much time as he needed to get ready. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.328-29. The version given by Shankerlal Banker in his *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.138 is substantially the same]

The arrest of Gandhiji took place at 10.30 p.m. on 10 March 1922. Gandhiji writes :

The preliminaries were more like being taken to a pleasure trip than to jail. The courteous Superintendent of Police, Mr. Healy, would not even enter the Ashram, but sent Anasuyabai with a message that he had a warrant for my arrest and that a car awaited me at the Ashram gate. I was



to take whatever time I needed for getting ready. [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.401-402]

The Ashram inmates gathered for prayer and sang Gandhiji's favourite hymn *Vaishnava Jan*. The women put vermilion mark on his forehead. After taking leave of the Ashram inmates Gandhiji surrendered himself to the police with great joy. On the way to Sabarmati Jail he met Hasrat Mohani. Kasturba, Anasuyabehn, Chhaganlal Gandhi and Krishnadas were allowed to accompany him to Sabarmati Jail, where both Gandhiji and Shankerlal Banker were to spend the next ten days, eight of them as undertrial prisoners. Krishnadas writes, "I was privileged to prepare the bed for him [Gandhiji] on the first night. Before finally leaving him there, I prostrated myself at his feet. Moved by affection, he gave me a vigorous slap on my back . It was about 12 midnight when we returned to the Ashram." [*Ibid*, pp.401-02]

15

Gandhiji was produced before a magistrate on the 11th, who committed the case to the Sessions. The trial was fixed for 18 March 1922.

During the ten days that Gandhiji was in Sabarmati Jail, he was allowed to have as many visitors as he liked and he could get his meals from outside. Krishnadas took him his lunch on the 16th. As he was about to leave, Gandhiji called him to his side and, writes Krishnadas :

First of all he took me to task for my giving way to grief. He then began to make various kind of enquiries about my needs and wants. Referring to *Young India*, he said: "Have no worry over *Young India*. Don't be harassed by the thought that all the columns have to be filled at any cost, or that you must seek to make it attractive by appropriate and topical leading articles. If you can't fill up the sixteen columns, publish as much as



you can; if no leading article be ready, let the issue go without it. You will do what you can without strain on your nerves.

Then he said he had decided to appoint Shuaib Qureshi as editor of *Young India*. He asked Krishnadas to extend all help and cooperation to Qureshi.

Krishnadas records :

... He applied the healing balm to the wound in my heart. When I was somewhat comforted, I enquired of him as to what I should do if the Government stopped the publication of *Young India*. Mahatmaji replied – "You will simply bury yourself in my room, and begin to live like a true Yogi. That room is yours. Don't leave the Ashram till I return. If the Government forces us to stop all other activities, then (pointing to a *charkha* lying at some distance) – that is our work. I tell you it is my faith that all our duties, secular and spiritual, are embodied therein. If you would closely scrutinize my activities you will find that the *charkha* [spinning wheel] is my only contribution to the world. Therefore, wide acceptance of my message to India will be truly indicated only by the spread of the *charkha*. I am not the originator of the idea of civil disobedience, although it is true that I have developed that idea, and have discovered a more extensive field for its application.

Besides working the *charkha*, you may also arrange to run a hand-written issue of *Young India*. In that case, don't make the size of the paper more than one sheet of foolscap paper. You must learn how to compress news and ideas within that short space. [*Ibid*, pp.402-03]

During the time that Gandhiji was in Sabarmati prison from the night of 10 March to midnight of 20 March, the jail, writes Krishnadas, became "transformed into a sort of royal durbar. A regular stream of people used to come and crowd



at the jail gate seeking for an opportunity to see Mahatmaji with the permission of the jail authorities." [*Ibid*, p.403]

Shankerlal Banker writes that they were lodged in a separate compound in the jail. There was a long row of cells. Gandhiji was kept in one of these cells about the middle of the row. He span regularly. They could get any number of books they desired. Many leaders came to see Gandhiji in jail and asked him what they should do after he was sentenced. Gandhiji told Vithalbhai Patel that no one was to offer satyagraha. True satyagraha could only be offered by a true satyagrahi and "I am the only satyagrahi of that type. No one should offer satyagraha after me." Vithalbhai asked : "What are we to do?" Gandhiji replied: "You all should carry on khadi activity with all your might." [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravrtti*, p.139]

Krishnadas again went to the jail on the morning of the 18th, the date fixed for the Sessions Court trial, " for a 'darshan' not to be repeated perhaps for many a month, or perhaps, as I thought, for many a year." Gandhiji was then surrounded by many well-known and renowned leaders of India, who were asking him questions as to the future programme of work for the country. "After some time spent in this way, Mahatmaji rose to have his bath. Pandit Malaviyaji who was there at the time, desired me to go and help Mahatmaji. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and I accordingly went to the bathing place, and we felt as if we were anointing the Master before his crucifixion." Mr. Healy, the Superintendent of Police, arrived about that time. Krishnadas and others hastened out of the jail and proceeded to the Circuit House. [Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, p.403]



"Mr. Healy," writes Shankerlal Banker, "took us to the Circuit House at 12 noon. The court room was full of Ashram inmates and other admirers of Gandhiji." [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.139]

The trial judge R. S. Broomfield had an easy task. Both Gandhiji and Shankerlal had already pleaded guilty to the charges brought against them in the lower court, and did so again before Broomfield.

16

Gandhiji was charged under Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code with "bringing or attempting to bring into hatred or contempt or exciting or attempting to excite disaffection towards His Majesty's Government established by law in British India." The prosecution produced in evidence three issues of *Young India*, of 29 September 1921, 15 December 1921 and 23 February 1922 containing three articles written by Gandhiji and forming three different offences under the same section. The headings of these articles were 'Tampering with Loyalty,' 'The Puzzle and Its Solution' and 'Shaking the Manes'."

Shankerlal Banker along with Gandhiji was charged under the same section for the same three offences, as printer and publisher of *Young India*.

The prosecutor wanted to show that the articles in question formed part of an organized campaign and read out extracts from the articles appearing in *Young India* issues of 8 June, 28 July and 1 September 1921, all preaching disaffection. It was true that in the course of the articles non-violence was insisted upon, he said, but, he asked, "What was the use of preaching non-violence when he preached disaffection towards Government or openly instigated others to overthrow it?"



On being asked by the Court whether he would like to make a statement, Gandhiji, with the permission of the Court, read out the following written statement, given here in summary :

I owe it to the public that I should explain why, from a staunch loyalist and cooperator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-cooperator.

My public life began in 1893 in South Africa. I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian. But I was not baffled. I thought this was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically good. I gave the Government my voluntary and whole-hearted cooperation. When the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served in several actions. In 1906, at the time of Zulu revolt I raised a stretcher-bearer party, I received medals and was mentioned in despatches. When the war broke out in 1914, I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London. Lastly, in India when a special appeal was made by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled to raise a corps in Kheda.

The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at the Jallianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other humiliations. But, in spite of the forebodings, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 I fought for cooperation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms marked a new era of hope in the life of India.



But that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was whitewashed. Not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were a method of further draining India and of prolonging her servitude.

I came to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than ever before politically and economically. A disarmed India had no power of resistance. It may take generations to secure Dominion Status. She cannot resist famines. India's cottage industry has been ruined. For this, both England and India's town-dwellers have to answer.

My examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases had led me to the conclusion that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred justice had been denied to Indians as against Europeans in Indian courts. The law is prostituted for the benefit of the exploiter.

Terrorism and display of force, on the one hand, and deprivation of all powers of self-defence on the other have emasculated the people. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. Section 124 A, under which Mr. Banker and I are charged, is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I know some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under it. I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which has done more harm to India than any previous system.

In my humble opinion, non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. I am endeavouring to show that, as evil can



only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil. I therefore invite the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil or to inflict on me the severest penalty. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.116-19]

In his judgement the judge said that the law was no respecter of persons. Nevertheless it would be impossible to ignore the fact that Mr. Gandhi was in a different category from any person he had ever tried or was likely to try. In the eyes of millions Mr. Gandhi was a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differed from him looked upon him as a man of high ideals and saintly life. The duty of the court was to judge him as a man subject to law, who had on his own admission broken the law and committed a grave offence against the State.

It was regrettable that Mr. Gandhi should have made it impossible for any Government to leave him at liberty. The judge recalled the trial of Tilak under the same section twelve years earlier which had resulted in Tilak being awarded a sentence of six years' imprisonment. That, the judge said, would be reasonable in the case before him and he accordingly sentenced Gandhiji to two years' simple imprisonment on each count of the charge. i.e., six years in all.

Shankarlal Banker, as printer and publisher of the articles in question, was sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment and a fine of a thousand rupees, or another six months' imprisonment in default.

Gandhiji and Banker were then led away to Sabarmati Prison and from there taken to Yeravda Prison, Poona on the night of 20 March 1922.



Thus was brought to halt a campaign that in the view of many, including the Governor of Bombay, had come very near to achieving its purpose of securing freedom for India.

Looking back on the gruelling time Gandhiji had given the Government, the Bombay Governor, Sir George Lloyd, told the American columnist Drew Pearson:

Just a thin, spindly shrimp of a fellow he was, but he swayed 319,000,000 people and held them at his back and call. He didn't care for material things, and preached nothing but the ideals and morals of India He gave us a scare. His programme filled our jails. You can't go on arresting people forever, you know, not when there are 319,000,000 of them. And if they had taken his next step and refused to pay taxes, God knows where we should have been! Gandhi's was the most colossal experiment in world's history, and it came within an inch of succeeding. But he couldn't control men's passions. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.556-58]

17

Shriman Narayan writes in his biography of Jamnalal Bajaj that Jamnalalji was also present at the Ahmedabad trial. He was anxious to obtain instructions from Bapu about various activities to be carried on during his imprisonment. Gandhiji told him to devote himself to the promotion of khadi and constructive work in general. He had written him the following letter at Jamnalal's request in his own hand two days earlier to help him in his spiritual growth :

Chi. Jamnalal,

As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything. It is not in *ahimsa*, but *ahimsa* is in it. What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling to



it, and it enables one to reach pure truth. There is no question there of divided duty. But often enough it is difficult to decide what is *ahimsa*. For instance, the use of disinfectants is *himsa*. and yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of *ahimsa* in the midst of a world of *himsa*, and that is possible only if we cling to Truth. That is how I deduce *ahimsa* from truth. Out of truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of truth has to be humble as the dust. His humility increases with his observance of truth. I see this every moment of my life. I have a much vivid sense of truth and of my own littleness than I had a year ago. The wonderful implication of the great truth "*Brahma Satyam Jaganmithya*" (*Brahma* is real, all else unreal) grows on me from day to day. It teaches us patience. This will purge us of harshness and add to our tolerance. It will make us magnify the mole-hills of our errors into mountains and minimize the mountains of others' errors into mole-hills. The body persists because of egoism. The utter extinction of the body, of egoism, is *moksha*. He who has achieved this will be the very image of Truth, or one may call it *Brahman*. Therefore the loving name of God is Dasanudasa (Servant of Servants).

Wife, children, friends, possessions – all should be held subservient to Truth. Each one of these should be sacrificed in the search for Truth. Only then can one be a satyagrahi. I have thrown myself into this movement with a view to making the observance of this principle comparatively easy, and it is with the same object that I do not hesitate to plunge men like you in it. Its outward form is *Hind Swaraj*. Its true form is the Swaraj for each individual. This Swaraj is being delayed because there



is yet to be found a satyagrahi of that type. This, however, need not dismay us. It should spur us on to greater effort.

You have made yourself my fifth son. But I am striving to be worthy. It is not an ordinary responsibility for an adopter. May God help me, and may I be worthy of it in this very life. [Shriman Narayan, *Jamnalal Bajaj*, pp.64-65]

Jamnalal mentioned the contents of this letter to his wife Janakidevi two days later in a letter saying : "You must have read about Bapu's trial in the newspapers. My coming here on this occasion was very fruitful. I had detailed talks with Bapu on various matters. He has given us an excellent letter to be preserved carefully for all time. It shall be most useful to us at the time of any difficulty or worry."

The scene of the court, Jamnalal wrote, was, "certainly memorable; it appeared as if the judge and his colleagues were the culprits and Bapu was trying to free them from the guilt with affection. The judge was an Englishman, and yet he was perceptibly influenced by Bapu."

The 18th of March, Jamnalal continued, would "always be fresh in our memory. It shall continue to shine in the annals of our nation." He wished Janakidevi, too, could have been present. "Bapu gave his blessings by patting me on the back with full force." He was confident that "we shall register definite improvement in our life. But our responsibility has also increased tremendously." It was not necessary to court imprisonment. If, however, he was arrested, he said to Janakidevi "your name shall appear as the publisher of the Hindi *Navajivan*. Mahatmaji has agreed to this suggestion."

Jamnalalji and many others in the court wept because of their deep affection for Bapu and the thought of separation from him for six long years. " I



went out of the court-room and I wiped my tears. But Bapu was laughing all the time," wrote Jamnalal.

Jamnalal added, "Now, we will have to carry on the Khadi work with renewed vigour." For this purpose, he added, both of them might have to live mostly in Bombay. "Everybody is well at the [Sabarmati] Ashram. Kasturba continues to carry on her work regularly and with forbearance." [*Ibid*, pp.66-67]



CHAPTER XVI: IN YERAVDA PRISON

1

Gandhiji had been working very hard and needed the rest which imprisonment at last brought him. Away from the hustle and bustle of political and other activities he looked forward to a quiet time to think and read as much as he could, a luxury he could not afford outside.

The Bombay Government had decided that in the event of conviction both Gandhiji and Shankerlal Banker should be transferred to Yeravda Prison. Accordingly on 20 March at midnight Gandhiji and Banker were put in a closed compartment of the special train waiting at Sabarmati station. Police Superintendent Daniel Healy accompanied Gandhiji up to Dadar, where the special was attached to the mail train going to Poona. The mail was to reach Poona on the following day in the afternoon. Healy had a very high regard for Gandhiji, and he placed a basket of fruit in their compartment. Shankerlal had his evening meal on the train before it reached Poona, but Gandhiji decided to have it later after reaching Yeravda. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti* (Gujarati), p.141]

They reached Yeravda Prison at about 5.30 p.m. on 21 March. The Jailor and the Superintendent were waiting and took them to a separate triangular compound in the jail. There were about fifteen vacant cells without a plinth in one row. Their belongings were held back in the Jailor's office. [*Ibid*, p.142]

Gandhiji told Superintendent R. M. Dalziel that it was time for his evening meal and that he could only take goat's milk, bread and fruit. Dalziel replied that he was sorry he could do nothing about it for that evening, as the office had already closed. Gandhiji said that if he could have his personal effects the problem would be solved, as he was carrying everything with him. But the



Superintendent flatly refused to give him his belongings. He was following the jail regulations. Gandhiji had taken no food since the morning. But he remained unperturbed. Shankerlal was, however, greatly upset, as he had had his meal and he saw that Gandhiji would have to go to bed hungry.

Gandhiji then asked for his spinning-wheel to be brought to him, as it was a rule with him to spin every day. The Superintendent could not oblige him in this regard either. He said that the jail committee would meet and decide which of his articles could be given to him.

Gandhiji next asked if he could be allowed to sleep outside, as he was used to sleeping in the open. The Superintendent replied : "Sir this is a jail. If I let you sleep outside, who will be responsible if anything happens?" Then he called out: "Jamadar, close the doors." So Shankerlal went to his cell and the doors of their cells were closed.

In each cell there was a straw mat and two blankets but no pillow. A metal plate and a bowl were supplied for meals, and a commode was kept in one corner to enable the prisoner to answer calls of nature. The warder gave them drinking water through a pipe which was made to pass through the wire mesh on the cell door.

Shankerlal writes :

I was used to sleeping under the open sky. I was very uncomfortable in the dark cell. Our cells were next to each other and we could talk. Gandhiji told me : "Take God's name and go to sleep. The best way to overcome all difficulties is to recite *Ramanama*." Gandhiji as a child had been afraid of darkness and ghosts and his nurse Rambha had advised him to recite *Ramanama* to overcome the fear. He had ever since found that this remedy worked in all situations.



The Superintendent came the next day and Gandhiji told him that he must get his spinning-wheel. He must spin every day or else he would have to fast. The spinning-wheel was then brought. Their other personal possessions had already been given back to them.

A little while later the jail committee paid them a visit Gandhiji repeated his request for permission to sleep outside. It was refused. The jail committee further recommended that Gandhiji and Banker "should be kept separate from each other." [*Source Material*, Vol.III, (2), p.2]

Within an hour after the interview Gandhiji wrote in a letter to Hakim Ajmal Khan, "a warder came ordering Mr. Banker to be removed to another quarter." Gandhiji felt like a mother suddenly deprived of her only child. It was not enough to supply food and other basic needs of life to prisoners, he wrote. A prisoner as a human being also needed human company. "He also has a heart and a mind and besides food and clothes, he needs suitable company to be able to talk and exchange ideas with. Solitary confinement denies this basic need of man." This letter was withheld by the jail authorities. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.129-36]

Shankerlal was taken to a "solitary cell" in another block. Except for this one, all the other cells there were vacant. Only those under sentence of death were kept there. Shankerlal had no company. His block was close to the Jailor's office and just outside it was the place where the prisoners were flogged. Those who were taken for this punishment had to pass in front of Shankerlal's cell. One or the other of the prisoners was flogged every day. It was painful for him to hear the tortured screams of the men being flogged. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.145]

Jailor Laxton saw Shankerlal and allowed him to have bread and tea. The food suited Shankerlal. But he found it very hard to sleep inside the cell. He



records that in 1914 as a student in England he had gone climbing the Snowdon in Wales and got caught up in a fog. The fog was so thick that he could not see his way at all. One false step and he might be hurled into the deep ravine below and die. There was no one around to help him or answer his shouts. The only thing he could do was to sit down and wait patiently for the fog to lift. It took nearly three quarters of an hour for the fog to clear, when Shankerlal was able to resume his climb and come down the other side. But the experience had shaken him and left its mark on him. He could not sleep in a closed room without a feeling of great discomfort. [*Ibid*, p.145]

But the Jailor would not permit him to sleep in the open.

Early in April the Assistant Jailor came one day and told Shankerlal that he would be taking him to Gandhiji. Shankerlal was surprised and pleased. Gandhiji had requested the authorities that Shankerlal might be allowed to teach him carding for half an hour every day, promising not to speak to him and the Inspector General of Prisons had acceded to the request. [*Source Material*, Vol.III, (2), p.179]

2

After a solitary confinement lasting a month and three weeks, Shankerlal Banker was on 15 May transferred back to his original cell near Gandhiji.

The day after Shankerlal joined Gandhiji, Gandhiji suggested that they should work out their daily time table. He said that they should get up at 4 a.m. Shankerlal asked why it was necessary to get up so early. Gandhiji replied: "In our country the farmers get up early and go to work. We who are their servants should also do so." He added that men wanted to live long, but they never thought how much time they lost in sleeping. If instead of getting up at 6 a. m. everyone got up at 4 a.m., they should get two hours more for work every day.



"Calculate how many hours you will get in a year – 730 hours!" So it was decided that they would get up at 4 a.m. and go to bed at 10 p.m.

During the day Gandhiji set aside six hours for carding and spinning for himself and gave two hours to teach Shankerlal how to spin. From noon to 1 p.m. they rested and they kept one hour for a walk. Gandhiji called walking 'royal exercise'. He would regularly walk for one hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. When it rained he would walk up and down in his 10 ft by 10 ft cell.

In solitary confinement, Shankerlal did not know how to spend the time, but now he was busy the whole day. Time just flew. He asked Gandhiji whether it was good for the body to work for so many hours. Gandhiji replied that if one liked one's work, and if it was not repetitious it did not tire one. If, however, one had to do the same thing over and over again all the time and did not like the work, it would bring on fatigue. "Work that one likes and that makes one happy, adds to enthusiasm and joy of life," he said.

At night from 9 to 10 p.m. Shankerlal massaged Gandhiji's head and feet. He also cooked for Bapu and himself and cleaned Bapu's cell. One day Bapu said if Shankerlal would not mind, he would prefer to clean his own cell. Shankerlal asked the reason. Bapu then told him that sometimes Shankerlal did not clean the corners properly and Bapu liked perfect cleanliness. Shankerlal promised to be more careful.

Shankerlal also washed Bapu's clothes. He washed them white and folded them neatly. One day Bapu said he would like to wash his own clothes. Was there any defect in his washing? – asked Shankerlal. Bapu said : "You wash the clothes very clean, but I feel you use too much soap. I feel I could do with half the soap that you use." Gandhiji never forgot that he was a representative of the poor and



he must use the minimum of everything necessary. He counted the match-sticks in the match-box and told Shankerlal that one box should last them seven days.

Gandhiji used to take 100 currants (seedless raisins) for breakfast. One day he said to Shankerlal that the currants he had served for his breakfast were 110 and not 100. Shankerlal had put the approximate quantity before him. Gandhiji told him always to count and serve him exactly one hundred currants. "One must not consume more food than one needs," he said. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.150]

Gandhiji used to drink hot water in the morning. One day he told Shankerlal not to light the fire to heat his water. They had the lantern burning at night. He had put the tumbler of water on top of the lantern and the water had become hot enough for him to drink. In this way he saved some coal.

Gandhiji had ordered 3 lb. of goat's milk a day for himself. Superintendent Dalziel sent 4 lb. and Shankerlal gave the one extra pound of milk to the warder. Gandhiji did not like it. He insisted that the authorities should send him only 3 lb. of milk. "We must never take anything more than our actual need," he insisted. [*Ibid*, p.152]

Gandhiji was very particular that the bread pieces served to him should be of equal size. Kasturba sent sweets made of jaggery and wheat flour fried in ghee (clarified butter) called *golpapadi*. Gandhiji would not take bread when he took *golpapadi*. Shankerlal boiled the milk and toasted the bread or fried the slices in ghee made out of the 2 oz. of butter supplied to them every day and put the bread in hot milk to soften it. Gandhiji's teeth gave him trouble and he had to eat soft food. When he had *golpapadi* he put that into his milk instead of bread pieces.



Fruit came from outside from time to time. Gandhiji took two oranges a day and juice of two sour limes with some soda bicarb in water. He did not take mangoes. Shankerlal asked him the reason. Gandhiji explained that other prisoners did not get mangoes. So he also did not take mangoes. "Mangoes are tasty but they are not necessary for health as oranges are," he said.

Gandhiji's extreme concern for economy is worthy of study. Gandhiji considered voluntary reduction of ones wants to be the hallmark of true civilization.

3

The conditions under which Gandhiji was to be kept in jail were made clear to the Superintendent by the Inspector-General of Prisons in a letter dated 17 March. All prisoners were to be treated alike. No distinction was to be made between ordinary prisoners and political prisoners. Paper and other writing material was not to be provided unless allowed by Government. Every effort must be made to keep the prisoners absolutely apart from each other. Letters must be rigidly censored and must not touch upon anything except purely domestic business.

On 1 April 1922, C. Rajagopalachari and Devadas Gandhi were given permission by the jail authorities to have an interview with Gandhiji. Following the visit, Rajagopalachari issued a statement charging that Gandhiji was not being well treated in jail. Throughout the interview Gandhiji had been made to stand while the Superintendent sat in his chair. He was kept in a cell intended for solitary confinement; he was not allowed even his own bedding : he had been given two jail blankets but no pillow; for utensils he had a jail mug and a dish; he was given no news papers; he was not allowed any books save purely religious ones. Except in the matter of food, Rajaji said, Gandhiji was being treated strictly



as a common prisoner under the Bombay Jail Code, which in many respects was worse than codes in other provinces. Gandhiji had told the interviewers that he did not want any complaints to be made about life in jail. Rajaji told him : "Leave that to my discretion." He felt he had to do it. [*Source Material*, Vol.III (2), pp.8-10]

There was a hue and cry in the newspapers. The Government denied the charges. Rajagopalachari repeated them. There were comments in newspapers and *The Bombay Chronicle* of 5 April 1922 came out with an editorial asking the authorities to treat Gandhiji with honour and courtesy and jealous regard for his health. [*Ibid*, pp.10-11]

On 23 April 1922 Gandhiji wrote to the Superintendent to withdraw lemons and sugar from his diet as he had come to the jail "not to indulge myself but to be under stricter discipline. Lemons and sugar are now an indulgence for me." The bread had already been reduced to 3/4 lb. at Gandhiji's own request. [*Ibid*, p.20]

The daily ration supplied to him consisted of bread, goat's milk, butter 1 oz., table salt 1 tea-spoonful, soda bicarb 1 tea-spoonful. [*Ibid*, p.23]

The Government were particular that Indian prisoners, Hindu or Muslim, should not be allowed to come in contact with Gandhiji. They feared he might influence them to create trouble for the Government.

They brought a Somali convict warder named Adan, an army deserter who was undergoing ten years' imprisonment, to serve Gandhiji. The object of the authorities in keeping Adan with Gandhiji was to keep a careful watch on him. To start with Adan was very vigilant. If while passing through Gandhiji's yard a prisoner saluted Gandhiji, he reported it to the Jail Superintendent. After three days Adan was so impressed by Gandhiji that he said to Shankerlal : "Gandhiji is a religious man. He prays at 4 o'clock in the morning and works the whole day.



He has not the time to speak to anyone. where is the need to keep a watch over him?"

Adan next wanted to serve the religious man, the man of God, and insisted on doing all the work that Shankerlal was doing for Gandhiji. One day he brought a copy of *The Times of India* and said to Shankerlal: "Here is a fresh copy of today's *Times*; please take it to Gandhiji." Shankerlal told him that Gandhiji would not like it. He was not allowed to see the newspapers under the jail rules and he would not do anything surreptitiously. Adan was upset. "Everyone likes to see newspapers," he said. He had brought it at some risk and he could not appreciate Shankerlal's reasoning. He said, "If you will not take it to him, I will take it to him myself." He went and put the paper in front of Gandhiji and asked him to read it. Gandhiji said he could not read it, as it was against the jail rules. He told Adan to tear it up or burn it. Adan wanted him to read the paper. He thought of a way and said to Gandhiji "You may not care to read it. But I have been away from home so long, please read it and tell me the news about my country." Gandhiji smiled; he read the paper and told Adan what was happening in the Somali Land war at that time. It made Adan happy as a child. He came to Shankerlal all smiles, "See, I made him read the paper," and he laughed.

Gandhiji had some trouble with his eyes. Adan told him not to strain his eyes by spinning. "Why do you work so hard?" he asked. Gandhiji told him : "See Adan, the sun rises in the morning and gives light to the whole universe. The sun is never tired. How can we interrupt our work?"

A little later when Gandhiji reduced his intake of bread from four slices to two, Adan said to him, "Sir, the sun rises on time and does not change its course. How can you reduce your bread intake from four to two slices?" Gandhiji only laughed, Shankerlal recalls. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.151]



Gandhiji came to like Adan more and more. He started teaching him Urdu. He took up his case with the Superintendent and saw to it that all that he was doing would count as work and he would get remission of his sentence for it. The result was that Adan was released soon afterwards. He was happy to go home, but he was sad to part with Gandhiji. [*Ibid*, pp.156-57]

4

Gandhiji was particular that whatever one did should be done well. The slivers should be the same size, he told Shankerlal, each one should be capable of giving twenty rounds of yarn so that after spinning 20 slivers one would know that one had produced four hundred rounds of yarn without counting.

He was dissatisfied that he could spin only 200 to 250 rounds in an hour, while Keshav, Maganlal Gandhi's son, could spin 400 to 450 rounds in an hour. Shankerlal tried to explain that Keshav was a young boy, but Gandhiji continued his efforts to pick up more speed in spinning.

Shankerlal tried to argue with Gandhiji not to strain himself by spinning for four hours a day. His reply was that it was necessary for him to do so in order to identify himself with the poor sisters who were spinning for eight hours a day to earn a few coins. He had the time in jail to do so. He added that it was not enough to spin. It was necessary to think how the spinning-wheel could be improved so that it took less space, how it could be made lighter to turn and more efficient and more productive. The idea was not just to spin and produce a certain amount of yarn. "Spinning must become the means of one's identification with the poor. Those who understand the importance of spinning would see God in the spindle of the spinning-wheel. Spinning should be done in the spirit of sacrifice (*yajna*) in order to serve God in the form of the poor."



Shankerlal was sceptical about the usefulness of the spinning-wheel. He said to Gandhiji one day that in this age of science and technology, there were many methods of reducing labour. "Gnett (a scholar) has said that a man could meet all his needs by working for 3 or 4 hours in the day. Should we also not think in terms of machines which would reduce labour and increase production which would also remove poverty?" he asked.

Gandhiji replied : " Your argument sounds attractive. But nature has so planned life that work is of great importance to man. No one can cheat nature. Suppose you work four hours a day, sleep for eight hours, you might use four hours for other daily routine needs, what are you going to do for the remaining eight hours?"

Shankerlal's reply was that there were many other things one could do to improve the quality of life, such as taking interest in arts and science, research, games and sports, dramatics and so on, for which people did not find time.

Gandhiji conceded that all these things had an important place in life but up to a point. "When no one needs work for more than four hours a day to earn a living, men are likely to be lost in seeking enjoyment and self-indulgence. If all could really make good use of their leisure, it would cease to be leisure. The English have a well-known proverb which says 'An idle mind is the devil's workshop'. It should be borne in mind by us," he said.

Gandhiji added: "Christ has said 'Earn thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.' It is a most significant statement. Without using one's hands and feet, one could not even digest the food one ate." Real joy lay in bread labour. Those who did not have to work to earn a living took to hockey, tennis and football, etc., to exercise their muscles. The work which one did by using one's own hands and feet was most important. In order to really appreciate art and science also, body labour



was necessary. Without it man would become almost a machine or a slave of the machine. "Moreover in our country we have plenty of manpower. If we use machines, only some men will get work. What about the large numbers who will remain unemployed?" All these realities had to be borne in mind to understand the limitations of machine and to appreciate the significance of the spinning-wheel and khadi. [*Ibid*, pp.158-60]

5

On 8 November 1922 , the jail authorities through the Inspector General of Prisons sent to Sabarmati Ashram Gandhiji's request to be supplied two periodicals, viz., *Vasant* and *Samalochak*, the latter only if it was non-political. The Government refused sanction for the periodicals. Gandhiji on 4 January 1923 wrote to the Superintendent asking for the reasons for the refusal. He was merely told that his request for the periodicals could not be granted. His letter was returned. Gandhiji persisted and wrote again on 23 February, wanting to know the grounds for the refusal and repeated the request again on 5 March. He was told that the decision regarding the two magazines could not be reconsidered. [*Source Material*, Vol.III (2), pp.30-40]

Gandhiji asked also for *The Times of India Weekly*, *Modern Review* and *Saraswati* (Hindi). He was allowed to have the last named periodical only. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, p.139]

In February 1923 a publication called *Bal Jivan* addressed to Gandhiji was received in the prison. This was not allowed to be delivered to him. About the same time a Gujarati book carrying the title *Gita Nishkarsha* Part - I and a Hindi magazine *Vedic Dharma*, were also received. While *Gita Nishkarsha* was delivered to Gandhiji, *Vedic Dharma* was withheld.



The procedure in every case was tedious and time consuming. When a letter or a book or a magazine addressed to Gandhiji was received, the Superintendent of Yeravda prison put it up for orders to the Inspector General of Prisons, who in turn put it up to the Home Department, Government of Bombay, who took the decision and conveyed it to the Inspector General of Prisons to be conveyed to the Superintendent.

At times this punctiliousness was carried too far, as, for instance when a post card addressed to Gandhiji was received from "a poor inhabitant of India" who wanted through Gandhiji's "intervention a regular stipend or allowance from the Swaraj Fund" to finance his "trip to foreign countries." He had further invited Gandhiji to accompany him to foreign countries "where I may be fortunate to serve you with heart." The Jail Superintendent put it through the usual mill. Orders came from Home, through I. G. Prisons, that the postcard should not be delivered. [*Ibid*, pp.91-92]

The works which the authorities were satisfied were purely religious were generally delivered. *Bhagwad Puran* and *Sant Bani Sangrah*, sent by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee and another work *Rambles in Vedanta*, sent by Ganesan, were duly handed over to Gandhiji. So were three pamphlets on Christian Science received from America. Other works received and delivered were *Sirat-e-Nabi*, *Fate and Free will*, *The Imitation of Buddha*, *Shri Buddha Gita*, *The Gospel of Buddha*, *The Dharma*, *A Short Sketch of Lord Buddha's Life*. *The Golden Rules*, *Upanishads* with Gujarati translation, *The Song Celestial*, *India, What Can It Teach Us?* and *Shanker Bhashya* in Gujarati.



Early in 1923 a large number of people began arriving in Yeravda who had been imprisoned in connection with a local satyagraha in a place called Mulshi Peta.

In Mulshi Peta in Poona district, the Tata Hydro-Electric Company had taken up work on a dam on the rivers Nira-Mula and the Government intimated that farm lands belonging to 54 villages in the area would be acquired under the Land Acquisition Act. The villagers resisted. After all pleas to local authorities and even to the Viceroy failed, the villagers decided to resort to satyagraha. The satyagraha commenced on 16 April 1921 by groups of villagers lying down on the construction site and making it impossible for the work to proceed.

Lending his support to the satyagrahis, Gandhiji had written :

What is the value of all the boons that the Tata scheme claims to confer upon India, if it is to be at the unwilling expense of even one poor man? I dare say the problem of disease and poverty can be easily solved... if the three crore half-starved men and women, and lakhs of the decrepit humanity were shot and their bodies utilized for manure, or their bones utilized for making knife-handles. And yet no one but a lunatic will put up such a suggestion. Is the case any weaker when men and women are not to be shot but compulsorily dispossessed of their valued lands... ?

At the same time he told the satyagrahis that given a just cause, capacity for endless suffering, and avoidance of violence, victory was a certainty. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XX, pp.40-41]

Among the satyagrahis who remained perfectly calm in the face of provocation from construction staff, were Bhuskute, Deo, Palsule, Deware,



Gokhale, Bhopatkar, Paranjpye, Joshi, Dr. Phatak and other local leaders. For a time the satyagrahis were successful and the construction work remained suspended. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, pp.144(g-i)]

But the work was resumed again and so was the satyagraha. Soon arrests began and the jail began to be filled with these satyagrahis. In January 1923 there were 60 Mulshi Peta prisoners in Yeravda prison. Most of the satyagrahis were Congressmen, but the satyagraha had not been organized or even authorized by the Congress. So the Mulshi Peta prisoners were treated as common prisoners.

These satyagrahis, who had all been sentenced to hard labour, were giving an anxious time to the authorities by either refusing to work or by "doing only a ridiculously small proportion of the allotted task," according to the jail authorities. Those assigned the labour of grinding grain produced only 3 lb., 5 lb. or 10 lb. of flour while they were expected to produce 35 lb. of sifted flour as required. The requirement was obviously too high. The satyagrahis could not have reached the target even if they had tried to do so – which they were not doing. They were awarded punishments of "standing handcuff and bar fetters" without producing any effect. Accordingly on 1 February 1923 Jail Superintendent Jones sought permission to inflict on the defiant prisoners corporal punishment of flogging. [*Source Material* Vol.III (2), pp.165-66]

Flogging thereafter became a matter of almost daily occurrence. On 10 February, Gandhiji wrote to Major Jones :

Yesterday morning I heard screaming.... A short while after, I saw four or five young men in gunny clothing being marched. One had a bare back. They were all walking very slowly and with bent backs. I observed that they were in pain.... The object in writing this is to know whether I



could be permitted to see these men who are refusing to work. I might be able to persuade them to reconsider their position.

The Superintendent regretted that the offer could not be accepted.
[C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.156-57 and ff]

One of the prisoners flogged was Dastane, a well-known worker of Bhusawal. Shankerlal Banker suggested to Gandhiji that since the authorities would not permit Gandhiji to see Dastane, a way might be found to have Gandhiji's message conveyed to him. Jairamdas Doulatram, a Congress leader from Sind, who had been lodged in a cell adjacent to that of Dastane, could be sent word to see Gandhiji and take his message to Dastane. They would later inform the jail authorities and take such punishment for breaking the jail rules in doing so as might be indicated. Gandhiji agreed.

Jairamdas carried out the mission, which had the desired effect on Dastane. He then informed the jail authorities. The Superintendent considered this unauthorized action contrary to jail rules, especially as it had entailed a good deal of "wandering about the separate yard" on the part of Jairamdas. He was accordingly punished with seven days of solitary confinement in his cell. Gandhiji wrote to the Superintendent on the same day, 12 February :

The breach is more mine than Jairamdas's. I asked him to tell any Mulshi Peta man he could see, that if he claimed to be a satyagrahi, he should not refuse work.... I told him too to tell you all that happened if you visited him today.... I should feel sorry if I escape when the one who is less guilty...is punished.

The Superintendent assured Gandhiji that he harboured no anger against Jairamdas. But he was bound to take some notice of the breach of regulations.



He could not punish Gandhiji for instigation, for Gandhiji had not left the boundary of his yard to talk to the satyagrahis. [*Ibid*, pp.157-58]

The defiance on the part of the Mulshi Peta prisoners, however, continued. The flogging, which also continued, only made the situation worse. One of the prisoners expressed the wish to be flogged "so that he may see what it is like and in order that he may not fear coming to prison on future occasions." The Superintendent, forwarding the request to the higher authorities, recommended that the request of the prisoner be granted to the extent of 20 lashes ! [*Source Material*, Vol III, (2), pp.267-68]

The Mulshi Peta prisoners were also resorting to hunger-strikes. According to prison records six of them went on hunger-strike in January, February and March at different times and for different durations ranging from two days to two weeks. [*Ibid*, p.171]

The flogging went on from month to month. On 28 June, for instance six of them were flogged. Protesting to the jail authorities, Gandhiji again sought permission to see the prisoners. He repeated the request the following day. His entreaties were of no avail. Some of the prisoners again went on hunger-strike in protest against the flogging and on 9 July Gandhiji gave notice to the authorities that as the situation had become well-nigh intolerable for him, he proposed, "purely as a solace for my own soul," to fast from the following day till a satisfactory solution was reached.

This made the Government jittery , especially as Gandhiji's health had considerably deteriorated in jail even though from June there had been some signs of improvement. His weight had registered a fall from 107 lb. on 11 March to 97 lb. on 30 April. The jail authorities had already expressed concern about this to the Government. On 2 May the Superintendent reported the matter to the



Government and mentioned that Gandhiji was somewhat debilitated and was suffering from indigestion.

To permit Gandhiji to fast, therefore, would not have been the wisest policy. The Governor, though he would not wish even to seem to consider Gandhiji's proposals under the threat of his fasting, had orders issued permitting Gandhiji to see the satyagrahis on hunger-strike and for flogging not to be resorted to except in the case of assault on officials. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.166-71]

Referring to the incident Gandhiji writes :

One fine morning we heard that several Mulshi Peta prisoners were flogged for short task and that, as a protest against the punishment, many other Mulshi Peta prisoners had commenced a hunger-strike. Two of these were well known to me. One was Dev, and the other Dastane. Mr. Dev had worked with me in Champaran.... Mr. Dastane of Bhusaval is known to everybody. The reader may therefore imagine my pain when I heard that Dev was among the party flogged and that he was also one of the hunger-strikers.... I felt that we as human beings could not possibly remain uninterested in such matters although we were prisoners.... There was a great deal of correspondence and negotiation.... The Government recognized that I had no desire to interfere with the prison administration... They therefore permitted me to see Messrs. Dastane and Dev in the presence of the Superintendent and Mr. Griffiths, the Inspector General of Police. It was to me a rare pleasure and a matter of pride to see these two friends walking unaided and with a steady step after full thirteen days' unbroken fast.... They agreed to break the fast and to persuade the others to do likewise.... The Major ordered milk and fruit diet for the



hunger-strikers during the period of recuperation. A hearty handshake between us all terminated the meeting. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.96-98]

7

Prisoners were allowed one visit every three months and to write and receive one letter during the same period. But in this matter, too, there was constant tussle between the jail authorities and Gandhiji. On 14 April 1922 Gandhiji wrote a letter to Hakim Ajmal Khan in exercise of this right. The letter was not passed by the censor and was returned to Gandhiji with the remark that he should take off certain passages before the letter could be passed. Gandhiji protested and informed the authorities that unless they forwarded the letter as it was he would be forced to forgo his right to the quarterly letter.

In December 1922 the Prison authorities were approached with the request that Hakim Ajmal Khan and Motilal Nehru might be permitted to have an interview with Gandhiji on the 18th along with Kasturba Gandhi and Chhaganlal Gandhi. The Superintendent gave the necessary permission. He explained to the higher authorities that he had given permission to the former two because permission had been given to Rajagopalachari earlier in April, whose status was the same. [*Source Material*, Vol.III (2), p.52] The Home Department took the Superintendent to task, saying his action was in contravention of Government orders and that interviews to Ajmal Khan and Motilal Nehru should be refused. The Superintendent accordingly sent telegrams to Motilal Nehru and Ajmal Khan : "I had no authority to grant interview, do not come." [*Ibid*, pp.53-54]

Notwithstanding the running feud Gandhiji carried on with the authorities over letters, interviews, books and magazines, and over the treatment of other prisoners in jail, Gandhiji was able to get through a great deal of reading. He looked upon the enforced rest in prison as an opportunity for satisfying his



intellectual hunger. The diaries he maintained in jail during 1922 and 1923 contain his reading list, which for range and pace of reading would be the envy of the most diligent scholar. A good deal of course was made up of religious works of different faiths and sects, but there were books treating of a wide range of subjects besides : works such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, Kipling's *The Five Nations*, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, *The Second Jungle Book*, Jules Verne's *Dropped From The Clouds*, Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, Shaw's *Man and Superman*. Gandhiji writes :

I mapped out a rigid programme of studies at Yeravda to finish which six years were not enough.... I therefore settled down to studies with the zest of a youth of twenty-four instead of an old man of fifty-four with a broken constitution. I accounted for every minute of my time and would have been discharged a fair Urdu and Tamil scholar and well versed in Sanskrit [at the end of six years].... My studies were rudely interrupted by my unfortunate illness and consequent discharge. However the following list gives the reader an idea of my studies.*

Gandhiji also put his hand to writing a *History of Satyagraha in South Africa*. By the time he left jail, he had completed some 30 chapters of the work, which were to appear later serially in *Navajivan* and *Young India*.

In the very early stages of Gandhiji's imprisonment, the Government of Bombay had considered the desirability of Gandhiji being transferred to a prison in Burma and wrote accordingly to the Home Department, Government of India.

The Viceroy on 8 April, instructed the Departments concerned "to expedite negotiations and preparations for transfer." The Burma Government agreed to accommodate Gandhiji in Mandalay Jail if necessity arose and informed the Bombay Government.



The Government of Bombay, however, had second thoughts, since "immediate transfer of Gandhi would stimulate agitation which at present seems to be dying down." It informed the Government of India that if necessity arose, timely notice would be communicated to the Government of Burma. [Source Material, Vol.III (2), pp.205-07]

* For the list, which is too long to be reproduced here, see Appendix III.

Companions in Jail

During Gandhiji's term in Yeravda, Shankerlal Banker, Manzar Ali Sokhta, Indulal Yajnik and Abdul Gani served him as companions at different times and for different periods. Of these Shankerlal Banker and Indulal Yajnik have published their reminiscences of their days with Gandhiji.

Shankerlal Banker had been awarded one year's simple imprisonment with a fine of a thousand rupees or another six months' simple imprisonment in default. Shankerlal did not pay the fine and expected to be in jail for 18 months. He was in jail altogether for a period of thirteen months - from 18 March 1922 to 17 April 1923. The Government auctioned his motor-car and recovered the fine. Shankerlal was disappointed to be released early. Most of his term, from 15 May 1922 to the day of his discharge, was spent in the company of Gandhiji.

In his Gujarati book, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, Shankerlal has given a vivid account of these days with Gandhiji. They were traumatic months. Gandhiji had to fight every inch of his way to claim not only the most elementary rights as a prisoner but also for the rights of other prisoners. He was at the same time ever ready to surrender any concession or special treatment for himself not available to other prisoners.



Shankerlal has also recorded his own impressions of the way Gandhiji thought and felt about these and other matters, about his duties as a prisoner, as a reformer and as a seeker after Truth.

Shankerlal recalls how, when once his *dhoti* had become frayed and worn and he awaited a fresh supply of clothes from home, Gandhiji suggested that he should stitch up the tears in the *dhoti* in the meantime. Shankerlal said he did not know how to sew.

"Give it to me then," said Gandhiji.

Gandhiji made a very good job of it. Shankerlal marvelled where Gandhiji could have picked up the skill. Gandhiji said he liked to learn these little things. He did not have enough opportunity outside jail to do so but when he went to jail in South Africa he learnt not only sewing but also sandal-making and could make excellent chappals. He would have liked to learn carpentry in Yeravda prison, but, he added, "in view of the fact that they have kept us in a block marked 'separate,' they are not likely to let me go to the workshop. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, p.161]

It was not only that Gandhiji knew how to sew, Shankerlal goes on to say, but he really enjoyed the work. There was no time left for it during the day, but there was half an hour or an hour available in the evening. Gandhiji asked for cloth from the jailor and spent the time sewing pillow cases. [*Ibid*, p.162]

Gandhiji had prayers regularly with his companions, morning and evening. At the prayers Gandhiji recited the *shlokas* and *bhajans* himself except on Mondays when he observed silence and Shankerlal did the reciting.

A particular *bhajan* of Narsinh Mehta, which counselled man to accept whatever happened as the will of God, made Shankerlal a little uncomfortable.



He thought it smacked of fatalism. It appeared to suggest that human effort was of no consequence.

Gandhiji said : "Never mind if that is how you feel. It is a good *bhajan*. You will understand its meaning some day."

Later, Shankerlal adds, someone was able to explain to him that what the *bhajan* meant was that man must try to understand what the will of God was, what was the right thing to do, and then act accordingly. That was true endeavour on the part of man.

Similarly in the morning prayers Gandhiji used to recite the verses :

प्रातः स्मरामि ह्यदि संस्फुरदात्मतत्त्वं
सचित्सुखं परमहंस गतिं तुरीयं
यत्स्वप्न जागर सुषुप्तिमवैति नित्यं
तद् ब्रह्म निष्कलमहं न च मुतसंधं

In this verse the last utterance, तद्ब्रह्म निष्कलमहं न मुतसंधः | (I am that Brahman without attributes and not a conglomerate of the elements.) again troubled Shankerlal. Gandhiji, he felt, could say that of himself perhaps. But it would not be appropriate on Shankerlal's part to make that claim for himself. Besides, he was inclined towards the way of *bhakti* (devotion). Gandhiji said: "We may very well not be aware that we are the Brahman, but that certainly is the truth." "Years later," writes Shankerlal, "when I visited Tiruvannamalai and saw Ramana Maharshi, I became convinced that Gandhiji was right." [*Ibid*, pp.162-64]

"Have you read the *Gita* ?" Gandhiji asked Shankerlal one day.

"Yes, in my student days," Shankerlal answered.

"Did you read it in the original Sanskrit ?" Gandhiji asked.



"No," Shankerlal said, "I do not know Sanskrit. At school my second language was French."

"But the *Gita* should be read in Sanskrit. Only then can one fully understand it. You can easily learn enough Sanskrit to understand the *Gita*."

Gandhiji went on : "I am after all quite advanced in years, and yet I devote one hour every day to learning Urdu, for I want to be able to correspond with my Muslim friends in that language."

Immediately R. G. Bhandarkar's Sanskrit primer was ordered and Shankerlal's study of Sanskrit began. Gandhiji gave him lessons for an hour every day. Twenty-one years later, in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp, I also had the privilege of studying the same primer of Bhandarkar under Bapu's guidance.

After Shankerlal had mastered the rudiments of Sanskrit, Gandhiji said: "That is enough. You can now start on the *Gita*."

Gandhiji then made Shankerlal go through the *Gita* with him, reciting a few *shlokas* every day, and being very particular that the pronunciation was correct. He also explained the meaning of each verse. though there were certain words he himself did not fully understand. In a few weeks they had gone through the whole of the *Gita*. Gandhiji then told Shankerlal that he should read one chapter of the book every day.

"But why?" asked Shankerlal, "I have read the *Gita*, I have understood it. Why must I read it every day?"

"Because", said Gandhiji, " the *Gita* is a work that has to be read every day. The more you read it the better you will be able to grasp its meaning. You will discover in it ever new truths."



"You surely have numerous friends, haven't you?" Gandhiji asked Shankerlal.

"But of course," Shankerlal answered.

"How many of them do you think will stand by you when you are in difficulties?"

"It is difficult to tell. A few may come forward to help, while others may not."

"The same applies to books," Gandhiji said. The *Gita* is a book which will help you in every difficult situation in life."

Shankerlal was to find in later life that this piece of advice was sound.

On Gandhiji's suggestion they had taken to getting up at 4 in the morning. The difficulty was that they did not have a clock and could never be sure when it was 4 a.m. unless the jail gong struck the hour. Many times they got up for the prayers to find that it was only 3 a.m. or even earlier. It was not easy going back to sleep again and so Gandhiji took to looking at the stars when he was allowed to sleep in the open later on. "Nothing like looking at the stars to know the time," he said.

To know what is where in the sky, Gandhiji ordered a copy of a map of the sky brought out by *The Times of India* press. He also ordered a copy of a work on the stars by an author named Boyle and asked Shankerlal to read it. By that time they had been permitted to sleep outside, and they both found this pursuit of astronomy immensely enjoyable. [*Ibid*, pp.169-70]



Superintendent Jones was a man of friendly disposition and had great regard for Gandhiji. Gandhiji wrote of him : "I have rarely met an officer, whether European or Indian, so free from humbug or false notions of prestige or dignity." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, p.488]. He told Gandhiji one day that he was considering shifting them to the European yard of the jail, where they might be more comfortable. Gandhiji agreed and one fine day – on 21 August 1922 according to Gandhiji's diary – they had their things shifted to the European yard.

In the evening when they had settled down in their new cells Gandhiji suddenly said : "Shankerlal, it was not right for us to agree to be shifted here. We must go back to our old cells. I must speak to the Superintendent."

"But why?" Shankerlal asked.

"This is not an ordinary matter," Gandhiji said. "The Superintendent has made a mistake and when the Government comes to know of it, his position will become quite embarrassing. We must save him."

When he told Major Jones, the latter said : "Please do not fret over it. I am the Superintendent of this jail and I have full authority to do what I have done. If the Government does not like it and interferes, I shall resign."

"You may have the authority you claim," Gandhiji told him, "but such authority applies only in the case of prisoners in general, certainly not in my case. I appreciate your concern for me, and I should like to fall in with your wishes. But it would be good to know the Government's view in the matter. The best thing would be for you to shift us back to our old cells and then consult the Home Member. If he approves the arrangement, we can again come back."



The two were then taken back. A few days later the Major came to express his gratitude to Gandhiji for his sage counsel. "You were right," he said. "It was the Government's decision to keep you in this ward and if I shifted you from here without the authority of the Government I would be putting myself in a spot." One thing was for sure, he said. Had he taken Gandhiji to the European yard and then had the Government ordered him to be taken back he would have had to resign." [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, pp. 185-87].

Shankerlal span on the charkha for two hours every day, for he had made a vow to do so, but he still did not quite understand the importance Gandhiji attached to spinning. He said to Gandhiji : "I do not fully understand how spinning is going to change the situation in the country. I have read the Census Reports and other literature on economic development brought out by the Government. The Census Report contains figures about the number of people in handloom industry. There are no figures about the people engaged in spinning."

"You city-dwellers form your ideas only by such reports," replied Gandhiji. "But they are misleading. You can learn about the true position only when you go around the villages and see how people live. I have been all over the country. The great bulk of our people live in the villages and in the villages millions have to go without two meals every day." He added that agricultural work that the peasants did must be supplemented by some industry and that industry could be based only on the charkha. "The revival of the villages is possible only through the revival of the charkha."

"But why not the handloom?" Shankerlal queried. Gandhiji replied:

Because weaving is not a thing that can be taken up by all. It can be done only by the weavers. Also, weaving is not quickly learnt. It requires expenditure; it requires space to install a handloom. But spinning is



something that everyone – man, woman and child – can carry on at any time, at any place. It is the only activity that can be carried on by all throughout the country.

Gandhiji emphasized that the charkha was a potent means to alleviate the economic distress of the large masses in the country. "We can have no idea of the dire poverty of the villages. The villagers frequently have no wherewithal to buy oil, chillies, salt and such daily necessities. If it could be arranged for them to deposit yarn in a post-office in exchange for money, they could then buy the things they need. We could even set up yarn banks. [*Ibid*, pp.170-71]

Once in the course of his conversation with Major Jones, Gandhiji suggested to the Superintendent that the jail could be made self-supporting in the matter of cloth.

"The effort you make to grow vegetables is commendable," Gandhiji said. "You also have looms in the jail and you have cloth woven here. If you set your mind to it, you could have the yarn for the looms spun in the jail. The jail would then be self-sufficient in cloth."

"The proposal is certainly worth considering," said Major Jones. "But it is beyond my authority to assign the task of spinning to all prisoners. However, if political prisoners will be ready to spin and express a wish to do so, I shall arrange the necessary facilities."

A short while later the Major arranged for spinning-wheels to be supplied to the political prisoners in the jail, most of whom took to spinning.

Gandhiji arranged for slivers of cotton to be prepared and sent from outside and also kept a record of how much and what kind of yarn each person



span. He took keen interest in the activity and made various suggestions for the improvement of the performance of each spinner.

10

At some stage, writes Shankerlal, a new Deputy Jailor arrived in Yeravda. His name was Warner and he had come from the Army. He was a man of a sociable disposition. He visited Gandhiji every day and talked freely with him. Gradually he came to have so much faith in Gandhiji that he discussed with him all his domestic troubles also. One day he said to Gandhiji: "My salary is meagre. I find it extremely difficult to manage all the expenses on it."

"Why don't you then leave off smoking and drinking? Money saved is money earned," Gandhiji said.

Warner laughed : "You are right, of course," he said, "I shall make efforts in that direction."

Warner gradually came very close to Gandhiji and always tried to anticipate and meet Gandhiji's needs. Gandhiji also became quite attached to him and remembered him even after his release from jail. [*Ibid*, pp.194-95]

Various convict warders were posted for various periods by the jail authorities to serve Gandhiji. Even after his release Gandhiji retained fond memories of them. He writes :

When Mr. Banker and I were transferred to the Yeravda Central Prison, there was one warder and one *bardasi*.... The convict warder whose acquaintance we first made was a Hindu from the Punjab side. His name was Harkaran. He was convicted of murder....

Well, the first acquaintance with Harkaran was not particularly happy Harkaran allowed the full force of his authority to descend upon



me. I was not to do this or that. I was not to cross the white line referred to in my letter to Hakimji.... When he saw that I did not resent his officiousness, nor did I pay any attention to it, he felt nonplussed.... My non-violent non-cooperation led to his cooperation.... Harkaran and I became perfect friends. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.289-91]

After the Somali convict warder Adan was discharged from jail, Shankerlal writes, two other convict warders were assigned to work for Gandhiji. They were Bhimo and Thamo. Bhimo, or Bhimrao was a Mahar by caste and knowing that he was an untouchable, always kept himself at a distance from Gandhiji and Shankerlal.

Shankerlal explained to him that they did not consider anyone untouchable. All human beings were equal in the eyes of God and he should have no scruples about entering their cells and touching their things, utensils and even food. Bhimo still hesitated. It was only when Gandhiji spoke to him that he finally overcame his scruples. He was overjoyed. Like Adan he learnt to do every little thing required by Gandhiji and did his work with great devotion. He was intelligent, of a lively disposition and quick to learn. After finishing his work he took to spinning. In a few days he became quite proficient as a spinner.

The thought of what work he should take up after his discharge from jail always perplexed Bhimo. "I do all this work here," he said, "I also spin. What shall I do when I go out?"

"Go to the Congress office," Gandhiji told him. "Explain that you had been working here for me and you had been spinning too. Congress workers will find something for you to do."

The other warder was Thamo, a Maratha. He was a happy-go-lucky fellow. His work was satisfactory but he showed no particular interest in anything. He



spat everywhere. In the morning he would be seen walking around the yard, chewing a *datun* (a green twig used as toothbrush after chewing) and spitting away right and left. The spitting went on all day.

This habit of Thamo caused Gandhiji much distress. Shankerlal tried his best to make him give up the habit. It was a bad habit. But a habit once formed is not easy to overcome. Things did not improve. Thamo continued to spit. [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, pp.193-95]

Adan and Thamo were replaced by Kunti, a Gurkha, and Gangappa a Kannadiga. Gandhiji wrote about Gangappa:

His almost punctilious observance of rules and his great devotion to duty commanded my admiration. He put his whole soul into whatever he was ordered by the authorities to do. He took up duties which he need not have.... His devotion to me personally I shall never forget. No wife or sister could be more unsparing than Gangappa in his attention. He was awake at all times. He took delight in anticipating my wants. He saw to it that all my things were kept spotlessly clean. During my illness he was my most efficient nurse, because he was the most attentive. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.369]

When I was given the permission to sleep on the cell verandah... another warder was posted for night duty. His name was Shabashkhan.... Shabashkhan was a powerful Baluchi convicted of murder.... Shabashkhan put me at ease the very first day. He said, 'I am not going to watch you at all. Treat me as your friend and do exactly as you like....' Shabashkhan was a good man, and he was by no means the only good prisoner in that jail. [*Ibid*, pp.291-92]

Of the Somali convict warder Adan, Gandhiji writes :



Adan was the longest with us. I treasure Adan's affection. He was most attentive to me. He would see to it that I got my food at the appointed time. He was sad if I ever became ill and anticipated all my wants It was a sad parting when Adan was transferred to another part of the prison. I must not omit to mention that, when I was organizing spinning and carding in the jail, Adan, though one of his hands was disabled, helped most industriously at making slivers. [*Ibid*, pp.366-67]

11

Shankerlal writes that as the day of his discharge drew near, thoughts of the days he had been privileged to spend in the company of Gandhiji occupied his mind. He had derived more profit and more happiness from the few months' association with Gandhiji, he felt, than from all his years in school, college and studies abroad. He owed Gandhiji a debt he could never repay.

Shankerlal expressed these feelings to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji said, "If you feel that you have derived profit from your life here, you should talk about it to people outside."

"Of course, I intend to do so," Shankerlal said. "And I am sure people to whom I talk will also derive profit from it."

"And do you know what they will say? They will say, 'Well, Gandhi is a Mahatma. Only Mahatmas can conduct their lives in that fashion. It is quite beyond us.' What will you then tell them?" he asked. Shankerlal was puzzled.

Gandhiji continued : "If someone says that, tell them that I was not born a Mahatma. I have many failings and I have been endeavouring, with all my energies, to overcome them. Bit by bit I have been acquiring qualities of a good life just as a miser accumulates his horde. Today I have arrived at a stage where



people call me a Mahatma, even though I am still far from being one. This royal road is open to everyone and everyone, if he has faith and determination, can certainly advance on this path." [Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji Ane Rashtriya Pravritti*, pp.198-99]

Shankerlal asked Gandhiji how he should set about if he were to take up village work after his discharge from prison.

Gandhiji said : "One must first go and study the life of the villagers. One must learn what one can from them. Acquisition of higher education did not by itself give one the ability to serve the villages.

"Some idea or the other might strike one as to what the villagers should do or should not do and one might feel tempted to offer them advice. That might cause harm instead of good." One should discuss one's ideas with the villagers. Only if they agreed should one ask them to put an idea into practice; or one might modify the idea in the light of the villagers' suggestions and then ask them to put it into practice.

One must make one's life conform with the life of the villagers if one was not to become a burden on them. Gandhiji added, "A city-dweller is not used to manual labour. His time is spent in talking, reading and writing. He produces nothing by the sweat of his brow. In a way he may be called a parasite." It was, therefore, necessary that when one went to a village one should identify oneself with the life of the villagers. Villagers produced food. They also produced cotton. And yet they imported their cloth. "If you take to carding and spinning and then have the yarn woven into cloth, the villagers, too, would be inspired to produce their own cloth." But this could be achieved only by setting an example and not by preaching.



"Along with this a good deal more can be done. If village children come to you, you can give them a wash, comb their hair and teach them to keep themselves clean."

Need for cleanliness of course was not confined only to the children, Gandhiji added. The grown-ups, too, should be taught to keep themselves, their homes and their surroundings clean. One could also teach them to read and write. [*Ibid*, pp.198-204]

12

A prominent Congressman was about to be discharged from prison. He went to Gandhiji and asked him what he should do on going out.

Gandhiji told him to take up the work of charkha and khadi. The Congress worker was himself a votary of the charkha, but he was not sure that people in general would be ready to take up the charkha with enthusiasm.

"What work then shall I recommend?" Gandhiji asked. "Shall I ask you to encourage people to visit the movies? They will like it. They will flock to the theatres in their hundreds and not mind spending money. We cannot go by what people will or will not like. We have to consider what will or will not be good for them."

There was not enough cloth in the country to cover the backs of the people. Millions of poor went about naked. "Just imagine, the country produces so much cotton and yet the poor cannot clothe themselves."

There was no dearth of weavers in the country. But there was paucity of yarn. "We import quantities of foreign cloth. We also import immense quantities of yarn. If we could only make the millions spin, we would have heaps and heaps of yarn at our disposal, we would have enough cloth for our requirements and all



the money that is drained out of the country on this account would be saved."

[*Ibid*, pp.204-05]

"Spinning would also lead to an unleashing of popular energy," Gandhiji added. The importance of the charkha activity had still not been adequately understood. It was full of immense possibilities. It could lead to the generation of many constructive activities in the villages to lend strength to people. All laziness would disappear. Laziness was the enemy of villagers. "But of course, it would all depend on workers with devotion, character and skills coming forward in their thousands and completely identifying themselves with the people." Only then could they give the right guidance and right education to the people. India was not composed of its cities. India lived in its seven hundred thousand villages. Workers should take up the task of regeneration of these villages." [*Ibid*, p.206]

Shankerlal was discharged soon afterwards. He writes that shortly after his discharge he happened to meet Jinnah, with whom he had been closely associated through the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League. He could therefore talk freely with him.

Shankerlal told Jinnah about his stay in jail with Gandhiji lasting for over a year and about the deep impression Gandhiji's thoughts and conduct, "which were those of a saint", had made on him. But Jinnah had already come to form "very different views" about Gandhiji. He said : "You do not know Gandhi. He is a shrewd politician. Look how he carries on his campaign against the Government. He establishes contact with the people and if they have a grievance, he starts a movement and carries it on with full force and vigour. Then when some violent incidents occur, which might make the Government take some severe step, he very skilfully withdraws the movement and everything is quiet again. Again when discontent brews over something, he takes up the fight anew. He thus initiates



struggles, carries them on and withdraws them. This gives training to the people. The Government is powerful and people are weak. Therefore, they cannot carry on a prolonged campaign, but Gandhi's technique of short periods of agitation and pauses between agitations forms good training for the people. So Gandhi is not such a saint as you imagine. He is a very clever politician." [*Ibid*, pp.210-11]

13

On 15 May 1923, nearly a month after Shankerlal Banker's discharge from jail, Indulal Yajnik was brought from Sabarmati Jail to provide companionship to Gandhiji. In his book *Gandhi as I Knew Him* he has also provided a detailed account of his days with Gandhiji in Yeravda prison.

On the very evening of his arrival, writes Yajnik, Gandhiji invited him to participate in the daily routine, which was as follows :

He got up every morning at 4 o'clock, and after spending about ten or fifteen minutes on ablutions, he sat down for prayer. He recited some Sanskrit verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* and then recited some Hindi and Gujarati devotional songs. This finished, he read the Sanskrit philosophical works, the *Upanishads*, for about two hours, and devoted an hour to the index of the *Gita*. This brought him to about 7 a.m., when the milkman brought him about 3 lb. of hot steaming goat's milk and poured it into his tin vessel. This milk he consumed with orange and sweet lemons. By this time the Jail sub-inspector arrived to see to his comfort, and treating him like a friend or almost as a father, discussed not only Mr. Gandht's personal comforts, but even his own personal cares and family questions. Then Mr. Gandhi devoted about three hours at a stretch to spinning. At 11 o'clock he took his bath and started another course of mascellaneous reading. At one o'clock he slept exactly for half an hour and



then took lessons in Urdu from our friend Mr. Ali (Manzar Ali Sokhta, who had also been transferred to Gandluji's yard on 2 May). [*Source Material*, Vol.III, (2), p.147]. At 3 o'clock he took his second and last meal with fruit and milk, spent time in general conversation and then again read from 5 to 7 in the evening. He then took his evening stroll in the narrow compound for about an hour, offered his last prayers at 8 and went to bed. [Indulal Yajnik, *Gandhi As I Knew Him*, Danish Mahal, Delhi, 1943, pp.297-98]

Yajnik relates how once, when the Somali convict warder Adan had been stung by a scorpion, Gandhiji had sent for the doctor. But in the meantime, without losing a moment, he "quickly washed the area round the wound, and applying his lips to the wound began to suck out the poison.... He went on spitting after sucking and eventually stopped when Adan felt relief.... It must be remembered that his teeth were then bleeding and he had only recently recovered from a long spell of illness in jail." This made a deep impression on Yajnik. He as a Communist had been somewhat critical of Gandhiji.

Yajnik observed how Gandhiji inspired Manzar Ali to keep the fast of Ramzan for the whole month and on the eve of Id-ul-Fitr "appeared to be even more anxious than Mr. Ali to catch a glimpse of the crescent moon during the short span of the few minutes that it could be seen hanging, as it were, in mid air on the tops of the trees, peeping over the high stone wall of the inner prison. His joy knew no bounds when he did eventually succeed in sighting the crescent moon. He was so excited that he actually overstepped the boundary of the barbed-wire fence to have a clearer view of the digit of the moon. His joyous shout called out Mr. Ali quickly from his cell." [*Ibid*, p.305]

Major Jones returned from leave all smiles. He had got Government permission at last to shift them to the European yard. On 18 May 1923 Gandhiji



and his companions were transferred to the European yard of Yeravda Prison. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, P.181]. This part of the jail, Indulal says, was spacious and was laid out with a garden containing fruits and flowers of many varieties. On either side of the compound were two lines of twenty cells each built on a plinth about 10 feet above the ground. The cells were well ventilated and opened out on spacious verandahs about 10 feet wide.

Indulal asked Gandhiji if the new accommodation was not very much better than the old one. He answered : "Yes, these new cells are far better than the old ones but I would have preferred to continue in the old place and I really agreed to our transfer because Major Jones's words, though not so couched, amounted in my opinion to a Government order." [Indulal Yajnik, *Gandhi As I Knew Him*, pp.308-09]

Gandhiji and the other prisoners with him were not allowed any newspapers. Some of the prisoners however managed to have newspapers smuggled in. Gandhiji of course would not look at them but, says Indulal, he welcomed bits of news conveyed to him by those who had occasion to see the newspapers. Hasrat Mohani, confined in the condemned cell, was constantly having not only newspapers but various other articles, such as knives, writing material and so forth, smuggled. For this he had been severely punished many times. Gandhiji applauded Hasrat Mohani's courage and heroism though he differed from his doctrine and his methods.

Indulal asked Gandhiji how he could reconcile his idea of strict observance of jail rules with such broad tolerance of newspaper smuggling. His reply was : "I have told the Jail Superintendent that I cannot possibly prevent myself from receiving information coming to me from many sources including newspapers." [Ibid, pp.308-09]



Indulal mentions that on hearing of the punishments inflicted on Mulshi Peta prisoners for not grinding their full quota of wheat, he thought of taking up grinding and requested the Jail authorities, through Gandhiji, to install a grinding mill-stone in the premises. This was done and Indulal took to this new task, in which Gandhiji joined him. Indulal records :

The first day of this novel exercise brought me a great surprise.

For while I got thoroughly exhausted and out of breath after a few turns of the wheel, Mr. Gandhi continued with it for about half an hour at a stretch. He then explained that it was more a matter of practice than of strength and so, though a weaker man, he could grind much longer.

Indulal Yajnik comments on Gandhiji's continued concern with dietetics in jail and how, owing to a series of circumstances he launched on an experiment of doing without fruit in his diet.

Manzar Ali, who had been suffering from chronic itching, was advised by Gandhiji to make some changes in his diet, such as doing without pulses and vegetables and to live on bread, milk and fresh fruit. Ali agreed. But the jail authorities refused to supply him fruit, saying fruit was to be supplied only to Gandhiji on medical grounds. Major Jones disagreed that fruit was necessary for Ali along with milk. Gandhiji then said, "All right, then I will also live on cold milk and will drop fruit from tomorrow." The Jail Superintendent became anxious and argued with Gandhiji. Gandhiji remained adamant, saying he had long been wanting to make the experiment.

So Gandhiji gave up fruit and lived only on 4 lb. of milk daily while Manzar Ali continued to take solid food as before. As anticipated, in just five days from 28 August to 2 September, the experiment brought down Gandhiji's weight from 104 lb. to 101 lb. This brought the authorities to their knees. They agreed to issue



fruit to Ali as requested and Gandhiji gave up the fruitless milk diet experiment. [Ibid, p.313]

On 25 October 1923 Manzar Ali Sokhta was transferred to Allahabad jail preparatory to being released. The prison authorities wanted a substitute to be obtained as soon as possible, since "I. K. Yajnik does not appear to possess similar tastes and interests and would not fill the place of Manzar Ali." [Ibid, pp.329-30]

Gandhiji had been requesting for Abdul Gani, editor of *Khilafat Daily*, then undergoing imprisonment for sedition, and the authorities, after once refusing the request, finally agreed. Abdul Gani was sent to Gandhiji's yard on 26 October.

According to his usual custom, writes Yajnik, Gandhiji prepared a food chart for Abdul Gani and presented it to the authorities. Col. Murray, who had now replaced Major Jones as the Superintendent, refused to provide the fruit. In protest Gandhiji again gave up oranges and raisins from 14 November. There was a further loss of weight and general debility. He was able to give up the semi fast after six weeks, resuming fruit from 18 Decembet 1923. [Ibid]. But these experiments had resulted in loss of weight and general debility. Gandhiji's health was in poor shape, causing a great deal of anxiety to the officials.



PART - IV
REALIGNMENT OF FORCES



CHAPTER XVII: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOWING GANDHIJI'S IMPRISONMENT

1

Referring to the suspension of Satyagraha by Gandhiji Pattabhi Sitaramayya writes :

The one experiment that should have been made on 23 November but was postponed by the Bombay riots to the new year, and postponed again to the 31 January on account of the All-Parties Conference at Bombay (14 and 15 January 1922), was ultimately postponed *sine die*. Who was to attempt this stupendous and novel experiment during the six years of Gandhi's absence? [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.242]

In the ensuing three months the Working Committee took steps to set into motion the programme chalked out in the Bardoli resolution of 12 February. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was put in charge of the khaddar department and a sum of five lakh rupees was placed at his disposal for promoting that activity. A committee was also appointed to formulate a scheme regarding the removal of untouchability. Non-cooperating lawyers were told to continue their Non-cooperation and not to appear in courts. Non-cooperators being brought to trial were reminded that they were not to put up any defence. [*Ibid*, p.242]

So far as civil disobedience was concerned, the Bardoli resolution had only suspended it. It had not been formally withdrawn. The A.I.C.C., by its resolution passed at Delhi on 25 February 1922, had made this clear beyond any doubt. While confirming the Bardoli resolution the A.I.C.C. had further resolved that :

Individual civil disobedience, whether of a defensive or aggressive character, may be commenced in respect of particular places or particular



laws at the instance of and upon permission being granted therefore by the respective Provincial Committee....

The All-India Congress Committee wishes it to be understood that the resolutions of the Working Committee do not mean any abandonment of the original Congress programme of Noncooperation or permanent abandonment of mass civil disobedience.... The All-India Congress Committee holds civil disobedience to be the right and duty of the people to be exercised and performed whenever the State opposes the declared will of the people. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.468]

However, no occasion arose, in the months following Gandhiji's incarceration, for permission to be asked or granted for the launching of any action of civil disobedience, whether mass or individual. But the possibility, necessity and advisability of civil disobedience continued to be hotly debated at all levels of the Congress organization.

Gandhiji's message was clear and unequivocal; no civil disobedience, but single-minded devotion to spinning and khadi. However, lawyers, doctors, schoolmasters, zamindars, merchants, swamis and maulvis that made up much of the A.I.C.C., could not be persuaded that khadi was enough as a political programme. Civil disobedience had formed a viable programme on which they could all unite in action. With the possibility of civil disobedience now receding, they looked for an alternative programme.

Indeed Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in a speech made in Bombay immediately after Gandhiji's trial and imprisonment, hinted that he had the outlines of an alternative political programme and he intended to convene a conference of leaders to consider it. Vithalbhai Patel, who was General Secretary of the Congress, however, publicly denounced the idea as inopportune and



unwise in view of the fact that the Congress already had before it the cut-and-dried programme of khadi and constructive work. Malaviya did not pursue the idea. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, p.35]

In Maharashtra, too, a modification of the plan of national work as laid down by Gandhiji was being demanded. The Nagpur branch first made the demand on 15 March 1922, even before Gandhiji had been tried and sentenced. On 14 April 1922 the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee strongly recommended to the A.I.C.C. to modify the programme and make the "principle of agitation to be manfully to face the Government and capture all public bodies, including Councils, with a view to carry out the policy of Non-cooperation." The Central Provinces Congress Committee took up the same stand on 7 May.

In the South, Satyamurti declared Council-entry as the only alternative to civil disobedience, though there was also talk in Congress circles of reviving civil disobedience. C. R. Das, speaking at the Bengal Provincial Conference held in Chittagong in April 1922, also hinted at the possibility of Council-entry being taken up as a programme.

There was also a good deal of opinion in the Congress in favour of reviving civil disobedience. Vithalbhai Patel in a speech in Calcutta towards the end of April spoke of the possibility of civil disobedience being taken up in not too distant a future. Then in May the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, at a meeting held in Mymensingh under the presidentship of Hardayal Nag, passed a resolution permitting civil disobedience and demanding the A.I.C.C.'s permission for this.

The Berar Congress Committee did likewise.

Thus the Congress ranks were becoming divided into two broad categories : those insisting on the accepted programme of khadi and Non-



cooperation being pursued and those wanting a change in this programme. The result was that the volunteer movement collapsed, the lawyers began going back to courts and students to Government schools. Foreign cloth again flooded the market. Congress funds were frittered away. [*Ibid*, pp.35-36]

2

The next meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held in Lucknow from 7 to 9 June 1922. Out of the total membership of 350, some 100 members were present. Motilal Nehru, who had been released from prison only on 6 June joined the deliberations on 7 June.

The meeting took note of the widespread repression unleashed by the Government and of the feeling among Congressmen that civil disobedience in some form should be resorted to. But, as Motilal Nehru said in his speech, the first and essential thing to consider in regard to civil disobedience was whether the country was prepared for it. It was necessary, he said, to gather all information in this regard before the Committee could take a decision in the matter.

After prolonged informal discussion the Committee passed a resolution on 9 June which, *inter alia*, said:

The Committee has taken note of the widespread feeling that, in view of the extremely unfair manner in which the policy of repression is being carried out by the Government, the country should be advised to resort to some form of civil disobedience to compel Government to abandon their present policy and to agree to concede the triple demand of the Congress, but the Committee is of the opinion that the carrying out of constructive programme will be the best preparation even for mass civil disobedience, while it will be the most effective means of furthering the



objects of the Congress.... That further consideration of the question ... be postponed till the next meeting of the committee to be held at Calcutta on 15 August next.

That in the meantime the President be requested to nominate and authorize a few gentlemen to tour round the country and to report on the situation to the next meeting. [*Ibid*, pp.38-39]

In pursuance of the resolution a Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee was formed, consisting of the following : Motilal Nehru, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Vithalbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and Hakim Ajmal Khan. Hakim Saheb was named president of the Committee. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.243]

A feeling had arisen in the minds of some of the leaders whether they should not enter the Councils in the absence of active Non-cooperation and some of the members used the tour to canvass for this point of view.

The Committee drew up a detailed questionnaire, covering :

- (1) constructive programme generally,
- (2) swadeshi,
- (3) Congress membership,
- (4) volunteers,
- (5) finances,
- (6) education,
- (7) panchayats,
- (8) untouchability,
- (9) anti-drink campaign,



- (10) communal unity,
- (11) belief in and practice of non-violence,
- (12) readiness for civil disobedience,
- (13) repression, and
- (14) the general situation.

The Committee started its work in July. Written answers to the questionnaire numbered 459 and 366 witnesses were examined orally. The Committee's tour programme included the whole of British India except Sind, Ajmer Merwara and Central India. The Committee submitted its report on 30 October. In the meanwhile all political work remained suspended. Congress activities at provincial, district and taluka levels declined everywhere.

The Committee unanimously recommended the following:

Civil Disobedience: The country was not ready for mass civil disobedience. But situations might arise in any part of the country where civil disobedience of a limited character became necessary. The Provincial Congress Committees should, therefore, be authorized to sanction such limited mass civil disobedience on their own responsibility, if the conditions laid down for such action by the A. I. C. C. were fulfilled.

Municipalities and Local Boards: It was desirable for Non-cooperators to seek election to these bodies. But they must act in harmony with local Congress organizations.

Boycott of Government Educational Institutions: In strict pursuance of the Bardoli resolution, any active propaganda for boycott should be suspended. Reliance should be placed on the superiority of National Schools for drawing students.



Boycott of Law Courts: Disqualifications imposed on practising lawyers should be removed. The emphasis should be on the establishment of panchayats for the settlement of disputes at local level.

Labour: The Nagpur Congress resolution on the organization of labour should be carried out.

On certain matters the Committee could not make unanimous recommendations. These were:

Council-entry : Hakim Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru and V. J. Patel were of the view that :

(1) Non-cooperators should contest elections to the Councils on the issues of Khilafat, the redressal of the Punjab wrongs and Swarajya.

(2) If they won enough seats to prevent a quorum, they should after taking their seats, leave the Councils for the rest of the term, occasionally attending the Councils to prevent vacancies.

(3) If their numbers were not large enough, they should oppose all official measures including the budget.

M. A. Ansari, C. Rajagopalachari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, on the other hand, expressed the view that as Non-cooperators, they could not fight elections and enter the Councils. There should be no change of programme in respect of the boycott of the Councils. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, pp.167-69]

Guru ka Bagh Satyagraha

In the months of August and September 1922, while the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee was finalizing its report, the Akalis in the Punjab



had been carrying on a very well-organized and effective satyagraha for the control of the Gurdwara at Guru ka Bagh near Amritsar. The Gurdwara had been under the control of a Mahant belonging to the Udasi sect, who was a very unsavoury character.

Guru ka Bagh was a tract of land overgrown with *babul* and other trees. Situated on it were a Gurdwara and a Math. The Mahant agreed to part with the Gurdwara, while retaining the possession of the Math. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee accordingly took over the management of the Gurdwara.

Once when some *Sewadars* cut down some *babul* trees on the property to obtain fuel for the free kitchen being run at the Gurdwara, the Mahant objected and called for police help. This was provided by the administration. The Akalis were ordered not to enter the Bagh. The Akalis decided to offer Satyagraha to vindicate their right over the place.

Batches of Akalis, pledged to non-violence, would proceed towards the Bagh defying the police cordon. They would be beaten up by the police. The Akalis would offer no resistance to the beatings. This went on for months. The spectacle of groups of sturdy Sikhs uncomplainingly enduring lathi blows roused much interest and excitement in the country. The Government took note of this in a statement regretting that "while this fact was emphasized and indeed praised to the skies as a triumph of Gandhism in various sections of the Indian press, scarcely a word of commendation was given to the remarkable good temper and excellent discipline shown by the police in the discharge of their peculiarly unpleasant duty." [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.245]

It was a strange complaint. Those who knew the real facts could tell that the "commendable discipline" the police showed was really the way in which it



perfected the technique of lathi charge, which would not leave much medico-legal evidence. Pattabhi points out that the police used the technique most effectively a decade later in dealing with the Civil Disobedience movement.

After the lathi charges came the arrests. Thousands were taken into custody, including the more prominent leaders of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Many among the satyagrahis were soldiers who had shown great bravery in fighting for the British during the War.

The Satyagraha went on in the most non-violent way till November 1922, when Sir Ganga Ram took the land on lease in his own name from the Mahant and handed its possession to the Akalis. [Rajendra Prasad, *Atma Katha* (Hindi), pp.194-97]

Gandhiji was full of praise for the bravery of the Akalis. He was, however, not convinced as to the struggle being a hundred per cent correct. Writing to Prithvi Singh, some eighteen years later, on 10 August 1940, he said : "What you think about Guru ka Bagh is not correct because those people came to me and I told them that what they had done was wrong. They agreed with me." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.373]. It is not clear what aspect of the struggle Gandhiji had his doubts about.

4

Following the publication of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee Report, the All-India Congress Committee met at Calcutta from 20 November to 25 November. Out of the 350 members of the Committee 200 were present.

The Committee passed by an overwhelming majority a resolution moved by Pandit Motilal Nehru, authorizing the Provincial Congress Committees on their own responsibility to sanction limited mass civil disobedience if the conditions



laid down in this regard by the A.I.C.C. in its resolution of 4 November 1921 were fulfilled.

About the Councils boycott, Motilal Nehru said that their views as to the necessity of boycott had not changed. But it was not enough to call upon the voters not to vote and the candidates not to stand. The object of boycotting the Councils was rejection of the Reforms and so long as the Councils functioned, their boycott had no meaning.

Motilal Nehru accordingly moved the following resolution :

Whereas the working of the Legislative Councils during their first term has besides proving a serious impediment to the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and speedy attainment of swaraj, caused great misery and hardship to the people, and whereas it is desirable that steps should be taken in strict accordance with the principles of non-violent Non-cooperation to avoid recurrence of the evil, it is resolved, with reference to the report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, that this Committee should recommend to the Indian National Congress that non-cooperators should contest the election on the issue of redress of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate attainment of swaraj and make endeavour to be returned in a majority.... [*Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.III, p.48]

The resolution raised a heated controversy. The meeting of the A.I.C.C. went on for full six days and the discussion on Council-entry took up as many as 40 hours. Nearly 25 members spoke, supporters and opponents of the resolution being equally divided. Those who ranged themselves behind the resolution were Motilal Nehru himself, C. R. Das, N. C. Kelkar, S. E. Stokes, M. S. Aney, M. R. Jayakar



and Madan Mohan Malaviya. They had considerable differences as to the purpose Council-entry was intended to serve .

Motilal Nehru stood for entering the Councils in order to obstruct their working and so to wreck them. C. R. Das was for entering the Councils in large numbers and make through them the demand for a swaraj constitution and on the demand being refused to carry out the policy of obstruction. Motilal said he stood by the Non-cooperation resolution. The others expressed the view that the Councils ought to be entered not with a view to wrecking them but to make use of them for nationalist purposes. [*Ibid*, p.52] Motilal's views were thus somewhat ambiguous, but C. R. Das was able to influence Motilal enough to make him a staunch Pro-changer and a strong advocate of Council entry. [Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.123]

Thus there came to the fore a sharp cleavage of views on the question, associated with two distinct factions : the Pro-changers, that is, those who stood for giving up the Councils boycott and supported the resolution moved by Motilal Nehru , and No-changers, who pleaded that the policy of triple boycott and Non-cooperation, along with the Constructive Programme, should be continued. The No-changers were represented by Vallabhbhai Patel, M. A. Ansari, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar.

The exchanges between the No-changers and Pro-changers were frequently hot, angry, bitter and full of invective and diatribe. The decision on the question was finally postponed till the forthcoming session of the Congress to be held at Gaya. The intervening one month's period was utilized by the factions to rally their forces for the ensuing combat. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, p.56]

This schism in the Congress ranks was taking place against a background of increasing repression and worsening Hindu-Muslim relations. Jawaharlal Nehru



who had been released from jail on 3 March 1922, was greatly distressed by the Congress squabbles. He was rearrested shortly afterwards, on 11 May 1922, and convicted under Section 385 I.P.C. for declaring his intention to picket foreign cloth shops. In a statement in court made on 17 May 1922, Jawaharlal said: "I marvel at my good fortune. To serve India in the battle of freedom is honour enough. To serve her under a leader like Mahatma Gandhi is doubly fortunate." [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.250]. He was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment.

5

The communal situation had in the meantime further deteriorated. In Multan there was a serious communal riot, leading to extensive destruction of life and property. Strenuous efforts to restore communal unity proved unavailing. *India in 1922*, a Government publication, commented: "The structure so painfully erected by Mr. Gandhi had crumbled hopelessly." [*Ibid*, p.250]

The flare-up in Multan started with a religious procession taken out by the Muslims, at which they daubed brickbats and other missiles were thrown by some elements among the Hindus. The Hindus denied the accusation. Nevertheless Hindu homes were immediately set upon and burnt, Hindus were murdered and Hindu women were dishonoured. Temples, too, were desecrated. There was plunder of Hindu houses on a large scale.

The Congress leaders were much disturbed. A team of leaders comprising Hakim Ajmal Khan, the President, Madan Mohan Malaviya, T. Prakasam, Janmalal Bajaj and Rajendra Prasad immediately set off for Multan to enquire into the riots. Rajendra Prasad wrote that there was much tug of war between the local Hindus and Muslims on who should play host to the visiting leaders. It became a problem where they should stay. If they stayed where the Muslims would like



them to stay the Hindus would be afraid that they would get a one-sided version of the events. On the other hand if they stayed with the Hindus, similar fears would be entertained by the Muslims. In the end the party divided itself into two groups. Rajendra Prasad and Hakim Ajmal Khan put up at the house of a Muslim Nawab, while Malaviya, Prakasam and Jamnalal Bajaj stayed at the garden house of a Hindu. But they made all their visits and held interviews together. [Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.139-40]

The leaders were greatly affected by the evidence of senseless violence they witnessed. They met the Deputy Commissioner, Emerson, who was later to become Home Secretary under Irwin. The approach of that official did not betray any desire on his part to bring about amity between the warring communities. All he talked about was meting out punishment to law-breakers. The leaders met the representatives of the two communities and found that they were keen to make up and live in peace with each other.

A large public meeting was afterwards held, at which Hakim Ajmal Khan and Madan Mohan Malaviya spoke. A peace committee was formed. Hakim Ajmal Khan issued a sharp statement condemning the criminal behaviour of the Muslims who had indulged in violence against the Hindus. [Rajendra Prasad, *Atma Katha* (Hindi), pp.197-98]

Malaviya said the Hindus had suffered because they were not organized. They must organize themselves. "He said it," writes Rajendra Prasad "in his own inimitable style without in any way adding to the misunderstanding between the two communities. No one could complain that the Hindus were being asked to organize themselves to fight the Muslims."

This had a corollary. The Congress session was to be held at Gaya soon afterwards. The Hindus thought of holding the Hindu Sabha session there at the



same time and asked Malaviya to preside over it. Malaviya said he would if Rajendra Prasad also joined him. Rajendra Prasad agreed as he saw nothing wrong in it. The Muslim League had met along with the Congress at Bombay and at Lucknow. Later, differences arose between the Congress and the Hindu Sabha. Malaviya reminded Rajendra Prasad that he had become President of Hindu Mahasabha at Gaya at his request.

The Gaya session of the Sabha was successful. Its main decision was that the Hindus should be organized. The subsequent worsening of the communal relations was unfortunately a tragic fact.

6

The Gaya Congress session was an event of great importance to the organization, if only because it was to put the final seal on the differences that had been growing within the Congress ranks on the question of Council-entry.

It took quite some doing on the part of the Bihar Congressmen to get the necessary preparations for the Congress going. The organization was suffering from a shortage of funds. Temporary huts had to be got ready for accommodating the large number of delegates who would be arriving, as also for the exhibition. There were various other materials to be procured.

Rajendra Prasad, as secretary of the Reception Committee, was charged with the onerous responsibility of seeing to all these preparations. He was worried where to find the money for the purpose. He knew that Gandhiji was very particular that public activity of any kind should be financed with the money raised from the public. If an activity was worthwhile, Gandhiji emphasized, people would pay for it. If and when it ceased to be useful, public support would dry up and the activity would come to an end. He was opposed to creating endowments



for carrying on the work of institutions with the interest therefrom. He was also opposed to borrowing money for public work.

Rajendra Prasad told his colleagues that he would not incur any expenditure till they had placed in his hands the necessary funds. They were all worried as the rainy season came to an end. Since very little money had till then been collected and time was short, the Executive Committee resolved that its principal members should borrow on their personal responsibility from the Bank of Bihar, so that the Bank knew whom to look to for repayment and there were not too many of them. The Committee also resolved that workers should be instructed to enrol members of the Reception Committee in as large a number as they could.

The workers at last became active and alert. They did not want Bihar to be disgraced. If adequate arrangements could not be made in time, not only would they lose face in the country, but even the people of Bihar would be entitled to complain that they had not been approached for funds.

Rajendra Prasad and some workers went round to raise funds and in four or five days they had collected several thousand rupees.

On returning to Patna Rajendra Prasad decided to go straight to the bank to deposit the money. Petty Government officials had come to feel that with Gandhiji in jail, Congress Workers would not be able to raise enough funds. A policeman asked Rajendra Prasad if they had arranged the loan from the bank. Rajendra Prasad told him that it was no longer necessary. The policeman could not believe this and followed Rajendra Prasad to the bank. He was surprised to see him deposit a good sum of money that they had collected.



On checking with the Reception Committee Rajendra Prasad discovered that workers had gone in many directions and the response from every place had been good. [Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.124-27]

With sufficient funds at his disposal, Rajendra Prasad now set to work, giving contracts for construction of huts and the *pandal* and for procuring necessary stores. A separate enclosure was set up for women, from where they could hear without being seen, for in Bihar *purdah* was still observed.

Some women who came from other provinces did not sit in the separate enclosure. The following day most of the Bihari women also joined them in the common enclosure.

Gandhiji had been educating women to give up the *purdah*. Real modesty, he told them, did not lie in covering the face. It was in the heart. Gandhiji's teaching made some impact. Brajkishore Prasad too had been campaigning against the custom and had organized a conference for the removal of the *purdah*. But seeing the women from other provinces participating in the Congress deliberations had a much greater effect on the women of Bihar than the earlier efforts of Gandhiji and Brajkishore Babu.

7

C. R. Das, who had been elected to preside at the Ahmedabad Congress held in 1921, had been prevented from doing so by his imprisonment. So he was elected to preside at the Gaya Congress. He was a staunch Pro-changer and it was he who had persuaded Motilal Nehru to support the Council-entry programme.

The A.I.C.C. meeting at Calcutta a month earlier had not been able to take any decision, even after six days of wrangling, on the question of Council entry.



At the Gaya Congress, therefore, the Council-entry question formed the most important part of the agenda. The delegates from the provinces had been selected for the strength of their commitment to either one course or the other, so much so that stalwarts such as M. R. Jayakar and K. Natarajan failed to be elected as delegates to the Congress from their respective provinces. Rajendra Prasad, though he did not see eye to eye with the two men on the question of Council-entry, nevertheless felt that it would not be proper for such eminent leaders to be kept out of the Congress and through his own efforts had them both elected as delegates from Bihar. [Rajendra Prasad, *Atma Katha* (Hindi), p.202]

In numbers No-changers dominated the session in the ratio of 2 to 1. The speech delivered by C. R. Das was, to quote Pattabhi, "a marvel of logic, erudition and practical idealism." Developing the theme of Council-entry, C. R. Das said:

To my mind the whole controversy proceeds on a somewhat enoneous assumption. The question is not so much as to whether there should be a change in the programme of work; the real question is whether it is not necessary now to change the direction of our activities in certain respects for the success of the very movement which we hold so dear. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Das then proceeded to point out that the Bardoli resolutions had changed the direction of the boycott of Government educational institutions; that whereas formerly national schools were regarded only as a kind of concession to the weakness of students, with the Bardoli resolutions the emphasis had been shifted to the establishment and running of national educational institutions and promotion of national education. The boycott of schools had thus changed in nature from "political" to "educational".

Das went on :



I have not been able to understand why to enable people to civilly disobey particular laws, it should be necessary that at least 80 per cent of them should be clad in pure khadi. I am not much in favour of general mass civil disobedience. But the disobedience of particular laws...is within the range of practical politics....

...There is no opposition in idea between such civil disobedience as I have mentioned and the entry into the Councils for the purpose, and with the avowed object of, ending or mending them...

...I am emphatically of the opinion that it does not offend against any principle of non-cooperation which has been adopted and applied by the Indian National Congress.

Das refuted the imputation that entry into Councils was inconsistent with morality or spirituality. Said he :

I am not aware of the injunctions of any religion against entering the Councils.... We burned foreign cloth without a scruple and the spirituality of the movement did not receive a shock.... Apart from any credal or doctrinal injunction and apart from any question of morality the basis of spirituality must be the attainment of freedom and of swaraj.

Das emphasized that all that the votaries of Council-entry desired was that permission be given for contesting elections to those Congressmen who wished to enter the Councils. The change suggested was not by way of surrendering any item of the programme – it was simply by way of addition. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.I, pp.813-46]

The Subjects Committee had before it a resolution moved by Motilal Nehru. It said :



...It is resolved with reference to the report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee that Non-cooperators should contest the elections on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate swaraj in accordance with the principle of non-violent Non-cooperation and make every endeavour to be returned in a majority. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, Suppl. p.2]

The debate on the resolution raged in the Subjects Committee for days. But the Subjects Committee had many more No-changers than Pro-changers on it. It could not be swayed into giving its sanction to Council-entry and rejected the resolution.

The matter now could be brought up in the open session only in the form of an amendment. This was moved by Srinivasa Iyengar. The amendment said that Congressmen might contest elections but must refuse to take their seats in the Councils when elected. Motilal Nehru supported the amendment. But the majority in the Congress remained of the view that the proposed change of direction of the Non-cooperation movement was not warranted.

The No-changers, prominent among whom were Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad, were opposed to Council-entry. It was negation of Non-cooperation, they said. Opposing the motion Vallabhbhai said:

I am not a leader, I am a soldier. I am the son of a peasant and do not believe that we can gain independence by merely talking. We shall not be able to fight the Government on its own ground. Once we enter the Legislatures, the people will lose their enthusiasm for independence and the Congress will lose the confidence of the people. It will indeed be ruinous to the Congress. It is only when the Congress announced its policy of Non-cooperation that it began to be supported by agriculturists,



labourers and women. That is so because it is only such activity which gives scope for participating in the national struggle and for making sacrifices. The Government knew well before the Reforms the nature of the people with whom it had to deal. The Reforms were drawn up with reference to their strong and their weak points. Even if you conducted your campaign for a hundred years through the Legislatures, you will not get independence. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.177]

This was Vallabhbhai's first major speech at a Congress gathering. Earlier he had only once spoken – or rather read out a short speech written in Hindi – as Chairman of the Reception Committee at the Ahmedabad Congress.

Rajagopalachari strenuously opposed C. R. Das's resolution and moved instead :

Whereas the boycott of Councils carried out during the elections held in 1920 has destroyed the moral strength of the institutions through which Government sought to consolidate its power and carry on its irresponsible rule;

And whereas it is necessary again for the people of India to withhold participation in the elections of the next year as an essential programme of Non-violent Non-cooperation;

This Congress resolves to advise that all voters shall abstain from standing as candidates for any of the Councils and from voting for any candidate offering himself as such in disregard of this advice, and to signify the abstention in such manner as the All-India Congress Committee may instruct in that behalf. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.I, pp.847, 862]



Speaking on the resolution Rajagopalachari asked the Congress to remember that no great change from the “present programme” could be recommended by any but the wisest and the greatest of leaders. And that leader was in prison. It was not possible for small men to ask the Congress to take a line different from what the Congress at Calcutta had decided under Gandhiji’s leadership after careful consideration. The question about contesting elections was whether poor India could afford to spend money for putting forward candidates every time the seats were rendered vacant. He added that they had not given sufficient trial to the constructive part of Non-cooperation which must, therefore, be carried on. They could not capture the electorate more effectively than by the constructive programme in villages. By surrendering the Non-cooperation programme the Congress would be making an ignoble surrender and it could not hope to get Gandhiji released through that means. [*Ibid*]

The resolution was carried by a large majority.

"The spirit of Gandhi," writes Pattabhi, "was all-pervading. Everyone took it to be an act of disloyalty to the Master to turn his back upon him the moment he was found to be absent from the Congress." [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.251]

The Congress accepted most of the recommendations on other subjects made by the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. The boycott of schools and courts was retained on the programme. Emphasis was placed on the work of khadi and swadeshi. The Subjects Committee also considered the question of the boycott of British goods and even proposed constituting a committee which would draw up a list of the goods to be boycotted. But the open session of the Congress did not pursue the matter, considering it to be not a practical proposition. [Rajendra Prasad, *Atma Katha* (Hindi), p.203]



The rejection by the Congress of the Council-entry programme constituted a clear defeat of C. R. Das, the President. C. R. Das thereupon tendered his resignation from the Presidentship. [Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol.I, p.252]

8

During the period following Gandhiji's incarceration, Turkey was rocked by what came to be described as the Kemalist revolution. Mustafa Kemal Pasha's Young Turks, with the help of Soviet Russia, drove out the Greeks and the Western Allies and affirmed their hold on the Anatolian peninsula, and on both shores of the Straits, including Constantinople. The Sultan was overthrown. In 1923 Turkey was promulgated a republic. The powers of the Sultan were taken away and the capital of the country was shifted from Constantinople to Angora. The Caliphate remained with the Ottomans but the choice of the incumbent was to rest with the National Assembly.

The Turkish Republic was conceived as a nation state in which the people were sovereign. Universal adult suffrage was introduced, along with a parliament, a ministry and a president who wielded enormous powers. For the first time in any Muslim country, the spheres of government and religion were sharply distinguished. Religion was declared to be a matter of private belief and hence equal tolerance was shown for all religions. The law of the Koran was thrust aside and a new law, based on the Swiss Code, which itself was based on Code Napoleon, was brought into being. In 1924, following the decree abolishing the office of Caliph, the existing Caliph and his dependants were externed from the Turkish territory.

The Turkish National Assembly having declared all treaties entered into by the regime of the Sultan null and void, including, of course, the humiliating Treaty



of Sevres, fresh negotiations began between the Allies and Turkey at Lausanne. A fresh treaty, much more favourable to Turkey, was signed on 24 July 1923. [R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of The Modern World*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965, pp.768-69; also *The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, pp.64-65]

According to the terms of this treaty, Anatolia was freed from the Greeks, Constantinople and Adrianople were given back to Turkey, Turko Syrian frontier was rectified in favour of Turkey, the question of Mosul was referred to the League of Nations, the status of Bosphorus and Dardanelles was defined by a special convention and the Turko Bulgarian frontier was readjusted in Turkey's favour. [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1965]

Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his Young Turks had inaugurated their take-over of Turkey by inflicting a series of crushing defeats on the Greeks who had just then invaded Turkish territories under instigation from the British. This caused Lloyd George to order mobilization of the British fleet in the Mediterranean and to appeal to the Dominions for help against Turkey. But public opinion in England was tired of war and disapproved of talks of war. As a result Lloyd George's coalition government collapsed on this issue on 18 October 1922. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, p.57]

The events occasioned much rejoicing among Indian Muslims, in which Hindus too joined. Nevertheless the pan-Islamic feelings of Indian Muslims had been shocked, first by the deposition of the Sultan and then finally by the abolition of the institution of Caliphate, making it clear to them and to the world that the Turkish revolution was anything but Islamic either in inspiration or in effect. [*Ibid*, pp.67-68]. With this died the Khilafat movement and the spectacular Hindu-Muslim unity forged by it.



C. R. Das had resigned as President of the Congress, following the defeat of the Council-entry resolution at Gaya. But his resignation was not accepted. He continued to be President even while he worked to organize his own party within the Congress. The new party did not secede from the Congress but assiduously worked to convert its minority into a majority. On 1 January 1923, C. R. Das issued a manifesto announcing the formation of the Congress Khilafat Swarajya Party. The manifesto was signed by 110 members of the A. I. C. C., including Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan, V. J. Patel, N. C. Kelkar, M. R. Jayakar and A. Rangaswamy Iyengar.

According to its more detailed programme issued in Allahabad on 28 February 1923, the party accepted the creed of the Congress, viz., the attainment of swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means. It also accepted the principle of non-violent Non-cooperation, "but with a determination to apply it rationally to prevent the said principle from degenerating into a lifeless dogma."

On the question of civil disobedience the Party declared that "at present civil disobedience is not a question of practical politics and that it cannot be artificially organized."

The programme was further elaborated as follows :

1. While the goal of the Party is attainment of swaraj, the immediate objective of the Party is the speedy attainment of full Dominion Status;
2. The Party will formulate a definite programme of organizing and instructing the electorates;
3. The Party will set up Nationalist candidates... to contest...seats in the Legislative Councils and the Assembly... on the following basis:



(a) They will, when they are elected, present on behalf of the country its legitimate demands... and ask for their acceptance (b) If demands are not granted... the elected members of the Party to adopt a policy of *uniform continuous and consistent obstruction... to make Government through Councils impossible.*

4. The Party will also contest elections to local and municipal boards;

5. The Party will take steps to organize labour in the country, industrial as well as agricultural, including ryots and peasants...;

6. The Party will frame a plan for the boycott of selected British goods;

7. The Party will accord its full support...to the carrying out of the constructive programme of the Congress in relation to Swadeshi, Khaddar, Temperance, Untouchability and...National Education;

8. The Party will take immediate steps...to promote the formation of what may be called the Indian National Pact....The Lucknow compact will generally govern communal questions as between Hindus and Muslims;

9. The Party will take steps for India to participate in the formation of a Federation of Asiatic countries and Nationalities;

10. The Party will take steps to start, maintain, revive and reorganize agencies of foreign propaganda for Indian affairs;

11. The Party resolves that the Scheme of Swaraj prepared by Sjt. Chittaranjan Das and Babu Bhagwandas be circulated. [*Ibid*, pp.143-44]

The Swaraj Scheme as formulated was placed before the leading members of the Party on 29 January 1923 in Bombay but was not discussed.



The Scheme generally dealt with Administrative divisions on village, district, town, provincial and all-India level, administrative functions, local centres, district panchayats, town panchayats, provincial panchayats and an all India panchayat. It further dealt with the qualifications for the membership of the panchayats at various levels.

The Swaraj Scheme did not make much impact on the people or politicians and was soon forgotten. [*Ibid*, pp.145-50]

Efforts were initiated, chiefly by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad after his release from prison, to effect a compromise between the two factions of the Congress. It was difficult going because the attitude adopted by the leaders of the new party, in particular C. R. Das, showed a lack of trust in the majority. Finally at the A. I. C. C. meeting held on 27 February 1923 at Allahabad, the Swaraj Party accepted the following compromise formula :

1. Suspension of Council propaganda on both sides till the 30 April;
2. Both parties to be at liberty to work the remaining items of their respective programmes in the interval without interfering with each other;
3. The majority would be free to carry on propaganda about money and volunteers;
4. The minority party would cooperate in raising funds and enlisting workers for furtherance of the Constructive Programme;
5. Each party to adopt after 30 April such course as might be advised.

The compromise largely remained on paper during the ensuing two months. Northern India was in the grip of communal riots. Hindu-Muslim unity was in a shambles following the abolition of the Khilafat which had been the main plank to unite the two communities. There was thus much work to be done. But



whatever work was done showed no joint effort. Swarajists did not even cooperate in furthering the constructive programme, which they had undertaken to do in terms of the Allahabad compromise. [*Ibid*, p.155]. Motilal Nehru, in a circular addressed to members of A.I.C.C. and P.C.C.s on 1 May 1923, admitted that "far from doing any practical good to either party", the compromise had materially prejudiced both. [*Ibid*, p.169]

10

Further developments inside the Congress widened the breach between the No-changers and Pro-changers.

On 25 May 1923, the A.I.C.C. met at Bombay under the presidentship of C. R. Das. On 26 May it passed a "compromise resolution" intended to bring together the two warring factions. In effect it was going back upon the decisions taken at the Gaya Congress. A resolution moved by Purushottamdas Tandon said that in view of the fact that there was a strong body of opinion within the Congress that favoured Council-entry, the A.I.C.C. deemed it absolutely necessary that Congressmen should close their ranks and that no propaganda be carried on in furtherance of the Gaya Congress resolution relating to the Council boycott.

The resolution was passed in the teeth of opposition from a majority of members of the Working Committee. Six of the members of the Working Committee thereupon tendered their resignations from the Working Committee. These were C. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Jamnalal Bajaj, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Vallabhbhai Patel and Brajkishore Prasad. Following them other members of the Working Committee also resigned.

All efforts to make the members change their mind having failed, the A.I.C.C. accepted their resignations on 27 May. C. R. Das, too, resigned from presidentship and Dr. M. A. Ansari was elected in his place. The new Working



Committee included on it. Jawaharlal Nehru, T. Prakasam, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Teja Singh, Abul Kalam Azad, Purushottamdas Tandon, K. Santhanam, Anugraha Narayan Singh, Dr. Varadarajan Naidu and Khwaja Abdul Majid. [*Ibid*, pp.162-66]

The A.I.C.C. next met at Nagpur on 8, 9 and 10 July 1923 and the confusion was further compounded. T. Prakasam sprung a resolution for which no notice had been given, calling for a special session of the Congress to consider the question of boycott of Councils. The Swarajists opposed the motion as a trick to dodge and thwart the Bombay resolution and allow the majority to carry on anti-Council propaganda.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and No-changers generally supported the motion. Rajagopalachari said the Bombay compromise resolution had reversed the decision of the Gaya Congress and a special session of the Congress should determine whether the A.I.C.C. had been competent to do so.

The resolution was put to the vote and passed by a majority of 80 against 67. [*Ibid*, pp.175-78]

Another resolution, emanating from the Working Committee and moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, condemned the P.C.C.s that had defied the Bombay Compromise Resolution of the A.I.C.C. He called it a case of indiscipline. It was disobedience and must be censured, said the Swarajist members. But who taught them disobedience? asked Rajendra Prasad. The best thing would be to let a special session of the Congress decide. The motion was lost by two votes. The margin was small but the fact remained that the resolution had been turned down. The Working Committee formed in Bombay then resigned. A new Working Committee was elected under a new President. Nominations were asked for and



votes were taken as to who should be the new team. The result was that a sort of coalition cabinet came into being with the No-changers having a definite advantage. Among those elected were Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Gangadharrao Deshpande and T. A. K. Sherwani.

Konda Venkatapayya was elected President in place of Dr. M. A. Ansari.
[*Ibid*, pp.178-84]

But the special Congress was to come after some time. Some members sent to the President a requisition for another meeting of the A.I.C.C. to consider afresh the question of a special session of the Congress.

Konda Venkatapayya summoned the meeting at Vizagapatnam on 23 August. The meeting was attended by only 45 members, the rest having refused to attend. The meeting decided on the special session to be held. It was first suggested that the venue should be Bombay. But Mrs. Naidu, president of the Bombay P. C. C., refused to host the session because she saw in the proposal manoeuvring by the so-called majority party. She said she could "neither be cajoled nor coerced into condoning the insidious and unchivalrous tactics of a small group of irreconcilables."

It was then decided that the special session should be held in Delhi on 15 September 1923.

11

The Congress duly assembled on 15 September under the presidentship of Maulana Azad. But the attendance was thin. Rajagopalachari, C. Vijayaraghavachariar and their followers were absent. There were in all about 2,000 provincial delegates and 3,000 visitors. [*Ibid*, p.190]



The Congress was meeting not only against the background of a rift which appeared to be widening with each attempt to narrow it, but also against the background of increasing disunion between Hindus and Muslims as manifested in the communal riots in many places. As Dr. Ansari, Chairman of the Reception Committee, pointed out in his address :

The basic condition for swaraj is inter-communal unity. We are being torn by communal strife. Complete Hindu-Muslim unity, which ought to have been a settled fact today, is conspicuous by its absence. Years of hard work in various fields have failed not only to make unity a permanent and solid factor of civic life but even to check the present recrudescence of communal discord, the neglected disease which now threatens the very existence of Indian nationalism.

The delegates attempted, before the opening of the Congress to sort out these issues at an informal conference. On the 11th a conference attended by Muslim Ulemas and representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha considered issues that divided the two communities. The Muslims appealed to Swami Shraddhanand to drop his *Sangathan* movement. The Hindu leaders would not agree to this, but said they would be willing to throw open the *Sangathan* movement to all communities. [*Ibid*, p.191]

In November 1923 the elections to Legislatures were to take place and the Swarajists were keen to have the imprimatur of the Congress for the Council-entry programme. For it would be disastrous to fight the elections in the teeth of opposition from the No-changers, whose faith in Non-cooperation had throughout remained unshaken.

Mohammed Ali and Lajpat Rai had by this time been released from jail. The No-changers hoped that these leaders would support the No-changers' position.



That was not to be. Lajpat Rai could not attend the Congress owing to indisposition. Mohammed Ali, they found, was not with them.

Speaking at the Congress the Maulana let it be known that : "by some spiritual trick – maybe through telepathy" Gandhiji had sent him the following directive : 'I do not insist that you should adhere to my programme. I am myself quite convinced of the wisdom of the whole of my programme, but if in view of the conditions in the country, you feel that it is desirable to cut out one or two details regarding the boycott, or to go slow in respect of any of them or to introduce any new items, I would expect you for the love of the country to make such modifications as you consider desirable and, if necessary, even to adopt an entirely new scheme.' [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.184]

Everybody of course knew that Gandhiji could not have smuggled out any message from jail, who had always emphasized that as soon as he went to jail he was civilly dead and could give no guidance on things happening outside the jail. And yet Mohammed Ali sought to convey an impression that he believed that Gandhiji would not oppose the Council-entry programme.

The No-changers were not quite sure of this. Yet to go against Maulana Mohammed Ali would be going against the prevailing Muslim sentiment in the matter. In a situation of escalating communal tension in the country this would not be wise.

By way of a compromise Mohammed Ali moved the following resolution:

While reaffirming its adherence to the principle of non-violent Non-cooperation, this Congress declares that such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at



the forthcoming elections and this Congress therefore suspends all propaganda against entering the Councils.

This Congress at the same time calls upon all Congressmen to redouble their efforts to carry out the constructive programme of their great leader Mahatma Gandhi, by united endeavour to achieve swaraj at the earliest possible moment.

The resolution generated much opposition from the No-changers. Rajendra Prasad was the first to speak on behalf of the No-changers. He said:

I am convinced that we are deviating from the principle of Non-cooperation by going to the Legislatures, whatever be the motive. My shoulders are not big enough, however, to take the responsibility for creating a split in the Congress. Therefore, I will not oppose this resolution. I am sorry that I cannot support it. But the responsibility for proving that by going to the Legislatures you are not defeating the policy of Non-cooperation, will rest upon Pandit Motilalji and Deshbandhu [C. R. Das]. I will go further and say that the responsibility for it will rest more than anyone else upon Maulana Mohammed Ali. [*Ibid*, p.185]

Rising to speak immediately after Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, who had just then also heard telegraphically from the ailing Rajagopalachari what he thought on the question, said with great feeling :

We carried on this fight until now to the limit of our strength and ability and kept the flag of Non-cooperation flying. We are, however, all soldiers. There is no leader among us but there is one person among us who has an acute brain and who thinks clearly. The message which he has sent from his sick-bed has just arrived. He says : 'I advise you to place the entire responsibility on Maulana Mohammed Ali . Do not do anything that



does not please him. If he is very keen upon a settlement, well, accept it. I have a feeling that the country has to pass through bitter experiences. It is useless to discuss and to argue. There is no point in our preventing people from doing what they want. We have done what we could. We have lost many colleagues. We must not lose Maulana Mohammed Ali.'

I accept this advice.

I have thought a great deal and I see that I can help Maulana best by withdrawing my opposition. He says that I must consider the position of one who comes back after an absence of two years. He must have realized by now the difficulties of those who had remained outside during these two years. I know that by the stand I am now taking hundreds of young men will be disappointed. I am not sure that this resolution will not deal a death blow to Non-cooperation. Today we look upon each other with suspicion and without love. This is an attempt to re-establish affection. It was a painful task during all this period to oppose great leaders of this country. At the same time it is equally difficult today to give up that opposition. Nevertheless, I request all those who are in favour of 'no change' that they should willingly accept our position. I place the entire responsibility upon Maulana Mohammed Ali. Jamnalalji and Gangadharrao Deshpande, who have been my colleagues in opposition, hold the same view as myself. If I may sum up our attitude in one sentence, we do neither support this resolution nor oppose it. [*Ibid*, pp.185-86]

N. S. Varadachari said while such a step would destroy the atmosphere for Non-cooperation, it would not result in unity. It would make the coming Congress a Das-Nehru Congress with no place in it for Mahammed Ali or the No- changers.



But in most of the speeches delivered, unity was the paramount issue. The resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, pp.197-201]

The resolution on khaddar and swadeshi, while reiterating the "conviction that widespread production and use of khaddar, that is, handspun and handwoven cloth, is essential for the economic betterment of India" and calling upon the people "to redouble their efforts to make spinning and the use of khaddar universal throughout the country and thus bring about complete boycott of all foreign cloth", also appealed to the people "especially to avoid the purchase of goods produced in Great Britain, her colonies and dominions, and thus bring about a complete boycott of all British goods."

The resolution was carried by 640 against 221 votes. [*Ibid*, p.203]

The debate within the Congress on Hindu-Muslim relations generated a great deal of heat and in the end defied an agreed approach. The stumbling-block was the Muslim delegates' suspicion of the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements being carried on by sections of Hindu leadership. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Swami Shraddhanand did all they could to reassure the Muslims that the movements were not being carried on with any aggressive intent. But they failed to bring conviction. The Sub-committee on Hindu-Muslim relations again met on being persuaded by Maulana Azad and other leaders of the extreme urgency of an agreement on the question. The committee after protracted discussions unanimously resolved that the leaders of the various communities should "proclaim it sinful for members of their community to attack the honour of women, person and property and religious institutions of others and, in case of aggression, to defend the victims and show tolerance."



The Hindu leaders agreed that a committee might visit places where *Shuddhi* work was going on, to enquire into any irreligious and corrupt practices being resorted to. With regard to *Sangathan* they agreed to the suggestion that civil guards with mixed membership to Hindus and Muslims be appointed in all district centres.

Notwithstanding the show of reasonableness on the two sides, Maulana Azad observed in his concluding address at the session that "Hindu Muslim unity was only seen on the surface and only in the Congress and that real work was still to be done." [*Ibid*, pp.207-08]

The Congress also formed a committee, consisting of C. R. Das, Mohammed Ali, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Mangal Singh, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel, to "organize an effective campaign of civil disobedience and to advise provincial action in this regard." [*Ibid*, p.202]

12

The Delhi Special Congress having given the go ahead to the Swarajya Party in the matter of elections to Councils, the Party on 14 October 1923 issued its election manifesto.

H. N. Mitra says :

It is impossible to overestimate the value of the permission they had received from the Delhi Special Congress to contest the elections. In theory the Swarajists remained a separate organization within the Congress but they did not fail to take advantages naturally arising from their intimate connection with that body. This enabled them to take advantage of the Mahatma's name. They came before the electorate as his men, pledged to



achieve the objects to which he had devoted himself, although at the cost of a certain deviation from his policy. Their manifesto laid stress upon the fact that they were entering the Councils in order to ensure that the new constitutional machinery should not be exploited for anti-national purposes. They intended to present an ultimatum to the Government demanding the right of the Indian people to control their own destiny. In the event of the demand being refused, the party pledged itself to a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction with a view to make government through the Assembly and the Councils impossible.

Swarajists were opposed in the elections chiefly by Liberals, who, during the preceding three years of the Councils boycott by the Congress, had securely entrenched themselves in these bodies. Though in the Assembly they had given voice to national aspirations and had fought for various measures such as Indianization of the army and public services, fiscal autonomy, withdrawal of certain repressive laws, etc., still the success they had achieved was limited. On the debit side they had all along supported the bureaucracy. The Non-cooperators blamed them for the failure of the campaign and even for the imprisonment of Gandhiji.

In the elections held in November 1923, the Swarajists emerged as the most important political group. With the Congress having suspended the anti-Council propaganda, the voters' turn-out was also quite large. For the Central Assembly, out of some 800,000 voters, no less than 350,000 exercised their franchise.

The Liberals, wherever they opposed the Swarajists, were totally routed. Among the stalwarts who thus fell were Sir Surendranath Banerjea, S. R. Das, R.



P. Pranjpye, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Kamat, C. Y. Chintamani, H. N. Kunzru and Seshagiri Iyer. [*Ibid*, p.225]

In the provincial elections, in the Central Provinces the Swarajists were returned in a majority and were in a position to form a ministry. In Bengal, having won 45 out of 114 general seats, they were the largest group, but could not by themselves form a ministry. In the U. P. they won 40 seats – quite a respectable tally, but exceeded by land-holders who had won 43. In Madras, the ministerialists and the non-Brahmin party had the upper hand. In the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, the Swarajists' position remained weak: in the Punjab, for instance, of the 71 seats contested, they won only 9.

In the Central Assembly the Swarajists won just under half the number of elected seats. [*Ibid*, pp.229-30]

13

The 38th session of the Indian National Congress assembled at Cocanada on 28 December 1923 under the presidentship of Mohammed Ali. No less than 12,000 delegates and visitors were present. The two most important issues which the Congress had to address were the Hindu-Muslim question and the compromise arrived at between Swarajists and No-changers at the special session of the Congress at Delhi.

Mohammed Ali opened his presidential address with the words :

Friends, the only one who can lead you is the one who had led you at Amritsar, at Calcutta, at Nagpur and at Ahmedabad, though each session of the Congress had its own elected president. Our generalissimo is today a prisoner of war in the hands of the enemy, and none can fill the void that his absence from our midst has caused. [*Ibid*, Suppl., p.20]



Mohammed Ali then developed his theme, which was the evolution of Muslim politics since the formation of the Congress. He covered the separate electorate, the Khilafat and the unity achieved during the Non-cooperation movement between the two communities, then the developing friction and riots that followed on the issues of cow-slaughter and music before mosques, and appealed for toleration, understanding and accommodation on the part of the leaders. [*Ibid*, pp.20-85]

As to the Swaraj Party and its programme of Council-entry, Mohammed Ali advanced the view that had the Congress, in spite of Gandhiji's injunction to the contrary, taken up civil disobedience, the Swaraj Party might not have come into being. He was sure civil disobedience free from violence was possible immediately after the imprisonment of Gandhiji. [*Ibid*, p.89]

But now the Swaraj Party could not be ignored. The elections had been held and "it must be remembered that those to whom people offered their votes were immeasurably nearer to Mahatma Gandhi than those who were opposed to them." Mohammed Ali was sure that responsible Swarajist leaders intended to assist the Congress to the best of their power and ability.

Paying a tribute to Gandhiji the Congress President said:

The political conditions in India just before the advent of the Mahatma resembled those of Judea on the eve of the advent of Jesus, and the prescription that he offered to those in search of a remedy for the ills of India was the same that Jesus had dispensed before in Judea. Self-purification through suffering; a moral preparation for the responsibilities of government; self-discipline as the condition precedent of swaraj – this was the Mahatma's creed and conviction; and those of us who have been privileged to have lived in the glorious year that culminated in the Congress



session at Ahmedabad have seen what a remarkable and what a rapid change he wrought in the thoughts, feelings, and actions of such large masses of mankind. [*Ibid*, pp.45-46]

Mohammed Ali closed with the words :

Let us go back to Nagpur, and with trust in our Maker and a prayer addressed to Him...begin the great work once more that our great leader has outlined for us. If only we do not prove unworthy of him we shall win back our lost liberty; and it will not be as a prayer for success but as the declaration of victory won that we shall then raise the old, old cry: *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai !* [*Ibid*, p.97]

It was persuasive rhetoric. But the fact remained that since the special Congress, there had been a further drift towards acceptance of the Swarajist position by a large part of the leadership.

The Satyagraha Committee formed at the Delhi session had not made much showing. It had not been able to do anything towards starting "an effective campaign of civil disobedience throughout the country." First because Dr. Kitchlew and others became too much involved with the Sikh movement, especially in Nabha, and secondly because according to reports from the Provincial Committees, no volunteers had been got ready because "the Council elections were occupying most of their energies and there was general complaint of lack of men and money." Out of the sum Rs. 5,000 made available to the Committee only Rs. 1,331 had been spent. [*Ibid*, pp.101-04]

The Committee appointed at the Delhi session for Hindu-Muslim unity had come out with a draft of a National Pact and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee had also worked out a Bengal Pact on more or less similar lines to be applicable in Bengal.



The proposed National Pact visualized agreement of the two communities on :

- (1) Swaraj for the country,
- (2) federal government,
- (3) Hindustani as lingua franca of India,
- (4) full religious liberty, subject to requirements of peace and order and absence of coercion,
- (5) prevention of preference being given to one religious denomination over the other in grant of Government funds and the like,
- (6) defence of Swaraj from attacks internal or external,
- (7) adequate protection to the minorities. It was further proposed that the various communities would have separate representation in legislatures, both Central and Provincial. Dr. M. A. Ansari, one of the signatories, wanted this to be extended also to the local bodies,
- (8) no cow-slaughter except at Id,
- (9) no music before places of worship,
- (10) different routes for religious processions held on the same day,
- (11) appointment of joint boards to manage things on the days of religious festivals, and
- (12) formation of a Federation of Eastern countries for mutual help and trade.

The proposed Bengal Pact laid down :



(1) representation of the communities on the Bengal Council on the basis of their populations;

(2) representation on local bodies in every district in the proportion of 60 : 40, 60 being for the community which was in a majority in the district; and

(3) 55 per cent Government posts to go to Muslims, subject to their fitness, to be decided by tests.

Any measure affecting a religious practice to be passed by the Legislature only when 75 per cent of the members of the community concerned voted for it : such as on music before mosques, cow-killing, etc.

The consideration of the two Pacts was not taken up by the Congress. The committee was asked to seek further opinions on them.

There was a good deal of discussion on Swaraj versus Independence. A resolution had been brought forward by some Congressmen from the U. P. for a change in the Congress creed. It was lost. [*Ibid*, pp.119-20, 129-36]

Efforts were made, by the Ali Brothers in particular, to bring the two warring factions of the Congress together. As a consequence C. R. Das and C. Rajagopalachari worked out a compromise resolution, which Rajagopalachari moved at the open session at Cocanada and C. R. Das seconded. The compromise was based on the need for each party to recognize the facts as they were.

Moving the resolution Rajagopalachari made it clear that it was by way of a truce between the warring No-changers and Pro-changers. He said :

This resolution will be supported by Deshbandhu Das and his friends.... Why does he give it support ? It is because he does not want battle now, but simply wants you to accept the facts as they are and we want him to accept the facts as they are. On our part we should not disturb



what has been done at Delhi and on his part he should not divide this house again over the programme which... the Congress has hitherto failed to accept.

The resolution read :

This Congress reaffirms the Non-Cooperation resolutions adopted at Calcutta, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Gaya and Delhi.

Since doubts have been raised by reason of the Non-cooperation resolution adopted at Delhi with regard to Council-entry, whether there has been any change in the policy of the Congress regarding the Triple Boycott, this Congress affirms that the principle and policy of that boycott remain unaltered.

This Congress further declares that the said principle and policy form the foundation of constructive work, and appeals to the nation to carry out the programme of constructive work as adopted at Bardoli and prepare for the adoption of civil disobedience.

There was opposition from the hardliners among the No-changers to the mention of Delhi in the resolution. Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and Jagat Narayan Lal moved amendments to the resolution seeking to omit any reference to the Delhi resolution. They were supported by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Maulana Azad, Sobhani and others. After a prolonged debate in which some 20 members, including Maulana Shaukat Ali, took part, the amendment was lost and Rajagopalachari's resolution was passed. [*Ibid*, pp.134-44]

One of the most important resolutions passed by the Congress related to the setting up of an All-India Khaddar Board. The Board consisted of Jamnalal Bajaj (Chairman), Vallabhbhai Patel, Maganlal Gandhi, Revashanker Jagjivan



Javeri, Velji Nappu, Belgaumwalla, Maulana Shaukat Ali and Shankerlal Banker. The Board was invested with full powers to organize and carry on khaddar work throughout India under the general supervision of the A.I.C.C. and to raise funds therefor. [*Ibid*, pp.147 and 154]

The compromise resolution did not really make for unity. Brecher writes : "In reality the Congress was now divided into two distinct parties tenuously linked by ties of the past. The schism was to continue for five years, until external pressures and the failure of the Swarajists' policy created conditions for a return to Non-cooperation." [Michael Brecher, *Nehru*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p.92]



CHAPTER XVIII: SATYAGRAHA IN NAGPUR AND BORSAD AND THE NABHA EPISODE

1

In April 1923 came the Flag Satyagraha in Nagpur.

The seeds of the agitation, it would appear, had been sown in August 1922, when in the course of their tour the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, headed by Hakim Ajmal Khan, had paid a visit to Jabalpur. The local Municipality, in welcoming the leaders, had flown the National Flag atop the municipal building. They had rejected the suggestion that the Union Jack be also flown alongside it. This had caused eyebrows to be raised in official circles, so much so that a question had been asked on the subject in the British Parliament.

When, therefore, a meeting of the Working Committee was held in Jabalpur in 1923, the authorities had decided beforehand to thwart any attempt by the Municipality again to hoist the National Flag on the municipal building. The District Magistrate had accordingly issued an order under Section 144 Cr. P. C. prohibiting the flying of the National flag on the municipal building or holding any meeting at the Town Hall, or taking out any procession without permission.

Congressmen decided to defy the order. On 18 March the anniversary of Gandhiji's imprisonment, a large procession was taken out under the leadership of Pandit Sunderlal, with the National Flag held aloft. The police snatched away the Flag and detained Sunderlal and several others. They were released the following day but the Flag was not returned. Sunderlal warned that if the confiscated Flag was not returned the authorities would have to face an agitation. Sunderlal was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

On 13 April 1923, the Jallianwala Bagh day, some young Congress workers in Nagpur climbed up the municipal building and hoisted the National Flag on it.



The police took it down and trampled upon it. A group of volunteers also formed into a procession and marched to the Civil Lines area with the National Flag. The authorities had issued prohibitory orders on processions in the Civil Lines, where many European officers lived. The police tried to stop the procession from entering the prohibited area. The volunteers were beaten by the police and some of them were dragged across the road.

The Nagpur District Congress Committee resolved that it was the right of citizens to take out processions and carry the National Flag and that any attempt by the authorities to put curbs on this right should be resisted. It was further decided that rather than divide their energies between Jabalpur and Nagpur, the resistance should be concentrated in Nagpur.

The Swaraj Party did not like the development. They viewed it as an attempt by the No-changers to bring about a situation of “some sort of civil disobedience.” Motilal Nehru, in a circular addressed to all Congressmen on 1 May 1923, said:

You have seen the Jabalpur incident in connection with the National Flag and are no doubt aware of a similar venture being contemplated at Nagpur. I confess I do not appreciate either the appropriateness or the utility of these undertakings. The net result will, in my opinion, be the temporary loss of valuable services of some of the most ardent workers.
[*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, p.157]

The Provincial Congress Committee however considered the matter and decided to inaugurate the Satyagraha from 1 May. A Satyagraha camp was opened, funds collected and volunteers enrolled to court arrest, beating, humiliation, in fact all suffering unto death to vindicate the honour of the National Flag. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had been on his way back to Wardha from



Calcutta, was met at the Nagpur railway station by the local Congress workers and requested to take up the leadership of the struggle. After some hesitation he agreed.

The Satyagraha was launched on 1 May with Jamnalal Bajaj leading a procession of volunteers carrying National Flags through the streets of the city. Many of them had come from outside Nagpur. On its way to the Civil Lines the procession was stopped by the police. The District Magistrate read out an order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, prohibiting all processions and public meetings in the Civil Lines area for two months. [*Ibid*, p.170]

The volunteers, determined to court arrest, defied the ban and marched in batches carrying flags to the prohibited area. The police then swung into action. There was lathi charge. After a severe beating the volunteers were dragged away and left on the roadside. Another batch of volunteers immediately took their place and the police subjected them to the same treatment.

This went on for days. Newspaper headlines featured the Flag Satyagraha, giving rise to widespread resentment against police brutality. Many persons from all over the country volunteered themselves for the Satyagraha.

As the struggle intensified, it was decided to offer mass Satyagraha with 250 volunteers on 18 June, 18th being the date in March 1922 on which Gandhiji was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. The police got to know of it and went to the volunteers' camp, woke them up and arrested them. Even the cooks were put under arrest. Vinoba had come with some of his colleagues from his Ashram at Wardha to join the satyagraha. They were all taken into custody. Each Satyagrahi was quickly tried and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. Jamnalal, as the leader, was given a sentence of 18 months and a fine of Rs. 3,000 and a further four and a half months' imprisonment if the fine was not



paid. Jamnalal refused to pay the fine. His motor-car, tonga and a cash box with Rs. 400 were confiscated. The authorities tried to auction the goods, but there were no bidders. His motor-car was ultimately sold to an English officer of Rajkot in Gujarat for a small sum.

Jamnalal was given A class in jail, but he preferred to eat with his C class comrades what was given to them. He lost much weight and his health suffered. But his spirit was strong and indomitable. [Shriman Narayan, *Jamnalal Bajaj*, pp.71-72]

The way Jamnalal led the Satyagraha and conducted himself at the trial won him the admiration of people and politicians all over India. Following his sentence, Mohammed Ali telegraphed to him : "Well done, my brave Bania. Longing touch your feet. Kitchlew joins." Hakim Ajmal Khan's wire read : "Congratulate you on your inspiring lead in Flag movement." Vithalbhai Patel, too, congratulated him for his sacrifice and service at a time when darkness and despondency pervaded the atmosphere. Rajaji wrote in *Young India* of his sacrifice in glowing terms. [*Ibid*, p.74]

On 18 June another order under Section 144 was issued by the authorities, extending by further two months the prohibition on meetings and processions as the previous order had come to an end on the 17th. On that day 275 Congressmen were arrested, taking the total number of arrests till then to 1,000.

2

The All-India Congress Committee met by requisition at Nagpur from 9 to 11 July. C. R. Das first objected to Nagpur Flag Satyagraha being placed on the agenda, saying it had not been mentioned in the requisition. Dr. M . A. Ansari, as President, overruled the objection.



Mrs. Naidu, speaking on the resolution which congratulated Jamnalal Bajaj and assured him whole-hearted support, said that whether within the requisition or not, the situation was such that they could not leave Nagpur without expressing their views in the matter. They had before their eyes an example of splendid sacrifice and it deserved their support. The Satyagraha had assumed a national character and as custodians of national honour they must congratulate the satyagrahis. Small as the issue might appear, the satyagraha was a token of their determination to give a battle to the bureaucracy in order to uphold their elementary rights.

Several amendments to the resolution were moved, among them one from Rajagopalachari, calling on all Provincial Congress Committees to organize Flag processions on 18 July, the Gandhi Day, all over the country. [*The Indian Annual Register*, 1923, Vol.II, pp.173-74]

C. R. Das, speaking on the motion, said that the Flag Satyagraha appeared to him to be "a cold-blooded movement" and for that reason it did not appeal to him. He honoured the satyagrahis who went to jail. But in the absence of unity in the organization he did not feel any inspiration to join the movement.

Votes being taken, the Swaraj Party abstained *en bloc* and the motion was declared carried.

The flow of volunteers from different parts of the country meanwhile was continuing unabated. On 3 July a batch of 45 volunteers arrived from Broach in Gujarat under the leadership of Chandulal Desai. They were stopped at a wayside station before their train arrived at Nagpur and placed under arrest. In pouring rain they were made to walk to Nagpur jail carrying their luggage. More volunteers came from Bihar, Sind, Maharashtra, Punjab, Bengal, Karnataka, the U. P. and Hyderabad. Police had been posted at strategic points all around the



city to prevent volunteers who came on foot from entering the city. A party of seven volunteers who had walked all the way from Gujarat were all arrested before they could get into the city.

The Nagpur Jail was soon filled to capacity. The prisoners were then sent to Akola jail.

Conditions in the jails were harsh. Prisoners were divided in categories according to their physical strength. The strongest were assigned to grinding wheat in the quantity of 25 seers a day. The second category had to grind 15 seers, and so on. Some prisoners were given the task of crushing stones. The food was coarse : *jawar* (millet) bread at both meals, morning and evening. The warden; ill-treated and humiliated the prisoners in order to break their spirit and force them to apologize. Of some 1,750 volunteers who went to prison during the 110 days that the struggle lasted, about 200 offered apology when they could not endure the prison hardships. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, pp.197-99]

The Swarajists' withholding their support to the movement was not taken kindly by the No-changers. On the very day the A.I.C.C. was deliberating on the Satyagraha, the trial of Jamnalal Bajaj concluded. The feeling was widely entertained that if the Swarajists supported the movement Jamnalal would be lightly let off, while on the contrary if the Swarajists showed that they were not with the movement. The rulers would be encouraged to deal more harshly with Jamnalal. The upshot of disunion within the Congress on the movement was that Jamnalal was sentenced to a prison term of two years. [*Ibid*, pp.197-99]

Jawaharlal Nehru had not been in favour of the Satyagraha at first. But later he wired to Jamnalal : "I am watching the Nagpur struggle with growing admiration. I wish I was one of the fortunate volunteers who are being placed



under arrest. I shall certainly send bands of volunteers to help you from the United Provinces." [Shriman Narayan, *Jamnalal Bajaj*, p.75]

He was in Nagpur on the day of Jamnalal's arrest. At a public meeting he said :

I did not fully realize the propriety and significance of the Flag Satyagraha before coming to Nagpur and I was sad. I felt that this fight should not have been precipitated when there was already a ban on organization of volunteers corps. But when I noticed what tremendous work had been done here I was satisfied. As a camp follower I know only one thing – to work, to fight. The example of Nagpur is worthy of being copied everywhere. The Government opposition is only strengthening our hands. Other provinces will surely give assistance, but even if they do not, I am convinced that your province will push on with the struggle. [*Ibid*, pp.75-76]

3

With Jamnalal Bajaj put in prison, the Working Committee entrusted Vallabhbhai Patel with the responsibility of leading the struggle. When Vallabhbhai arrived in Nagpur on 22 July, he found that practically all the local workers were in prison and all volunteer camps had been occupied by the police.

Vallabhbhai immediately sent appeals to the various Provincial Congress Committees for volunteers to be sent so that each day there would be fifty volunteers available to present themselves for arrest.

In the C. P. Legislative Council the Governor on 3 August declared that Government were determined that "this new challenge to lawful authority... should be resisted with all the resources at their command." However in the same



session of the Council, through the efforts of Vithalbhai Patel, resolutions were moved to the effect that :

(1) all pending cases arising out of the Flag Satyagraha should be withdrawn and railway tickets to Nagpur freely issued;

(2) the order under Section 144 prohibiting the taking out of Flag processions in Nagpur should be immediately withdrawn; and

(3) all those arrested in connection with the Flag Satyagraha should be unconditionally released.

The Council passed the resolutions by a majority of 31 for and 27 against. The Government, using his special powers, disallowed the resolutions.

The Government were, however, aware that the situation might soon get out of their control and the Home Department made overtures for a compromise. On 13 August, at the Government's initiative, Vallabhbhai and Vithalbhai Patel met the Governor. But no compromise resulted because the Governor appeared to be determined that as soon as the existing prohibitory orders expired on 17 August fresh prohibitory orders should be issued.

There now appeared to Vallabhbhai no alternative but to continue the struggle. Accordingly on 17 August he issued a statement announcing the plan of a procession to be taken out on 17 August (this was later postponed to 18 August to coincide with the date of Gandhiji's imprisonment), and warning that if the procession was prevented by the police, the struggle would assume a new phase.

In a letter Vallabhbhai wrote about this time he said:

Please tell Ba [Kasturba Gandhi] to be ready to go to jail. If it is possible, issue an appeal over Ba's signature to the women of Gujarat to come forward to join her when she leaves for Nagpur.... The present order



expires on the 17th. If the Government extends it, women also must take part in the movement from the 18th. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.201]

The Government were alarmed. On the evening of 16 August the Home Member met Vallabhbhai and broached the matter of a settlement. He suggested that the Government would allow the procession to pass through the Civil Lines if Vallabhbhai would agree to call off the struggle. Vallabhbhai said he would be prepared to call off the struggle if all those arrested and imprisoned in connection with the satyagraha were also released. The Home Member accepted the condition.

On 18 August, according to press accounts, 100 volunteers marched instead of 50 as previously arranged. They were led by the well-known Hindi poet Makhanlal Chaturvedi. All volunteers had been previously warned to be ready to face police assault and beating. The procession was accompanied by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and the Hindi poetess Subhadrakumari Chauhan among others. When the procession entered the Civil Lines area, it was feared the police might stop it. But it was not interfered with. The procession terminated in Sadar Bazar. Vallabhbhai Patel in a written statement declared the satyagraha closed. [The Indian Annual Register, 1923, Vol.II, pp.171-72]

However, the matter did not end there. Important sections among the police, the I.C.S. and the Anglo-Indian press frankly expressed their unhappiness at what they thought was a climb-down by the Government, not in keeping with the uncompromising statement of the Governor in the Council. They particularly objected to the Government's intention to release all the satyagrahi prisoners according to the agreement arrived at with Vallabhbhai. At the behest of the Commissioner of Nagpur, the whole group of civilian officers openly opposed the



move to discharge the prisoners. As the clearance for this had to come from the Government of India, the Governor was in a difficult position, especially as the civilian officers had sent a representation in the matter to the Secretary of State for India.

The resulting delay in the discharge of the nearly 2,000 satyagrahi prisoners earned Vallabhbhai censure from Indian newspapers. They charged that he had taken out the procession with the permission of the police. Some thought he had been tricked by the Governor. Vallabhbhai, unable to take the unfair criticism any more, finally served a twenty-four hours' notice on the Governor to discharge all the prisoners. The Governor and the Home Member approached the Secretary of State for clearance, saying that if the prisoners were not immediately released, they would resign. On 3 September, 1923 all the prisoners were released. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* Vol.I, pp.201-10]

4

The Borsad Satyagraha

December 1, 1923 saw the inauguration of a satyagraha in the Board taluka of Kheda district in Gujarat, against the imposition of a punitive levy. The satyagraha was led by Vallabhbhai Patel and Durbar Gopaldas Desai and ended in success.

The genesis of the satyagraha may be described as follows :

Of Borsad's population of about 150,000 no less than half comprised Dharalas, classified as a criminal tribe by the British. All attempts to reform them through application of the Criminal Tribes Act and other repressive laws had failed. The community remained largely outside the pale of law, living by plunder.



One of the Dharala outlaws, a freebooter called Babar Deva, had for years been carrying on depredations in the countryside. The police were unable to apprehend him. Villagers were so terrorized by him that they did not have the courage to give the police any information about him. He had murdered his own uncle for the crime of informing the police and nailed another informer to a tree. On 9 October 1923 the Government published the following resolution : "The Government of Bombay have come to the conclusion that the conduct of inhabitants of all the villages in Borsad taluka and of those villages in the Anand taluka which lie towards the west of the main line...renders it expedient to employ additional police in the said villages for a period of one year."

The maintenance of this force was to cost the Government a sum of Rs. 24,000. A communique stated that this would be defrayed wholly by a rate assessed on the adult inhabitants of the villages of Borsad and parts of Anand taluka.

This cess came to about Rs.2-7-0 per head, or between Rs. 10 and Rs. 15 per family. The villages affected were 84 in Borsad and 14 in Anand taluka.

What hurt the feelings of the people most was that they were branded as being in league with the dacoits. They did not so much mind losing a little money. They were not so poor as to fight for a paltry sum. They were fighting for their self-respect. Vallabhbhai expressed their feelings saying :

We are not beggars that we cannot afford to throw away two or three rupees. But the Government wants to take away that much money after calling us associates of dacoits. If the Government admits that its authority has vanished and its finances are poor we shall be quite prepared to take over the administration. [Patel, *Sardar Patel Ke Bhashan*, p.82]



The injustice of the impost caused much resentment among the people. On 1 December 1923 the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution severely criticizing the Government for having failed in its function to protect the people from the oppression of dacoits and, worse still, for having shifted its guilt on to the people. It advised the villagers to resist the injustice by refusing to pay the impost and by peacefully putting up with all the suffering consequent on the refusal.

The representatives of the villages in a conference welcomed the resolution of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. A satyagraha committee was set up and volunteers posted in each village. Every volunteer had to sign the following pledge :

- (1) I will put on only handspun and handwoven clothes;
- (2) I will remain non-violent in word and deed and will try to be so even in thought;
- (3) As a Hindu I will try to abolish the stain of untouchability and will serve the untouchables to the best of my ability;
- (4) I will obey the resolutions of the Satyagraha Committee and those emanating from my superiors;
- (5) I will do all the work assigned to me by the Satyagraha Committee and will be prepared to meet all the difficulties such as jail life, beating and loss of life or property without getting angry or violent;
- (6) It shall be my ceaseless endeavour to strengthen the communal bonds between Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis and others;
- (7) I will not ask for any help for myself or my family in case I am sentenced to imprisonment.



More than 75 volunteers signed the pledge. Many of the volunteers were educated young men and some of them were veterans of the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha.

A central headquarters of the Satyagraha Committee was set up, led by Vallabhbhai Patel, Durbar Gopaldas and Mohanlal Pandya. They were ever ready to go to any village where the people showed any weakness.

Officials on their part bent all their energies to the task of recovery of the tax. Punitive police were employed, notices of attachment were served on the villagers as also of confiscation of lands. The poor left their houses with their cattle and made for the fields. All forced labour was refused. Many headmen resigned their posts. Women buried their metal utensils and began using earthen vessels. After a month the recovery officials had not even collected the cost of the recovery proceedings. As against Rs. 24,000 only a sum of Rs. 900 could be recovered.

The struggle led to great awakening among the people. Constructive work made rapid progress. People gave up drinking and thieving. The sale of khadi mounted and panchayats were set up.

Mohanlal Pandya and Ravishanker Maharaj settled down amongst the Baraiyas and Patanwadias and tried to make them give up lawlessness. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.246]

Vallabhbhai had dealt with the local criminal tribes when he had set up his practice at Borsad as a lawyer at start of his career. They resented being treated as criminals. They too had once had lands of their own. Most of them had lost the land because they were not able to pay the various levies or return the money they had borrowed at exorbitant rates of interest on different occasions from the local well-to-do who had taken away their lands in return. They longed to be



treated with respect as the warrior class – the Kshatriyas that they claimed to be. Frustration had driven them to crime.

Some of the well-to-do land-owners were sheltering the dacoits and sharing the booty with them. The notorious Babar Deva was known to the police to visit the Mukhi – the village headmen quite often, but they were not laying their hands on him for reasons of their own. Many poor villagers had been murdered by Deva for collaborating with the police. The charge of the Government therefore, that the people were not helping the police was false.

Vallabhbhai asked his trusted workers Durbar Gopaldas, Mohanlal Pandya and Ravishanker Maharaj to get him proof of the police collusion with the law-breakers. They obtained two letters with the help of a clerk which provided the proof Vallabhbhai needed.

Vallabhbhai made a devastating attack on the administration. He quoted from official reports to show how many poor villagers had been murdered for being informants. The police he knew had made friends with another outlaw Ali and had supplied him with arms and ammunitions in the hope that he would eliminate Deva. With the police guns Ali had looted many and murdered several innocent people and Deva was still at large. "Who is going to fine and punish the Government ?" he asked.

The exposure of police collaboration with outlaws led to acute embarrassment. It resulted in the arrest of Ali in the house of the Mukhi. Later Deva was also arrested . They were tried and hanged in due course.

During the whole of December, official barbarities against the peasants went on. The villagers remained undaunted. Officials could not even find bidders for the articles attached and put up to auction, or to carry away the confiscated goods.



Finally the Governor deputed the Home Member Sir Maurice Heyward to make an on-the-spot enquiry. The Home Member arrived in Borsad on 3 January 1924 and immediately stopped the recovery proceedings.

On 7 January a Government press note was issued saying that "the cost of the extra police which have already been drafted shall be met during the current year from general revenues and that the Legislative Council shall be asked to vote funds for the continuance of the operation during the next financial year." The press note also said the extra charge having been levied on the villagers was being remitted.

Thus the Borsad Satyagraha ended in complete victory for the people. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March, 1924, pp.29-32(d)]

Commenting on the Satyagraha later Gandhiji wrote :

This satyagraha is in many ways superior to the Kheda Satyagraha. The victory in Kheda Satyagraha was one which merely saved our faces. The victory in the workers' satyagraha in Ahmedabad was tainted by my fast.... In Borsad, satyagraha by itself has completely succeeded. It upheld our honour and also protected our material interests, and no other means, legitimate or otherwise, was employed along with it for securing victory. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIII, p.382]

Tha Nabha Episode

In the Punjab, the friction generated by the Akali movement to wrest control of gurdwaras from the Mahants supported by the British had continued without interruption following the Nankana Saheb tragedy. In the latter half of 1923 the arena of conflict shifted to Nabha, a small Sikh state adjoining Patiala.



Following incidents of friction between the two states, the Political Agent, one Col. Minchin, brought pressure to bear on the Maharaja of Nabha, Ripudaman Singh, to abdicate. In the event of refusal to do so he was threatened with "dishonour, prosecution, internment and other grave consequences". The Maharaja accordingly, much against his will, sent the letter of abdication on 5 July 1923. On 9 July he was seized by armed guards and conveyed outside the state.

The Government's case was that the Nabha ruler had been deliberately trying to injure Patiala by implicating subjects of Patiala state in false cases. The real reason for the action against the Maharaja was that he was known to be a supporter of the Akalis. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March 1924, pp.233-40]. He had long been a thorn in the flesh of British officials.

The Akalis refused to take the disgrace to the Maharaja lying down. July 29 was observed by the whole Sikh community as a day of prayer for Nabha. 9 September was fixed for giving expression to the outraged feelings of Sikhs by leading hymn-singing, barefoot processions through the principal streets of all important towns of the country and by offering prayers at gurdwaras.

On 5 and 6 August the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee passed a resolution denouncing deposition of the Nabha ruler as designed to wrest the administration of the Nabha state from the Maharaja and as "vindictive, unjustified and absolutely uncalled for". The resolution authorized the executive committee of the S.G.P.C. to "get the wrong done to Nabha and the Panth righted by all peaceful and legitimate means." [*Ibid*, p.240]

A campaign was started to restore the ruler to the throne. The agitation took the form of Akali *jathas* marching to Jaito, the capital of Nabha, and holding protest meetings and *akhand paths* at the Gangsar gurdwara. The *jathas* were of course arrested as soon as they entered Nabha. They were followed by fresh



jathas in a continuous stream. This unarmed "invasion" continued throughout September.

Towards the end of September Jawaharlal Nehru, A. T. Gidwani, and K. Santhanam of Lahore were invited to Nabha by the Akali satyagrahis to observe one of the *jathas* in action. When they arrived in Nabha they were ordered by the authorities to leave the state at once. They refused. They were thereupon immediately taken into custody and paraded down the main street of the town, handcuffed and chained to a policeman.

"To be handcuffed and chained to another person for a whole night and part of a day is not an experience I should like to repeat," wrote Nehru. They were kept in a foul, insanitary cell, full of rats, some of which scampered across his face.

When the trial began they discovered that the judge was an illiterate person. No witnesses were examined. A charge of conspiracy was added to the original charge. The British administrator of the state told them that if they expressed an apology and agreed to leave the state at once the charge would be dropped. They refused. The court convicted and sentenced them. But the sentence was suspended and they were allowed to leave after a couple of weeks.

In the Nabha jail Nehru contracted typhoid and afterwards lay seriously ill for a month. The experience brought home to him the sharp distinction that existed between British India and princely India. This was Nehru's first brush with the methods of administration carried on in Indian states. [Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, pp.89-91]

The agitation meanwhile continued with increasing vigour, inviting repression and arrests on a mass scale. On 13 October 1923 the Government declared the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee an unlawful body and



arrested its entire executive committee. The offices of *The Nation*, the S.G.P.C. organ, were raided and its editor arrested. Arrests and convictions of Akalis continued. In the following months the Nabha agitation grew in intensity and proportions.

Akali satyagrahis in *jathas* of twenty five would march to the Gangsar gurdwara in Jaito to continue the *akhand path* there. As soon as one band of marchers was arrested on entry into the Nabha territory, another would set out in its place. The arrested men were put in various jails in the Punjab. In prison they were beaten, tortured and maltreated in a variety of ways. Many died in jails of Multan and Montgomery.

Early in February 1924 the Akalis decided to send a *shahidi jatha* of 500 satyagrahis to Gurdwara Gangsar. The *jatha* started from Amritsar on 9 February 1924. As it proceeded on its way its ranks were swelled by huge crowds of people joining on the way. The procession, comprising now thousands of people – 7,000 according to a report – reached Jaito on 21 February. At the head of the *jatha* drove A. T. Gidwani and Saifuddin Kitchlew. Accompanying them was an American news correspondent Zimand.

The Administrator of the Nabha state, accompanied by mounted troops accosted the *jatha* and ordered it to stop. Immediately afterwards he ordered the troops to open fire. As a result, according to official figures, 21 persons lay dead and 33 were injured. The Sikhs put the number of the dead at over 40 and those wounded at 80. The dead and the wounded lay scattered in the fields where they had fallen. The medical team accompanying the *jatha* was arrested and no one was allowed to attend to the wounded. Kitchlew and Gidwani were arrested. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March, 1924, pp.97-112(t)]



Gandhiji's release from prison coincided with the hotting up of the Nabha agitation, and he was flooded with letters and telegrams from the Akalis to visit the Punjab "unminding health condition". Gandhiji, in an open letter to the Akalis addressed to "Khalsaji" dated 25 February, regretted "physical impossibility" of a visit to the Punjab on his part, but expressed sympathy on the loss of so many brave men. He then went on to say :

Without full facts before me I am unable to say whether the march of a large number of men in order to pay devotion to the shrine of Gangsar at Jaito was or was not justified. But I would ask the Akali Sikhs not to send any more *jathas* without further deliberation and consultation.... You have, from the very commencement, claimed that your movement is perfectly non-violent and religious. I would like everyone of us to understand all the implications of non-violence.... Non-violence is impossible without deep humility and the strictest regard for truth.... I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that, had we practised non-violence in the sense I mean during all these five years, we would not only have achieved our common goal, but there would be today no differences and quarrels between Hindus and Mussalmans.

I would therefore have you search yourselves and, if you find that you have not been true to the standards set before yourselves, to cease further demonstration for the time being and perform the necessary cleansing process before beginning anew. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.210-11]

The general impression created by the letter was an unfavourable one. The Akalis suspected that Gandhiji had written it on the basis of incorrect information supplied to him by Lala Lajpat Rai, who had gone to Poona to see Gandhiji on 21 February.



In the first week of March a deputation of Akalis headed by Sardar Mangal Singh visited Gandhiji and had prolonged discussions with him on the Akali movement. Gandhiji, on 4 March, issued a statement saying he was not entirely satisfied as to the nature and implications of the Akali movement and the methods adopted to gain the end. If he was to guide the movement he would want to be satisfied on the following points :

(1) The strength of the Akalis;

(2) A. A manifesto stating the minimum, which was the performance of the *Akhand Path* at Gangsar Gurdwara. It must be clearly stated that *Akhand Path* was not a means for seeking restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha.

B. As regards control of the gurdwaras, the matter should be referred to arbitration;

(3) Full assurance on the part of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as regards absolute adherence to truth and non-violence;

(4) That the movement was not anti-Hindu or anti-any other race or creed;

(5) That the S.G.P.C. had no desire for the establishment of Sikh Raj. [*Ibid*, pp.231-33]

On 9 March Gandhiji repeated the advice. In the meanwhile another *shahidi jatha* of 500 had started from Amritsar on 28 February.

Gandhiji regretted that it had been sent without proper stock-taking. The *jatha* had been instructed, in the event of being ordered not to cross the boundary of the state, to present a solid wall to the police and "draw upon their devoted heads with unflinching courage the fire" that would be poured upon them. Gandhiji said this kind of heroism would thrill the world. But he was sorry to say that it would not be non-violence or civil disobedience. Civil disobedience



lay in perfect submission to orders given as punishment for the breach of primary orders which a civil resister disobeyed. Gandhiji advised meek submission by the *jatha* to orders of deportation or imprisonment. [*Ibid*, pp.231-33]

The *jatha* reached Jaito on 14 March. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rangaswami Iyengar and some other leaders tried to mediate between the Nabha Administration and the Akalis. But neither side was prepared to budge – the Akalis insisting on completing 101 *Akhand Paths* without interruption, a procedure which was likely to take ten months, and the Administration not inclined to permit more than a week's time for the whole ritual. On 15 March the *jatha* was placed under arrest. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March 1924, pp.112(c)-112(e)]. This time there was no violence and Gandhiji in a telegram congratulated the Sikhs on the *jatha*'s "dignified peaceful surrender". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, p.264]

More *shahidi jathas* followed. The third such started from Amritsar on 22 March and reached Jaito on 14 April. The fourth set out on 27 March, the fifth started from Amritsar and reached Nabha state on 21 May, the sixth started on 10 May and reached Nabha on 20 June, the seventh left Amritsar on 10 June.

In each case the avowed purpose of the Akali *jathas* was to defy the Nabha Administration's orders and conduct 101 *Akhand Paths* at the Gangsar Gurdwara in Jaito. Each time the *jatha* was arrested, handcuffed and taken to various prisons in Punjab. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.640]

But as one *shahidi jatha* followed another and was quietly put away by the authorities without showing the least sign of any climb-down, the ardour of the movement wore away. The patience and the discipline required could not be kept up by the mass following of the Panth. The process of demoralization and disarray was hastened by the policy of Governor Malcolm Hailey to create a schism in the



Akali ranks by encouraging certain big zamindars and moderates among the Sikhs to assert themselves more determinedly.

A new Sikh organization called the Provincial Sikh Sudhar Committee came up in September 1924, which in October organized its own *jatha* to march to Gangsar Gurdwara in Nabha to carry on *Akhand Path* there. As was only to be expected the authorities fully cooperated, after the *jatha* had accepted the conditions offered. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*. July-Dec., 1924, pp.199-202]



CHAPTER XIX: DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

1

Although the doctrine of Swadeshi was not altogether a novel one for the Congress – indeed it had been the chief political weapon in the movement of national protest that had followed in the wake of the Bengal partition of 1905 – with the advent of Gandhiji it came to acquire a pivotal importance in the programme of the Congress organization.

As early as the Amritsar session of Congress in 1919, when Gandhiji's active association with the policy and programme of the Congress began, a resolution calling for encouragement of hand-spinning and handweaving was passed.

The Nagpur session of 1920 stressed the idea of self-reliance in economic matters and called upon "the capitalists, the merchants and the dealers in the country to assist the national cause by introducing in their respective businesses the spirit of patriotism and to help the movement for boycott of foreign goods by concentrating their attention on stimulating production of cloth sufficient for the national needs by encouraging home-spinning and home-weaving." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.184]. The Congress also decided to set up a committee of experts to draw up a scheme of boycott of foreign cloth.

The Bezwada meeting of the A.I.C.C. on 1 April 1921 drew up a three- point programme of enlisting one crore members for the Congress, collecting one crore rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund and distributing 20 lakh charkhas in the villages – all before 30 June. Except for enrolment of one crore members a target which could not be met – the other two items of the programme were fully carried out.

At another meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay on 28 July 1921, all those who loved the country were called upon to direct their efforts towards the



achievement of complete boycott of foreign cloth by 30 September. Congressmen were asked to give up the use of all articles of foreign clothing from 1 August 1921 onwards, to introduce the spinning-wheel into homes where it had not been introduced and to induce weavers as far as possible to give up the use of foreign yarn altogether, to use only hand-spun yarn and, failing that, mill-spun yarn of indigenous origin.

The Non-cooperation movement thus was also a movement for expansion of khadi and hand-spinning and of boycott of foreign cloth. The idea was to encourage self-sufficiency in cloth and help the poor to have a source of income when agriculture did not require their labour. Villagers grew wheat, rice and other cereals, and made their own bread in their homes. They also grew cotton, but a large part of it was exported. Answering criticism contained in a newspaper Gandhiji wrote in August 1920 :

India requires nearly 13 yards of cloth per head per year. She produces, I believe, less than half the amount. India grows all the cotton she needs. She exports several million bales of cotton to Japan and Lancashire and receives much of it back in manufactured calico, although she is capable of producing all the cloth and all the yarn necessary for supplying her wants by hand-weaving and hand-spinning. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XVIII, p.176]

According to a leaflet issued by the Khadi News Centre and quoted by Gandhiji, in the year 1921-22 some 29,81,361 bales of cotton were exported, while in the following year this figure had grown to 33,62,601. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.133]

If, instead of exporting all this cotton, the peasantry could spin and produce their own clothing and if there was more cloth produced than they



needed, they could sell the surplus and earn some money, too. Those who would ask people to make sacrifices by going to jail, Gandhiji felt, should also help them feed their hungry children. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving could help. Moreover, through the discipline of constructive work people would be educated for satyagraha and non-violent resistance. Idleness would disappear and with it would go the feeling of helplessness and dejection.

When the question of civil disobedience arose towards the end of the year, the A.I.C.C., at its meeting held in Delhi on 4 November 1921, decided that those wishing to offer civil disobedience must know spinning, must be wearers of khadi and must give up the use of foreign cloth altogether. For mass civil disobedience it was thought necessary that the people of the area which was to resort to mass civil disobedience must take the vow of *purna* swadeshi and wear only clothing produced locally through hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Gandhiji insisted on this condition, along with that of eradication of untouchability, being fulfilled in Bardoli before mass civil disobedience could be initiated in that taluka as had been contemplated. Bardoli did fulfil the conditions.

It may be noted that to begin with Gandhiji had thought of the spinning-wheel merely as an economic weapon to improve the lot of the people. Foreign cloth imported into the country accounted for an annual drain of sixty crore rupees. Gandhiji was anxious that this drain should be stopped. The cloth produced by Indian mills barely came to about six sq. yards per head, while the minimum requirement of cloth was computed at 15 sq. yards per head. It was thus necessary to augment the country's cloth production by at least nine sq. yards per head. This could only be done by production of cloth by the masses through hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Later on Gandhiji realized and increasingly stressed that khadi symbolised non-violence. The wages of spinners,



weavers, khadi bhandar salesmen and managers and other khadi workers did not show the disparity that characterized the wage structure in the mills.

It was a stupendous idea, calculated to ensure participation by the poorest masses in the battle for freedom, not merely political but also and above all economic.

In 1921 hand-spinning and khadi rode on the wave of Non-cooperation, which had as part of its programme the boycott and burning of foreign cloth. It is a moot point if in the absence of the Non-cooperation movement khadi would have made the progress that it did in that period.

It was, again, in April 1921 that it was suggested that the Congress flag should be of khadi and have three colours – white, green and red – representing minorities other than Muslims, Muslims and Hindus. At the suggestion of Hans Raj of Jullundur the spinning-wheel was used as an emblem on the flag. The Congress soon afterwards adopted this design for its flag. [Shrikrishnadas Jaju and A. V. Sahasrabuddhe, *Charkha Sangh Ka Itihas* (Hindi), pp.95-103; C.W.M.G., Vol.XIX, p.561]

The Bardoli programme of the Working Committee, adopted by it under Gandhiji's guidance on 12 February 1922, while suspending mass civil disobedience in the wake of the Chauri Chaura violence, called upon workers "to popularize the spinning-wheel and organize the manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar", the other items of the constructive programme being organizing of national schools, removing untouchability and organizing Depressed Classes for a better life, promotion of temperance and organizing village panchayats for the settlement of disputes.

The A.I.C.C. meeting in Delhi of February 25, 1922 confirmed the Bardoli resolutions of the Working Committee. It authorized *bona-fide* picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXII, p.468]



Following the suspension of mass civil disobedience and the imprisonment of Gandhiji, enthusiasm for khadi and spinning among a section of the Congress leadership began to wane. C. R. Das, for instance, in his presidential address at the Gaya Congress in December 1922 said :

It is often stated that khaddar alone will bring us swaraj. I ask my countrymen : In what way is it possible for khaddar to lead us to swaraj? It is in one sense only that the statement may be true. We must regard khaddar as the symbol of swaraj.... To my mind such symbol worship requires the spreading out of all Non-cooperation activities in every possible direction. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March, 1924, p.485]

Nevertheless, as the resolutions passed in the same session showed, the vast majority of Congressmen still believed in the programme spelt out in the Bardoli resolutions and wanted to pursue it with devotion. In nearly every province there were leaders who, notwithstanding the general feeling of defeatism that had gripped the organization at all levels, pursued with loyalty the constructive programme as laid down by Gandhiji. Vallabhbhai Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, C. Rajagopalachari, Konda Venkatapayya and Rajendra Prasad were some of the leaders who kept the flag of Non-cooperation and constructive programme flying and resisted any attempts to modify the programme.

After Gandhiji's arrest on 10 March 1922, Vallabhbhai devoted himself to the pursuit of the constructive programme. He was a loyal follower of the Mahatma and took pride in saying that he just raised his hand to support whatever Bapu proposed. It was for his leader to think, write to the officials, frame resolutions, make speeches and deal with the Government. He as a soldier was content to obey his leader.



On the very next day after Gandhiji's imprisonment Vallabhbhai issued an appeal to the public :

Gujarat has to shoulder a great responsibility. It is a testing time for it. Gandhiji has clearly explained to us our duty. If we want to show our love for Gandhiji we must not merely shout '*Gandhiji ki jai*' and make a dash to see him, but must pursue the fourfold constructive programme enunciated by him. [Ramnarayan Pathak, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, (Guj.), pp.118-19]

In an article captioned 'The Test of Faith' Vallabhbhai wrote :

Now that Gandhiji has gone, what ought his colleagues and disciples to do? There is no one among them of such outstanding character and ability.... But while a mason does not claim to have the ability of the planning architect, yet he experiences no difficulty in completing a structure in accordance with the plan drawn by the architect. In the same way if Gandhiji's colleagues have thoroughly understood Gandhiji's plan for the achievement of independence, they will have no difficulty in working to implement that plan.

They must keep in mind Gandhiji's doctrine of non-violence, his boundless affection and love, his indefatigable energy and his passion for independence. If they too like him will work tirelessly, they will be able to prove their loyalty to him and fulfil his programme for the achievement of independence. [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, pp.168-69]

The sixth Gujarat Political Conference met at Anand on 25 and 26 May 1922, under the presidentship of Kasturba Gandhi. It reiterated the importance of constructive work and unanimously expressed itself in favour of continuing the programme of Non-cooperation and against Council entry.



Vallabhbhai had used his office in the Ahmedabad Municipality for the promotion of National Education when Gandhiji had given a call to boycott Government schools and set up national schools and colleges. At his prompting two Municipal teachers had written to the Chairman of the Education Committee of Ahmedabad Municipality to say that they would like to teach in schools which did not take Government grants and followed Gandhiji's advice to develop National Education. They asked whether the Municipality would accept Gandhiji's advice. If it could not do so, they would like to resign their jobs. Vallabhbhai succeeded in convincing the Municipal members of the advisability of giving up Government grants and also in collecting enough money from the public to manage the finances of schools run by the Ahmedabad Municipality. The Nadiad and Surat Municipalities followed Ahmedabad and had national schools. The three Municipalities had a tough time with Government officers who did not like this decision, but Vallabhbhai had his way.

Vallabhbhai continued his work for national education after Gandhiji's arrest. In the various Kumar Mandirs and Vinaya Mandirs (Primary and Secondary Schools) of Gujarat which were affiliated to Gujarat Vidyapith, no less than 37,000 pupils were receiving education. The Vidyapith imparted higher education to 250 and had an excellent library with some 75,000 books on its shelves. They were consulted by students from Government institutions too.

The Vidyapith did not have a building of its own, Vallabhbhai accordingly issued an appeal for ten lakh rupees to be collected by 2 October 1923. Vallabhbhai himself proceeded on a hectic tour to collect the sum. He went to Jharia, Dhanbad, Calcutta and Burma. Manilal Kothari, too, went all out to help in the collection. By the target date of 2 October ten lakh rupees had been collected, though on the last day a generous donor had to make up the shortfall of Rs.



75,000. A sum of three and half lakh rupees was donated by Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, an old friend of Gandhiji. [Ramnarayan Pathak, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* (Guj.), p.121]

Similarly Vallabhbhai went all out to promote spinning and use of hand-spun and hand-woven khadi by the people. Women from well-to-do families did not mind wearing thick coarse khadi saris. As khadi in those days did not have sufficient width for making saris two strips had to be stitched together to make a sari.

Vallabhbhai saw the economic benefit of khadi for the poor and the spirit of nationalism and national solidarity as also of self-reliance and self-respect which khadi fostered. Besides, khadi generated a feeling of brotherhood and equality among the workers.

Under Vallabhbhai's leadership the fight against untouchability and the drink evil was carried on as well as the boycott of law courts, Government controlled schools and colleges and of foreign cloth. In pursuance of the Swadeshi Programme the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee on 16 October 1922, decided to launch a programme of picketing of foreign cloth shops. Vallabhbhai issued an appeal for volunteers. He said : "Gujarat has money, organizing ability and intelligence. What Gujarat lacks is young men to work as volunteers. Every Gujarati family should offer one son for the country, at least till Gandhiji is released from prison."

Every volunteer was called upon to sign the following pledge: "I shall prove to the Committee appointed for the task of enrolling volunteers that I have persuaded every member of my family, whom I am in a position to influence, to give up the use of foreign cloth." [Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol.I, p.172]

Hundreds of young men answered Vallabhbhai's call. He issued a set of instructions to volunteers to maintain perfect peace and order, to try to gain the



sympathy and support of the people, not to crowd public thoroughfares and truthfully and politely to submit to any questioning by the police and even to arrest and imprisonment. They must submit to beatings and assaults without resorting to violence themselves.

The picketing was inaugurated in Ahmedabad on the morning of 1 December 1922, with bands of volunteers making rounds through the city singing bhajans. At 3 p.m. in the afternoon the hawking of khadi was taken up. Vallabhbhai, Abbas Saheb and Dr. Balvantrai Kanuga at the head of a large band of volunteers made their way to that part of the market where business in foreign cloth was carried on. Women volunteers headed by Mrs. Vijayagauri Kanuga besieged the Ratanpol cloth market mainly selling women's wear.

The activity soon spread to villages. In some villages merchants had come out with pledges to forswear selling of foreign cloth – some for a period of six months, some for nine months or a year – even while volunteers were being recruited. Merchants in Surat, Nadiad and Broach districts undertook not to sell foreign cloth so long as the Congress programme in this regard remained in force.

[Ramnarayan Pathak, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, (Guj.) p.121]

One view was that to prevent loss to them the cloth merchants might be allowed to sell the stock in hand if they promised not to order fresh stocks. This was considered risky. It was thought best to appeal to their spirit of sacrifice. They were, therefore, persuaded to pack up their stock and put it aside, which they agreed to do. The idea at the back of this proposal was to try and help them export it if possible so that they did not suffer total financial loss, though this was not spelt out and no assurance to this effect was given.



The campaign for the eradication of untouchability, another important item in the fourfold constructive programme, was also taken in hand. Vallabhbhai described banishing of untouchability as a giant step on the road to Swaraj.

In November 1922, the second Kathiawar Political Conference held under the presidentship of Abbas Saheb, passed a resolution supporting the campaign for the abolition of untouchability. An interesting incident on the occasion shows the way Vallabhbhai handled a situation. Harijan delegates had been seated in a separate block and volunteers were appealing to them to be careful not to touch the other delegates. Vallabhbhai, observing this, went and sat among the Harijans. Durbar Gopaldas and his wife Bhaktibehn followed him there. Vallabhbhai addressed the conference from his seat among the Harijans. The Harijan enclosure became the centre of attention. In his speech he made no allusion to it. His action was more eloquent than any speech could have been.

3

In Bihar Rajendra Babu took up khadi work in all earnestness. He, like Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and many others, had given up his law practice. Some people wondered how he spent his time. But Rajendra Babu had not a minute to spare. He was wholly immersed in the production, sale and popularization of khadi among the people. He was also busy in the promotion of National Education. Khadi made tremendous progress, he records in his memoirs, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, but National Education showed signs of slackening. The Swaraj Party was getting stronger. While the controversy regarding Council entry continued it proved a hindrance in the conduct of any kind of public work with speed and enthusiasm. [Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.130]

Regarding National Education they had made a 'fundamental mistake' from the very beginning in imitating Government-run colleges and universities,



writes Rajendra Babu. "We did not have the resources either in men or money to be able to compete with them. Moreover the students who came out of National Schools could not get employment in Government or even non-Government institutions, even though their standard of education was every bit as good as of those coming out of Government colleges and universities. This discouraged the students. [*Ibid*, p.130]

National education did give the students additional skills and a sound character. They all learnt spinning and some also learnt weaving. Many became efficient in agriculture and carpentry and shoe-making. They led a simple life in an atmosphere of truth and non-violence. These were valuable assets for those who wished to take up national service. But the number of those whose parents wanted them to serve the country and those who themselves wanted to be educated for national service was limited. The National Schools, therefore, had progressively fewer and fewer students and many of these schools closed down. [*Ibid*, pp.130-31]. Also, the return of many lawyers to courts after the Swaraj Party was set up had a deleterious effect on the student community in Bihar, though some National Education institutions did continue and are still there to render valuable service.

Khadi work, however, did very well. The Swaraj Party had also adopted the use of khaddar, as it set apart its members from those of rival political parties fighting the elections and canvassing votes. [*Ibid*, p.131]. Efforts were made to improve the quality of khaddar and also to devise improved models of the spinning-wheel to make it lighter and more efficient. Gandhiji's Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad had become a research laboratory for this purpose. [*Ibid*, p.149]



Finer khadi, when it became available, was very popular. There was, Rajendra Prasad writes, increasing demand for it which it became difficult for the Bihar workers to meet.

To cotton khadi was added silk khadi and also woollen khadi. The last, unlike cotton and silk khadi, could very well compete with mill products in quality as well as in price.

Exhibitions were arranged for promoting the sale of khadi. Some of these exhibitions, especially those held at the time of Congress sessions also demonstrated the various production processes. Congressmen and non-Congressmen visited the exhibitions in large numbers. [*Ibid*, pp.131-32]. Khadi clothes became a symbol of nationalism and patriotism. Jawaharlal was to call later khadi "the livery of freedom".

Emphasis remained on production and popularization of cotton khadi. Rajendra Prasad writes that he actively associated with khadi exhibitions and often worked as a khadi salesman, particularly in exhibitions which were held in Bihar. His faith in khadi became all the stronger when he saw poor village women dressed in rags come to the khadi centres walking four or five miles with small quantities of yarn wrapped in pieces of rag, to exchange it for cotton and a few coins as wages. This exchange went on the whole day in several centres. If by chance there was not enough cotton, or money to pay wages, and the exchange had to be stopped, the despair and disappointment on those faces was heart-rending. It convinced Rajendra Babu that the only way to help the poor was to popularize khadi. [*Ibid*, pp.131-32]

Everyone was very keen to know Gandhiji's views on the Council-entry controversy. But Gandhiji was not allowed to meet other prisoners. Nor would he



speak on political matters with those who went to meet him. It was against his principles. When Shankerlal Banker was released after spending 13 months in Yeravda prison, most of this time with Bapu, they were all greatly relieved to learn that Gandhiji had not changed his views and still stood by Non-cooperation and the constructive programme. [*Ibid*, pp.132-33]. Rajaji was at the Yeravda prison gate to receive Shankerlal on his release. Shankerlal had become a confirmed votary of the spinning-wheel and a khadi worker.

The Government on their part continued to pick up workers one after another and throw them into jail. Dayaljiibhai Desai of Surat was arrested for making a 'seditious' speech and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. Shuaib Qureshi, who had taken over the editorship of *Young India*. J. P. Bhansali as printer, Swami Anand as manager and Valji G. Desai as publisher were similarly sentenced. [Ramnarayan Pathak, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, (Guj.) pp.120-22]. Rajaji on his release from jail on 20 March 1922 became editor of *Young India*.

Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari had all acted as chairmen of municipalities at one time or another. The experience enabled them to serve the people and deal with British officers connected with municipal administration. As Chairman of the Salem Municipality, Rajaji developed deep interest in the removal of untouchability and in prohibition. He saw the plight to which Harijans and poor people in general had been reduced as a result of addiction to drink. Liquor snatched away the bread from their children's mouths. Rajaji braced up to fight this enemy.

The practice of untouchability took the worst form in South India. Not only the touch but even the sight of the so-called untouchables was believed to defile the caste Hindus. Gandhiji described the plight of the untouchables in South India with deep sorrow:



Nowhere is the 'untouchable' so cruelly treated as in this Presidency [Madras). His very shadow defiles the Brahmin. He may not even pass through Brahmin streets. Non-Brahmins treat him no better. And between the two, the *Panchama* as he is called in these parts is ground to atoms.

Rajaji was wholly in tune with Gandhiji in the fight against untouchability. As Chairman of the Salem Municipality he insisted on admission of two Harijan boys to Salem's Secondary Training School against the wishes of the community and he and his associates were excommunicated. His old father Chakravarti Ayyanger was afraid that no priest might come for the funeral rites at his death. But that did not happen. [Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Rajaji Story*, Vol.I, pp.57-58]

Rajaji resigned as Chairman of the Salem Municipality and shifted to Madras for better prospects at the bar. There he was host to Mahatma Gandhi within two weeks of his arrival and under the Mahatma's spell he became a non-cooperator. [*Ibid*, pp.69-70]. He was in jail when Gandhiji was arrested on 10 March 1922. Gandhiji was sentenced on 18 March 1922 and Rajaji was released on 20 March after completing his three months in Vellore jail.

Gandhiji had earlier desired Rajaji to take up the editorship of *Young India*, which he now did. He used his powerful pen to propagate the new strategy that Gandhiji had suggested before his arrest, namely "a switch to a phase of preparation, of training (for satyagraha) through constructive programme." Gandhiji had said that Congressmen were not to rush to civil disobedience but "to settle down to the quiet work of construction. I would urge them to be indifferent to the clamour for immediate action.... We should concentrate all our energy on the tasteless but health-giving, economic and social reform." [*Ibid*, p.123]



Khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of the evils of drinking and untouchability – the main items of the constructive programme – were not exciting enough like civil disobedience and an active revolt against the Government. Many Congressmen craved for civil disobedience even of a limited kind in spite of Gandhiji's advice. They had to be educated so that they understood the potential power of constructive work. Rajaji had to explain to them the significance and beauty of the constructive programme.

Rajaji, taking advantage of the popular response, went on a tour of the Central Provinces, Bihar, Bengal, the Punjab and Sind. He wanted to take the message of the constructive programme to the people and convince them that it could be made into a dynamic programme. He was accompanied by Rajendra Prasad and Devadas whom Gandhiji had sent to Madras to spread the use of Hindi. Propagation of the national language was an important item of the constructive programme. [*Ibid*, pp.135-36]. That alone, Gandhiji held, could make Indians a nation and bring the people and leaders closer together. Rajaji agreed with Gandhiji and took up the cause of Hindi in Madras.

Rajendra Babu recalled later : "It was my privilege to join him (on his tour) and also translate his speeches." With his characteristic modesty Rajendra Prasad added that he learnt a great deal from Rajaji's speeches, and was spared the trouble of making speeches of his own, "which I doubt not would have fallen flat after his brilliant performance." [*Ibid*, p.136]

Rajaji continued to educate the people in favour of devoting their energy to the constructive programme – promotion of communal harmony and khadi, removal of untouchability and of the drink evil. He opposed Council-entry, using the press and the platform during his tours.



"Do not vote," he told the people, while the Swarajists went about canvassing votes for the coming elections. In the course of his electioneering C. R. Das came to Salem and the two leaders embraced each other in public. Rajaji saw to it that all courtesy was extended to the Swarajist leader and that he received the respect due to his stature. [*Ibid*, p.140]

Rajaji also visited Assam. Assam with its forest-clad hills and the broad-bosomed Brahmaputra captivated him with its natural beauty. But the greatest beauty was the family loom, he said. He contrasted the "sisters in Assam plying the shuttle and making garments for themselves and their children," with the "high-born ladies" elsewhere in India, laboriously picking and choosing from the silks exhibited in the bazars. [*Ibid*, p.126]

6

Like his master, Rajagopalachari sent matter for *Young India* regularly during his travels and commented on various subjects with the object of educating public opinion and carrying the message of non-violence and constructive work to the people. In one despatch, referring to terrorism which was showing definite signs of subsiding, he asked, "What became of the bombs?" and replied : "It is the Mahatma's hold...and the truths he drove home into the mind of India that have made secret crime a thing to be ashamed of." [*Ibid*, p.126]

In another place he commented : "To get Home Rule somehow may be an achievement so far as we are concerned, but to wrest our birthright by non-violence will emancipate the world forever...." [*Ibid*, p.126]

Sections of Congressmen had been urging boycott of British goods. They were willing to import from other countries and even to increase such imports. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee had accepted it in principle and recommended that the question be referred to a committee of experts. Rajaji



said that would be "the road from one prison to another, not to emancipation." Singling out British goods for boycott suggested malice.

At the Gaya Congress he had presented a resolution to the Subjects Committee opposing the boycott of British goods and though it was lost the voting was fairly close, 129 for and 146 against. In the open session ultimately, the Subjects Committee's resolution advocating boycott of British goods was lost and Rajaji won his point. [*Ibid*, p.133]

Rajaji was deeply distressed to find that though people took care not to do any physical harm to opponents, they were not free from hatred and anger. He believed that the magic of conversion of the opponent was not possible unless there was real non-violence and love for the opponent in one's heart, as Gandhiji had often pointed out.

The Gaya Congress was held on the sandy banks of the Phalgun, not far from the Bodhi tree under which Prince Gautama had attained enlightenment twenty-five centuries earlier and become the Buddha (the Enlightened One) and taught compassion and righteousness to mankind. Rajaji was trying to remind the country and the Congress of the message of non-violence and love which the new Buddha, Gandhiji, had placed before them. [*Ibid*, p.132]

Rajendra Prasad and Brajkishore Prasad as hosts had done an excellent job at Gaya and attended to their duties with unfailing sweet temper. White tents were put up to house the delegates. A separate block was set up for the leaders. Rajaji, though secretary of the Congress, preferred to stay in a tent along with other delegates and not with the leaders. This did not detract from the attention that he received like Das, the President, and Motilal Nehru, another secretary of the Congress. [*Ibid*, p.132]



The Gaya victory was followed by compromise at Delhi and Nagpur at the insistence of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Mohammed Ali. This made the No-changers sad. But they continued to push forward khadi, prohibition, communal harmony and removal of untouchability with all their strength.

At Salem Jamnalal Bajaj, Maganlal Gandhi (Gandhiji's nephew who was his right-hand man as the Ashram manager from his South Africa days), Shankerlal Banker and Mathuradas Trikumji, another nephew of Gandhiji who became Mayor of Bombay, had gone to see Rajaji and undertake a tour of the south with him to promote khadi, when news of Gandhiji's operation for appendicitis was received in January 1924. Surgery was not so well developed in those days and they along with the rest of India were most anxious. In spite of their anxiety and a feeling of frustration at not being able to do anything to help their beloved master – they could not even be with him – they proceeded with their tour. Their first halt was the village of Pudupalayam, south-west of Salem. The landlord of the village, Ratna Sabhapati Gounder, welcomed them. His father had been a client and a close friend of Rajaji. He had offered to present a village to Rajaji if he would make his son proficient in English. This offer was not taken up. But under Rajaji's influence, Ratna Sabhapati started wearing khaddar. He had given up drinking and had become a staunch supporter of the Congress. He offered to place a four acre coconut grove at Rajaji's disposal to develop a khadi centre. [*Ibid*, p.146]

After his release, Gandhiji practically handed over the Congress to the Swarajists, instructing his loyal followers, like Rajaji, Vallabhbhai and Shankerlal Banker to concentrate quietly on constructive work. Rajaji decided to set up his constructive work Ashram at Pudupalayam. Ratna Sabhapati made over the four-acre plot and also helped with funds for putting up thatched huts. [*Ibid*, p.154].



Rajaji shifted there with his younger son Narasimhan, daughter Lakshmi and five Harijan boys in spite of the snakes and scorpions. There were 17 of them altogether. The villagers were outraged at the admission of Harijans in the Ashram. When the rains failed, they blamed it on the sin committed against religion by Rajagopalachari. Even the Harijans were against the Ashram. But Rajaji went ahead undaunted. The villagers soon saw that the Ashram people could help them with their petitions and dealings with officials. The police had long been notoriously corrupt everywhere in India. The Triachengode Police Station arrested some of the villagers on false charges of theft and released them after taking bribes ranging from Rs. 20 to 200 from each. The affected persons, most of them untouchables, came and narrated their experience to Rajaji. He said he would help them if they were prepared to stick to their story in spite of the pressure the police might exert on them to change it. They agreed. He then wrote to the police officer in charge of the Triachengode Police Station to return the money, failing which the matter would be taken up with higher authorities. They returned the money, apologized and promised never to harass the villagers in future. The villagers thereafter changed their attitude and began to cooperate with the Ashram. [*Ibid*, p.146].

When Gandhiji set up the All-India Spinners Association in September 1925 (the institution which replaced the Khadi Boards set up earlier by the Congress), Rajaji and Vallabhbhai were made members of the Executive, with Shankerlal Banker as Secretary and Janinalal Bajaj as Treasurer. Gandhiji himself became the President of the Association. Jamnalal gave Rs. 1 lakh to start with and provided more funds by making collections and contributing himself to help set up production centres and shops for sale of khadi all over the country.



Rajaji's Ashram helped the women who took to spinning. He encouraged weavers to use hand-spun yarn for weaving. Those who were spinning and weaving khadi to earn wages were persuaded also to wear khadi.

To begin with, the women spinners earned between a rupee or a rupee-and-a-half a month. Even that was good money for them in those days. Within two months a thousand women from 20 villages around the Ashram took to spinning. By August 70 weavers of the area were using hand-spun yarn. [*Ibid*, p.157]. The Ashram became a training centre for workers who could set up similar activities in other places. G. Ramachandran of Kerala was sent by Gandhiji for training in khadi work to Rajaji.

Vallabhbhai set up a similar centre at Bardoli. Other No-changers did the same in their areas. Everyone buried himself in constructive work.

7

Jamnalal Bajaj was present at Gandhiji's trial on 18 March 1922 and was deeply moved by the proceedings. He wrote to his wife Janakidevi soon afterwards about the trial and told her that they would both have to devote most of their time to khadi work and would not be able to stay at Wardha for long. He undertook an all-India tour for the propagation of khadi. When the Indian National Congress at its Cocanada session set up a Khadi Board for the promotion of khadi and appointed Jamnalal as Chairman, he travelled all over India to organize production and sale of khadi. He donated money and collected funds for meeting financial requirements of the growing khadi industry. He travelled by train in third class. Khadi workers met him at every station and accompanied him to the next station to discuss their problems. He would often carry surplus khadi from one place to another where there was a shortage. He set up Khadi Bhandars everywhere for promoting the sale of khadi. He would go



to Khadi Bhandars at various places and sell khadi for a few hours, thus identifying himself with the workers and learning of their problems if any. Ramdas Gandhi, Gandhiji's third son, was also recruited by him for this purpose for some time. Gandhiji wrote :

Jamnalalji gave as much time as, if not more than, I to khadi. I may have given the *mantra*, but Jamnalalji devoted his intelligence, powers of organization and his money to give a form to the scheme. He had the gift of seeking out and creating workers too. He felt with me that Swaraj was to be found in khadi, and he organized it while I was in jail, or else it might have died. [Shriman Narayan, *Jamnalal Bajaj*, p.58]

It was after the Nagpur Congress in 1920 that Jamnalal had offered himself as Gandhiji's fifth son and Gandhiji accepted the offer. Jamnalal sent his wife and children to Sabarmati Ashram to imbibe Gandhiji's teachings and learn to absorb and practise the principle of simple living and high thinking in the Ashram atmosphere. It was in the Ashram that Jamnalal's eldest daughter Kamala was married in a simple ceremony without a band or a wedding procession. There was no rich feast and there were no ornaments. Jamnalal's family lived in a separate bungalow called Jamna Kutir and at first had their own kitchen. Later they joined the common kitchen. The children and Janakidevi attended classes conducted in the Ashram. Janakidevi also looked after the cows and cleaned the cowshed from time to time.

Jamnalal longed to have an Ashram at Wardha and asked Bapu to come there. Bapu liked the idea, but he felt as a Gujarati he could function better from Gujarat. Jamnalal then asked for Vinoba to be allowed to go to Wardha. Maganlal opposed it. Someone else was sent, but he came away after a year. Then Vinoba was sent with some of his disciples and an Ashram was started first at Maganwadi



and then near the Marwadi Vidyalaya where now stands the Mahila Ashram, and finally at Paunar. [*Ibid*, pp.60-61]

Jamnalal had been running a Marwadi Vidyalaya for several years at Wardha. It is interesting to note that Gandhiji gave the call to teachers and students to boycott Government institutions for the first time at a meeting held in the Marwadi Vidyalaya at Wardha. The Vidyalaya gave up Government grant as well as Government recognition as a result and became a Rashtriya Vidyalaya in line with Gandhiji's scheme for National Education. The syllabus was recast. Staff and students look to wearing khadi.

At the Nagpur Congress, Gandhiji had asked women to give up ornaments and to use the money for some good purpose. Jamnalal wrote to his wife to give up ornaments, to sell them and to use the money for khadi work. She followed his advice and removed even the anklets which are normally removed only when a woman's husband dies. The women in general and Marwadi women in particular were stunned to see her without ornaments. Many other women, especially those who joined the national movement for independence, gave up wearing ornaments.

Some weeks later the ornaments of the deity in the Lakshminarayan Mandir at Wardha, established by Jamnalal's grandfather, were stolen. Gandhiji said if ornaments were necessary, God would have prevented the theft.

As removal of untouchability was an important item of constructive work, Jamnalal wanted to throw open the Lakshminarayan Temple to Harijans. Gandhiji advised him first to get the consent of the Trustees. The matter was therefore postponed. However, he started having Harijan servants in his home and arranged community dinners with Harijans participating in the dinners. The food



was cooked by Harijans later and all had it together. He also admitted Harijan students in the Marwadi Vidyalaya which he had started at Wardha. This shocked the orthodox. Jamnalal was excommunicated. Gandhiji congratulated him on it.

In a forceful appeal to trustees of Hindu temples Jamnalal said :

Untouchability among the Hindus is no ordinary evil. That a community known throughout the world's history for its religious toleration and its most catholic culture should have established and maintained for centuries, and should still countenance in the name of religion a social code which brands for life human beings as unworthy of ordinary intercourse and capable of polluting others by mere touch or sight is a tragedy and a riddle that baffles every right-minded Indian today.... It is an irony of fate that such glorious inheritance notwithstanding, we should have come to treat today one-third of our own kith and kin as pariahs worthy of treatment which we may not mete out even to dogs or to domesticated animals. [*Ibid*, pp.62-63]

Jamnalal also took up the propagation of Hindi. Gandhiji had been editing *Young India* in English and *Navajivan* in Gujarati since 1919. Jamnalal requested him to bring out a Hindi edition also and offered to finance it. Gandhiji accepted the offer. Jamnalal also gave substantial donations to help other Hindi journals such as *Karma-Veer*, *Pratap*, and *Rajasthan Kesari*. A Gandhi Hindi Pustak Bhandar (book store) was started by Jamnalal at Bombay. He also helped set up Sasta Sahitya Mandal at Delhi for publication and sale of Gandhian literature at low prices. *Tyaga Bhoomi*, a Hindi monthly journal, was brought out by the Mandal. For many years it was edited by Haribhau Upadhyaya, who later became Chief Minister of Ajmer. Jamnalal also collected funds for Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1918 (held at Indore when Gandhiji presided over it) and also later.



Jamnalal was far more interested in constructive work than in politics. After Gandhiji's release he threw himself into constructive work with still greater zest and travelled from Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari in the south and from Gauhati in the east to Dwarka in the west, meeting workers and leaders, addressing meetings, setting up khadi mandals, charkha clubs and khadi Bhandars in the cities. Khadi work was combined by him with removal of untouchability, promotion of prohibition and propagation of Hindi as *Rashtra Bhasha* (national language) and strengthening of national education. During his South Indian tours Rajaji translated his speeches; during Rajaji's tours in the north Jamnalal did the same for Rajaji. He travelled by train, by road using taxis, bullock-cart or tonga (horse carriage) or on horse-back. He just gave the minimum necessary time to his business to keep it going. As soon as he came to Wardha, his children would ask him "Kakaji, when are you leaving?" It was these efforts which led to the success of the khadi movement.

It was in the course of his tours during Gandhiji's imprisonment, that he saw the plight of the families of workers who had gone to jail, with no one to support those left behind. He was deeply distressed and set up the Gandhi Seva Sangh, of which he was the first president. The Gandhi Seva Sangh helped the workers and their families financially and also ideologically. There were most interesting and instructive discussions at the annual gatherings of the Gandhi Seva Sangh till it was wound up in 1937 by Gandhiji.

In one of his meetings Jamnalal said : "I consider khadi as the religion of the purest type.... Mill-cloth deprives the poor of their food and work, while khadi provides livelihood even to the blind and the crippled."



Jamnalal told a conference of Agarwal Mahasabha : "I wish to tell you from my own experience that khadi is a great teacher influencing our character. I have not the least doubt that khadi alone would liberate India." [*Ibid*, pp.83-84]

Shriman Narayan writes :

With detailed facts and figures, he would convincingly prove to the audience that khadi and village industries, and not the big mills, were capable of resolving the difficult problems of unemployment and under-employment in India. He utilized all his skill as a businessman and an industrialist to place khadi work on sound and lasting foundations. [*Ibid*, p.84]

Jamnalal also worked for Hindu-Muslim unity and was one of those who were sent to study the situation in Kohat. He did a great deal to bring about a better atmosphere of understanding between the two communities wherever there were riots in the name of religion. Equal respect for all religions came to him naturally. He did not have to make any effort to cultivate it. His house at Wardha provided hospitality to all Congress leaders, when they went there to meet Gandhiji in later years.

Jamnalal had cultivated progressive ideas and had outgrown the narrow constraints of sect, community and creed even before he met Gandhiji. Gandhiji wrote of him :

This passion for removal of untouchability, and freedom from communal feelings, as well as equal regard for all religions, Jamnalalji does not at all owe to me. It is not possible for any one to transfer his convictions to another. All one can do is to help another to manifest that conviction which is already in him. But in respect of Jamnalalji, I could not take the credit for having even helped him to arrive at or to manifest those



convictions in his life. He had these convictions in him long before he met me, and he had lived up to them. [*Ibid*, p.63]

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Shortly after Gandhiji's imprisonment, in May 1922 the Congress Working Committee started a Khadi Department and put Jamnalal Bajaj in charge of it. Jamnalal contributed a substantial sum himself and collected funds from others for khadi work. A Department of Khadi Science was also started under Maganlal Gandhi to improve the spinning-wheel and make it lighter to work and more efficient. Khadi production was made the responsibility of Lakshmidas Purushottam Asar and Vithaldas Jerajani was made the director for khadi sales. The provincial Congress committees had already been given sums totalling Rs. 13 ½ lakhs. Such subsidies were continued, so that between 1921 and 1923 a total sum of Rs. 23 lakhs had been spent on khadi activity.

From 1922 onwards the Khadi Science Department of the Congress took charge of the Khadi Vidyalaya at Sabarmati Ashram. Each province sent to this Vidyalaya two or three enthusiastic workers for training. They learnt their work well and returned to their provinces to carry on khadi work there.

The Khadi Science Department took up the following tasks :

1. To compare the charkhas and carding-bows of various provinces and examine any new inventions in this regard;
2. To work on improvement of implements and to produce more efficient models;
3. To instruct the trainees in ginning, carding, spinning and weaving;
4. To examine the purity of khadi and the yarn from the different provinces so as to prevent adulteration with mill yarn; and



5. To implement the Congress resolution on spinning.

The Khadi Department also set up a Khadi Information Bureau. It collected statistics in regard to khadi work in various provinces. Some of the information it collected was as follows :

BENGAL : Chittagong was the only area, and to some extent Dacca, where pure khadi was produced. In these areas as elsewhere in Bengal, mixed khadi was also produced, in which mill yarn was used for warp. The cotton used was not of high quality and the yarn produced was thick.

ASSAM : From about 50 years earlier cloth had been manufactured in every home in Assam. With the introduction of foreign yarn, hand-spinning gradually declined, but handloom weaving continued. Women could weave both cotton and silk. The looms used in Assam could be dismantled in a matter of minutes and as quickly reassembled. Ginning and carding were also done at home. The carding-bow was made of cane. The string used in it was also made of twisted cane fibre. The quality of the Assam cotton was light. Some *Devkapas* (a superior variety of cotton) was also produced.

ANDHRA : The khadi work in this province was carried on by the Congress Committee and private businessmen. There was great scope for the expansion of khadi work. Like in the Punjab, in Andhra, too, hand-spinning was widely prevalent and some fine yarn was produced. But when demand for khadi went up, some traders began to sell spurious khadi woven from mill yarn. The Congress had to devise ways to distinguish between pure khadi and spurious khadi.

Masulipatam was famous for the art of dyeing and printing. In the period covered by the report the number of spinning-wheels in the province was estimated at a hundred and twenty-five thousand.



TAMIL NADU : The report for Tamil Nadu became available only in 1924. This province too, like Andhra, had a tradition of spinning. At the time of the report khadi worth Rs. 50,000 was produced every month in the province.

There were many areas in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, the Punjab, Rajasthan and Andhu where spinning on the charkha was widely practised. In the Punjab the number of charkhas plied was estimated at 20 lakhs. According to the estimate of the Bihar Khadi Board about 50,000 charkhas were plied in Bihar. In the Tadapatri area of Andhra within a perimeter of 20 miles about 60,000 charkhas were being plied, whereas in Tamil Nadu in Coimbatore district alone the number of charkhas plied was 2 lakhs.

BOMBAY CITY : Bombay city came to form an important centre for khadi sale. The main Khadi Bhandar here was run by Vithaldas Jerajani. The Bhandar was taken over by the All-India Khadi Board of the Congress in 1924. There were many other Khadi Bhandars in some of which mixed khadi was sold. Efforts were made to boost hand-spinning. The Provincial Congress Committee distributed some 5,000 spinning-wheels in the course of two months. Other institutions, too, came forward and in a few months about 9,000 lb. of yarn was spun.

In February 1923 the Congress Working Committee drew up a scheme for advancing khadi work. Its emphasis was on :

1. Hawking of khadi by a band of 3,000 workers.
2. Appointment of 600 teachers to impart training in carding.

It was estimated that khadi worth Rs. 1 crore would be sold by hawking by the end of the year and training in carding would be provided in about 1,000 villages, about 15 days being given to each village. The hawkers would be given



as commission one anna in the rupee, all other expenses being borne by the Provincial Congress Committees.

To implement the programme it was necessary to make some permanent arrangement to carry on khadi work, which had with the passage of time become more complicated. There were areas where a lot of yarn was produced but where weaving was possible only to a limited degree. Then there were other areas where looms existed but there was no yarn to feed them and the weavers were without work. The All-India Khadi Board, therefore, decided, in March 1923, that the various Provincial Congress Committees must appoint earnest and efficient workers to run the Provincial Khadi Boards. Those trained at the Sabarmati Khadi Vidyalaya were especially recommended for this work. The Provincial Committee did likewise and thus was laid the foundation of Khadi Service. It was also contemplated to get khadi work done through institutions other than the Congress Committees – provincial and local. Some institutions thus came to be formed, chief among them being the Gujarat Khadi Mandal.

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In 1923 a scheme was formulated to subsidize weaving. Steps were also taken to provide financial assistance to poor spinners for buying cotton and slivers. The following are the figures in rupees of the sale of khadi in various provinces for the year 1923 :

Gujarat	83,000	Bihar	36,030
Kerala	6,755	C. P.	30,587
Andhra	74,774	Bengal	5,54,934
Utkal	11,588	Tamil Nadu	63,220



United Provinces	16,519	Karnataka	30,892
Assam	500	Bombay	1,42,095
Sind	8,450	Maharashtra	22,894
Punjab	9,601	Berar	7,100
		Total	10,98,939

The figures for 1924 reveal that khadi worth Rs. 10 lakhs was produced and worth Rs. 20 lakhs was sold. But the statistics are not wholly reliable. Many provinces filed no returns. It was, however, estimated at the time that perhaps yarn worth two crore rupees was spun during the year in the country as whole. [Shrikrishnadas Jaju and A. V. Sahasrabuddhe, *Charkha Sanghka Itihas*, (Hindi)]

From 1923 onwards Gandhiji's birthday according to the Indian calendar began to be observed as the Charkha Day – or *Rentia Baras*, as it came to be called in Gujarat. Various khadi centres organized group spinning on the day.

With the establishment of the All-India Khadi Board by the Cocanada Congress under the presidentship of Jamnalal Bajaj the khadi activity was placed on a more secure financial footing. For the Board was entrusted with the task of carrying on khadi work throughout India under the general supervision of the All-India Congress Committee and was empowered "to raise funds (including loans) therefor in addition to allotments that may be made from the Central Funds." [The Indian Annual Register, 1923, Vol.II, Suppl. p.154]

The Board asked all Provincial Congress Committees to set up Provincial Khadi Boards in their respective provinces and to allow them full powers to carry on their work. By 1924, except for Burma and Berar all the provinces had set up Provincial Khadi Boards.



Members of the Central Board went on tour in various areas to collect information, which was collated with the information provided by the Khadi Information Bureau. It was found that in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Bihar, the Punjab and Rajputana lakhs of charkhas were plying and the tradition of spinning had been maintained. People also wove and wore coarse khadi. Still, spinning as a vocation was on the decline. It was necessary to create institutions to make cotton available and to organize the work properly. A sum of Rs.1,35,000 was sanctioned for the purchase of cotton in Bihar, Bengal, Utkal and the United Provinces. Institution and individuals were advanced loans to set up Khadi Bhandars. Attention was also paid to improving and manufacturing the implements.

Khadi self-sufficiency centres were also started. Much good work in this respect was done in Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, Ramesara and Bardoli in Gujarat, Madhubani in Bihar and Sitanagaram in Andhra. A Khadi Propaganda Centre was started in Gujarat, which collected donations of cotton from people to be given to spinners at cheap rates.

In the Khadi Service were included workers in the Central Office of the Board, workers in the Khadi Science and Information departments, accountants, supervisors, etc. For wages Rs. 100 a month was the ceiling, though exceptions were made in a few cases. Jaju and Sahasrabuddhe give the following figures concerning the workers employed in the Khadi Service in various provinces and the wages paid to them : [Shrikrishnadas Jaju and A. V. Sahasrabuddhe, *Charkha Sanghka Itihas*, (Hindi), p.123]



Centre	No. of workers	Graduates	Paid	Hon.	Average wage per month in rupees
1. Tamil Nadu Khadi Board	22	1	22	-	32.25
2. All-India Khadi Board	24	8	22	2	64.50
3. Khadi Pratishthan Bengal	88	13	84	4	26.00
4. Gujarat Khadi Board	32	5	32	-	43.50
5. Punjab Khadi Board	15	1	15	-	50.00
6. Mahakosal Khadi Board	6	-	6	-	18.00
7. Sind	9	1	7	2	38.00
8. Delhi	16	-	6	10	23.50
9. Gandhi Kutir, Bihar	40	Details not available			



To provide financial assistance to weaker centres loans were advanced and bounties on sales were given. Loans were advanced in areas where spinning had to be propagated among the poor and unemployed and where the wages paid to carders and spinners did not exceed Rs. 10 a seer. Loans were given to registered institutions and even to unregistered institutions against the security of the khadi stocks they held. The rate of interest was minimal, i.e., just one rupee per annum per thousand.

A bounty of 2 per cent on the sale of khadi was granted, provided the overheads did not exceed one anna per rupee of cost and the selling price of khadi did not exceed one rupee four annas per square yard. Another condition was that the shop should stock no cloth other than khadi. For some time the bounty was given only where the sale exceeded Rs. 15,000 per year. This amount was later reduced to Rs. 10,000.

All these steps certainly led to an expansion of khadi activity. But the workers engaged in the work were those largely inexperienced in the trade, for they were drawn from the political cadres. The result was that notwithstanding the progress made, the khadi produced continued to be relatively costly and was not economically viable.

The Congress Working Committee asked the various nationalist institutions everywhere to introduce spinning in their curriculum and appealed to municipalities to exempt khadi from tax. Several municipalities did so and later even in many native states khadi remained exempt from taxation. Spinning was introduced in many National Schools, but could not be sustained because of paucity of teachers trained in the craft.



CHAPTER XX: APPENDICITIS OPERATION AND RELEASE

1

Gandhiji had throughout 1923 been harassed every now and then by severe pains in the abdomen. The symptoms first manifested themselves on 21 April that year and on 5 May he was examined by Col. Maddock, Civil Surgeon, Poona. He was also suffering from general debility and had been losing weight. On 11 March 1923 his weight was reported as being 107 lb., on 30 April it had come down to 97 lb. – a drop of 10 lb. in less than two months. The jail authorities thought that perhaps he was suffering from indigestion and gave him a tonic to try and improve his appetite. They also gave him injections of emetine as most of those who had been in jails suffered from amoebic infection. An aggravating factor was his “commencing pyorrhoea,” for which a dentist's services were arranged. But his appetite remained capricious and his weight registered no improvement. [Source Material, Vol.III, (2), pp.169-71]

The abdominal pain came on again on 2 July. Gandhiji tried mud packs and further regulated his diet. But these measures did not help. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, *Chronology*]

On 6 January 1924 Gandhiji complained of acute abdominal pain. The acute pain subsided within twenty-four hours, but fever followed and on the 10th there were definite signs of inflammation in the right iliac region of the abdomen. On the morning of the 11th the symptoms of inflammation were more marked. The Jail Superintendent summoned Col. Maddock to see the patient and it was decided that Gandhiji should be removed to hospital at once. An operation for appendicitis and skilled nursing were considered essential. The same day Gandhiji was accordingly transferred to Sassoon Hospital, Poona, in anticipation of Government sanction. [Source Material, Vol.III (2) p.200]



Gandhiji was informed by the doctors at Sassoon Hospital, where Dr. V. B. Gokhale was in charge, that he would have to be operated upon for appendicitis. As the case was serious, he was asked if he would like any of his doctor friends to be present. Gandhiji asked for Dr. Dalal of Bombay and Dr. Jivraj Mehta, then in Baroda. While steps were being taken to summon the two doctors, an examination indicated that the operation must be performed at once. On the evening of 12 January Gandhiji was further asked if he would like any of his other friends, not necessarily medical men, to be summoned to be by his side. Gandhiji mentioned Srinivasa Sastri, Dr. Pathak and N. C. Kelkar.

Kelkar was then away at Satara but Sastri and Dr. Pathak came. Gandhiji told Sastri that should there be any public agitation it should be made known that he had no complaint whatever to make against the authorities and that so far as the care of his body went, their treatment left nothing to be desired.

A draft statement giving his consent for the operation was read out to Gandhiji before he signed it. Gandhiji was not satisfied with the draft and dictated another to Sastri. This acknowledged "the exceeding kindness and attention" which he had received from Col. Maddock, Surgeon General, and other medical men and stated that he had the utmost confidence in Col. Maddock. He also thanked the Government for their consideration in allowing him to send for his own doctors. It had not been possible to get at them and delay would involve serious risk. So he requested Col. Maddock to perform the operation. He then signed the statement. His hand shook. He turned to Col. Maddock : "See how my hand trembles. You will have to put this right."

Col. Maddock answered : "Oh! We will put tons and tons of strength into you."

While the operation theatre was being got ready Gandhiji spoke to Sastri:



If there is an agitation for my release after the operation, which I do not wish, let it be on proper lines.... If Government think they have kept me long enough they may let me go.... But it must not be on false issues. Any agitation must be kept on proper non-violent lines.

Sastri pressed him for a message to the country. Gandhiji firmly declined. He said he was still a prisoner of the Government and as a prisoner he was supposed to be civilly dead. He must scrupulously observe the prisoner's code of honour. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-March, 1924, pp.33-35]

On the night of 12 January Dr. Maddock performed the operation on Gandhiji. Right in the middle of the operation the electricity failed and the surgeon had to carry on the operation in the light of hurricane lanterns. At about 11 p.m. the patient's abdomen was opened. The operation took about 20 minutes. The abscess was deep-seated and quite a large quantity of pus was drawn out by a six-inch tube. "A few hours' delay would have led to this poisonous matter being absorbed in the peritoneum, making the case almost hopeless." Gandhiji bore the operation well and passed the night peacefully. [*Ibid*, p.37]

The Inspector General of Prisons reported to Government that everything had gone off well and the operation had been successful. A couple of days later the patient's pulse was 72, temperature normal and sleep good. [*Source Material*, Vol.III (2), p.201]

On 17 January, the I. G. Prisons directed the Civil Surgeon, Poona, to "wire every evening news of patient to Prisons, Sabarmati." This the Civil Surgeon did, reporting on 22 January 1924 : "Condition excellent stitches removed wound healed perfectly... requires dressing once daily." [*Ibid*, p.203]

Immediately the news went out that Gandhiji had been taken ill and removed to hospital, anxiety mounted throughout the country. Meetings were



held and prayers offered for Gandhiji's speedy recovery. Newspaper correspondents and news agencies carried daily news of Gandhiji's condition but, reported a correspondent, "the craving for news, more news and yet more news is so great that it is impossible to satisfy it." [*Ibid*, p.208]

The hospital authorities on their part bestowed extraordinary care and attention on Gandhiji. He was not treated as a prisoner at all and daily bulletins in regard to his condition were issued and pasted on a notice board. There were no restrictions placed on visitors except such as were dictated on medical considerations. [*Ibid*, p.211]

Maulana Mohammed Ali, President of the Congress, issued an appeal for prayers to be held all over India on 18 January. There were demands from all sections of public men for immediate and unconditional release of Gandhiji. Among those who issued statements demanding his release were M.A. Jinnah, M. R. Jayakar, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Dinshaw Petit, Jehangir Petit, H. P. Mody and Byramji Jeejeebhoy. [*Ibid*, pp.216-19]

There were notices of resolutions to be moved in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State on February 4 and 5 for the release of Gandhiji. [*Ibid*, p.230]

2

In the hospital Gandhiji continued to be besieged by crowds of visitors solicitous for his health and party leaders seeking advice and guidance. On 18 January Vallabhbhai Patel came. Gandhiji commended him on the excellent work he had done in the Borsad Satyagraha.

On the 19th, in conversation with Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji asked about J. B. Kripalani and was happy to know that he was doing good work. He also asked



about Vinoba Bhave and about *Maharashtra Dharma*, the monthly that Vinoba was bringing out. Gandhiji marvelled at the depth of Vinoba's study of the *Upanishads*. He then asked about Mazharul Haq, who during the Non-cooperation movement had given up his palatial bungalow in Patna and set up "Sadaqat Ashram" on the banks of the Ganga and taken to living the life of an ascetic. He asked who was the chairman of the Reception Committee at the Cocanada Congress recently concluded. When he was told that it was Konda Venkatapayya, who had delivered his speech in Hindi, Gandhiji expressed much happiness. He also spoke of Kallenbach, who had in a letter complained : "The light that you kindled in me is on the point of extinction." Gandhiji said he could understand the point of the complaint.

On 20 January Lala Lajpat Rai came. Gandhiji welcomed him as the Lion of the Punjab. Lajpat Rai was shocked to see the deterioration in Gandhiji's health. He came again in the evening and said : "Please get out of jail and assume leadership.... In your absence we have been fighting like boys in the absence of the teacher."

Gandhiji held his stomach. He said : " I want to laugh, but I have to restrain the desire. I am convinced that I am doing as much service to the country being in jail as I would if I were outside."

Lalaji was depressed when he came. He was full of cheer when he left. Bapu knew how to cheer up and enthuse colleagues and workers who came to see him.

On 21 January Imam Abdul Kadir Bawazeer came and Gandhiji asked him for news of some Muslim friends. He asked Mahadev about *Young India* and *Navajivan*. He asked about the number of subscribers. He said *Navajivan* would have some variety after Kaka Kalelkar joined the paper. He asked Pyarelal if khadi



work had come to a halt in the Punjab. His interests were wide-ranging and he kept himself abreast of developments in all the areas of his interest.

On 23 January Col. Murray, Superintendent of Yeravda Jail, paid a visit to Gandhiji. Shaking Gandhiji by the hand he said : "I hope you do not feel that I have forgotten you. I kept away because I did not want to interfere with your convalescence. You look much better now." Gandhiji asked the Superintendent about his jail companions. The Colonel assured him that all of them remembered him, that his rule of getting up at 4 a.m. was being observed and they all worked as he had directed.

On 24 January Muni Jinvijaya and Punjabhai called. The conversation turned on the *Upanishads*. Gandhiji mentioned Raichandbhai, and his desire to write about him. Shuaib Qureshi, Sherwani and Anasuyabehn also came. She sang a *bhajan* and Gandhiji joined her in the singing.

Gandhiji conversed with Devadas till late at night. He spoke of the reading he had done and how he forgot his body when immersed in study. Once he had decided to read something, he knew no peace till he had read it. He spoke of the Urdu lessons Abdul Ghani gave him and of his study of Sanskrit. He did not waste the time he spent on the commode. He read. Indeed he had finished Guizot on the commode. Gandhiji pointed out that Guizot was not like Wells. He was philosophical. He had also read Gibbon and Buckle. Consideration of the body did not come in his way. This was not so with the Westerners, he said, who worshipped the body. In 1914 Asquith fell slightly ill and although the war had just broken out, he proceeded on a cruise in the Mediterranean.

N. C. Kelkar also dropped in on his way to Delhi and spoke of the Swaraj Party and its comparative strength.



On 25 January Abbas Tyabji, M. R. Jayakar and others came. Then Durbar Gopaldas and Bhaktibehn came. Bapu complimented Durbar Saheb on the work he had done during the Borsad Satyagraha. Without him Vallabhbhai could not have done much, he said. Mohanlal Pandya and Ravishankar Vyas had also done good work. Gandhiji then took Durbar Saheb to task for not giving up smoking *bidis*. Tea could be forgiven, he said, but not smoking. Gopaldas apologized and said he had given up smoking no less than 33 or 34 times. It was difficult to kick the habit. He had been smoking since the age of 11 years.

In the evening Vinoba came. Gandhiji told him to tell Balkoba, Vinoba Bhave's younger brother, that there was talk of his (Gandhiji's) being released. If the release came about he would decide whether Balkoba should stay at Wardha or at Sabarmati. On the whole Gandhiji was inclined to the view that no one should leave his place of work.

Gandhiji asked Devadas whether he had gone through Mohammed Ali's address at the Cocanada Congress. He did not think there was anything special about the speech by way of style or content. The addresses of Congress presidents must be "classical" pieces, whether you agreed with them or not. He mentioned in this context the addresses of G. K. Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjee, A. O. Hume and Wedderburn. Mohammed Ali's address could stand no comparison with them.

The work *Non-violent Coercion* was mentioned. Gandhiji said he had read parts of it. It was rather scrappy in treatment. It certainly showed study. But it did not have the quality of Romain Rolland. As compared to Tilak Romain Rolland was a seer. What he wrote was not merely poetry, it showed vision.



While Gandhiji was recuperating from the operation, the nurses of the hospital served him with rare devotion. At the head was an Englishwoman with long experience. She would nurse him and entertain him with her talk about her dogs one day and about her experiences in English and African hospitals another day. She put flowers in his room. She said her doctors had taught her not to try to be popular. She had endeavoured to live up to that advice.

The head nurse was very strict with the visitors and sent many of them away on her own. The doctors wondered at the number of visitors Gandhiji had. Could he have so many personal friends, they wondered.

Another young nurse was proud of the fact that Mr. Gandhi was her first private patient after she had passed out as a nurse. "Nursing is not always a joy, at times it is a task," she would say, " but it has been a pure joy and a privilege to nurse Mr. Gandhi." One day she told Mahadev : "My friends were chaffing me for getting fond of Mr. Gandhi; I told them they would do the same if they had the privilege of serving him."

Gandhiji's elder sister came to see him with several other Ashram women. Both brother and sister were deeply moved. They were meeting after many years. She could not speak. Gandhiji broke the silence by apologizing that he could not get up to touch her feet. When she was leaving the nurse asked : "Is she your sister?"

"Yes," replied Bapu.

"And the next one, she too?"

"Yes," said Bapu.

"The next one?"



"Yes," replied Bapu.

And so on it went.

She asked at last "Am I your sister?"

"Certainly," said Bapu, "if you want to be".

The nurses and the doctors understood that the whole of mankind was the family of their illustrious patient. Only the British Government had not understood it. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.IV, pp.30-35]

On 26 January Col. Maddock called. He let Gandhiji know the thinking in official circles that since Gandhiji had improved in health, only the members of his family should be allowed to see him. Gandhiji said he never discussed politics with the friends who came to see him. And they were members of the family to him.

Col. Maddock said he was under great pressure to fall in line, but he had only two months left before he was to retire and he was not going to be cowed down. Gandhiji must go on as he had been doing.

Durbar Gopaldas and Bhaktibehn came to take leave. Gandhiji said he was sorry to have said to Gopaldas the things he had done the day before. He certainly wished that the whole of India should be of his view, but how could he expect all his co-workers to give up their own predispositions? It was his love that had impelled him to say the things he did.

Gopaldas said having given up smoking no less than 33 times he did not have the courage to take a vow against smoking. For if he failed to keep the vow it would cause Gandhiji much pain. He, however, continued his efforts and in the end succeeded in giving up smoking.



Gandhiji again praised the work that the husband and wife had done. If the whole country were to follow their example, there would be no need for the demand for his release being raised in the Legislative Assembly. "Go", he told them, "Go and promote the charkha, promote Hindu-Muslim unity and eradication of untouchability."

There were many more callers, including Rangaswami Iyengar, Swami Shraddhanand, Shardabehn and Dr. Sumant Mehta, Raimal, Maulana Mohammed Ali (of Kasur), Shankerlal, Jamnadas and others. The meeting with Rangaswami was touching. He kept crying as he stroked Bapu.

D. V. Gokhale had called earlier. Gandhiji asked him about Tilak Vidyalaya. His report was not encouraging. The number of students had been going down, though there had been no paucity of funds. Gandhiji said he was certain no institution was ever wound up because of lack of funds. Institutions failed because of lack of workers.

On 27 January Motilal Nehru came. Then came Shaukat Ali with his group. The talk with Motilal went on for about 45 minutes. Motilal said they had been forced into the Council entry because Gandhiji had not been in their midst. Had he not been in jail, that would not have happened. Whenever Gandhiji came out, he would be their leader and they would do as he directed. Gandhiji said he had been asking himself whether what Motilal and Das were doing was right or not. They must convince him of the correctness of their course.

Motilal said the situation had arisen because they had been deprived of Gandhiji's counsel. He admitted there were sharp differences between himself and Das. He was opposed to the resolution brought for the release of political prisoners in the Bengal Assembly. But Das had been adamant.



Bomanji came and said : "You have permitted people to go into the Councils. Why not give permission to the lawyers to give up the boycott of courts? They must not be allowed to starve ." Gandhiji said who was he to give permission? People must do as they thought proper. As a prisoner he would not offer any opinion on political matters. If the lawyers wanted to resume practice they could do so.

Rajaji came and seeing Gandhiji said : "You have been reduced to a shadow of your former self."

Gandhiji in reply turned on him and said it was a case of the pot calling the kettle black. What was needed was for Rajaji to leave everything and take rest for four months. In this respect the British could teach them a lot, he said.

The talk turned upon Mohammed Ali's address, which Rajaji had liked. Bapu said :

I cannot agree with you. I have read the whole address. I have read Gokhale's address at the Benares Congress. I have also read Surendranath's address. It is beautiful. So much study packed in just eight pages. Mohammed Ali's speech, I feel, is laboured. I know he means well and he does not show confusion of ideas. But he has used twenty words where one would have been enough.

Rajaji agreed that brevity was not one of Mohammed Ali's strong points.

Mathuradas Tricumji spoke of Hindu-Muslim differences in Bombay over the question of cows-laughter. Gandhiji said the matter could not be decided by a majority vote ignoring the Muslims.

On 28 January Narhari Parikh, Jugatram Dave and Chhaganlal Joshi came from Bardoli. Mohammed Ali and others also came. They spoke about Angora



and about the Hindu-Muslim friction. The distrust between Shaukat Ali and Jairamdas also featured. There was talk about the statement of Abdul Bari. When they left Gandhiji said he did not care what Shaukat Ali and Mohammed Ali did so long as the Hindus' own conduct was right. If they wanted to slaughter cows he would tell them to go ahead and do so. If they said the Hindus must abstain from music before the mosques, he would say, all right, there would be no music before the mosques. The essence of Hinduism lay in sacrifice and non-violence.

Between 29 January and 1 February Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali came to see Gandhiji. Mohammed Ali kissed Gandhiji's feet and Hakimji prostrated himself before him. Mohammed Ali cried.

Jawaharlal asked about the propriety of the Hindus being included in the Angora deputation. Bapu considered it inappropriate, which was putting it mildly. "Uncalled for" might be a better expression, Jawaharlal suggested.

About the Sikhs Gandhiji said moral support was all that could be extended to them.

Jawaharlal was Chairman of the Allahabad Municipal Board and he asked whether he should give it up, for he was also General Secretary of the Congress. Gandhiji said he could not give up either responsibility.

On 2 February 1924 Andrews came. He had returned from Kenya shortly before. Andrews asked Gandhiji's opinion about the new Labour Government in Britain. Gandhiji said they might turn out even worse than the Liberals. Andrews said in Britain people had come to hold the view that Gandhiji had given up non-violence. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury had expressed that opinion. Andrews had assured him that there was as much likelihood of Gandhiji giving up non-violence as there was of his (Archbishop's) giving up Christianity.



Andrews spoke of Rabindranath Tagore and how he had got more than a lakh of rupees from Kathiawar. Gandhiji corrected him : "Not from Kathiawar, say from the Princes of Kathiawar." Tagore had the assistance of the British Political Agent. The latter had sent out the word and the Princes had loosened their purse strings. The Political Agent had himself made the beginning by donating a sum of Rs. 50. So it had been with the Government's blessings that the collection had been made possible. It, therefore, had no importance in Gandhiji's eyes. The Princes had not been so liberal when he had gone to collect funds for the Gokhale memorial. [*Mahadevbhaini Diary* (Gujarati), Vol.VI, pp.30-32]

Dilip Kumar Roy, the musician son of the well-known Bengali dramatist Dwijendra Lal Roy, was another caller on the morning of 2 February. Gandhiji asked him to call again in the evening and sing to him. He did, and sang two *bhajans* – one of Mirabai, which enthralled Gandhiji and everyone in the room.

When the singing was done, Dilip Kumar Roy said : "I feel, Mahatmaji, that our beautiful music has been sadly neglected in our schools and colleges."

"Yes, it has, unfortunately," Gandhiji agreed, "I have always said so."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Roy, "I was under the impression that art had no place in the gospel of your austere life. I had often pictured you as a dread saint who was positively against music."

"I ! Against music !" Gandhiji exclaimed, "Well, I know, I know, there are so many superstitions rife about me that it has now become almost impossible for me to overtake those who have been spreading them. As a result, friends only smile when I lay any claim to being an artist myself."

"May not your asceticism," said Roy, "be somewhat responsible for such popular misconceptions? People would find it difficult to reconcile asceticism with art."



To this Gandhiji said :

But I do maintain that asceticism is the greatest of all arts. And to think that I should be dubbed an enemy to an art like music when I favour asceticism ! I, who cannot even conceive of the evolution of India's religious life without her music ! But indeed I fail to see anything in much that passes for art in these days. What is needed for the appreciation of any art is to have the heart for it, not any intimate knowledge of technique or training. Why must my walls be overlaid with pictures, for instance, when they are meant only for sheltering us? I do not need pictures. Nature suffices for my inspiration. Have I not gazed at the marvellous mystery of the starry vault, hardly ever tiring of that great panorama? Could one conceive of any painting comparable in inspiration to that star-studded sky, the majestic sea, the noble mountains? Beside God's handiwork does not man's fade into insignificance?

Gandhiji went on :

Life is and must always be greater than all the arts put together. I go still further. For I say that he is the greatest artist who leads the best life. For what is art without the background and setting of a worthy life ? An art is to be valued only when it ennobles life. Art has a place in life, but art is not life. Life, on the contrary, is art. Art should be subservient to life. It should act as its handmaid, not master. It should be alive to life and the universe. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.IV, pp.24-28]

The demand for Gandhiji's release meanwhile had been rising in volume and insistence. The rulers in Delhi, however, were not disposed to set him free. They wrote to the Government of Bombay that in view of the widespread



demand for Gandhiji's release and the resolutions on the subject coming up in the Assembly and the Council on 4 and 5 February a line of action in this regard had to be considered. They argued that grounds necessitating his imprisonment had remained unaltered. The alternatives were either to keep him in prison or to secure from him an undertaking "to refrain during the unexpired period of his sentence from activities falling within the scope of Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code." In the event of Gandhiji refusing to give the required undertaking the position of the Government would be strengthened. [*Source Material*, Vol.III, (2), pp.230-31]

The Bombay Government answered that they did not consider it feasible to extract from Gandhiji any undertaking that he would not take part in any political action if released. They suggested that on "purely medical grounds" reincarceration in a prison might be postponed for six months, during which time Gandhiji could be kept in a hill station for recovery. Gandhiji was sounded on the matter and he suggested that he might be allowed to proceed to the seaside and that Tithal or Dumas in Surat district would be most suitable. It was pointed out, however, that Dumas was not in British territory and that accommodation at Tithal might be difficult. But on medical grounds Belgaum, Dharwar or Varsova was considered equally good. The Government of Bombay asked the Government of India for comments. [*Ibid*, pp.236-39]

On 31 January C. V. Mehta and Cowasji Jehangir had addressed a note to the Bombay Government pointing out that there had been a change in the situation since Gandhiji's imprisonment. Some of Gandhiji's staunchest followers had set up the Swaraj Party and had openly declared that they had no faith in the no-change policy. Not releasing Gandhiji would give them an opportunity to start



an agitation for wrecking the constitution. The best policy would, therefore, be to release Gandhiji before the debate in the Assembly. [*Ibid*, pp.239-40]

Montgomerie, Home Secretary, went along with the above view. In a long note he admitted :

Technically he [Gandhiji] was guilty of sedition. Actually he was put away not because of the violence of any particular article but because his continued liberty was a danger to the country. His high ideals and moral earnestness, twisted and distorted by men much cleverer than himself for unscrupulous purposes and working on the minds of the people incapable of distinguishing between a spiritual warfare against a Satanic Government and physical assaults on the unfortunate police subordinates of that Satanic Government, produced over and over again disorder and bloodshed. There is no guarantee that this spiritual warfare, which he assured Mr. Sastri was still to be waged, will not have the same physical results as at Dharwar, Malegaon, Bombay, the Punjab and Malabar.

The demand for the release of Gandhiji, the note, however, pointed out, was universal. It should not be lightly flouted even by a Government not responsible to public opinion. Then there were the further considerations that when released he might be able to exercise a check on the activities of the Ali brothers. With Gandhiji around they would not be able openly to preach violence. His release might also give a set-back to the Swaraj Party, for "a strong reprimand from him of those who had back-slidden into joining the Councils would much diminish their influence."

There was also a possibility of violence breaking out if Gandhiji was not released. There were 1,50,000 striking workers in Bombay, hungry and ready to be fanned into acts of violence. The last important point made by Montgomerie



in his note was: "No man, least of all a man with so many good qualities as Gandhi, should be in prison if he can possibly be let out."

The Governor's Executive Council, meeting on 1 February, decided that it was "advisable to release Mr. Gandhi forthwith unconditionally and that the Government of India be requested to concur." [*Ibid*, pp.239-40]

"But you had said it was not necessary to release Gandhi," shouted, in effect, the Government of India. "You only said he should be removed to the seaside for six months. We cannot agree to his release."

The Bombay Government insisted, reiterating the following reasons :

(a) The universal character of the demand throughout India from all sections of political opinion;

(b) the restraining influence which Gandhi would exert on the Ali brothers;

(c) his return to prison might easily lead to outbreak of violence which in view of the present industrial situation in Bombay would very probably lead to a most serious position;

(d) his release would greatly facilitate the smooth working of the Councils and the Assembly. [*Ibid*, p.259]

It was not till the Governor himself wrote to the Viceroy on 3 February that things moved. With the concurrence of Government of India, the Governor of Bombay on 4 February 1924 passed an order remitting " unconditionally the unexpired portions of the three sentences of 2 years' simple imprisonment" each passed on Gandhiji and releasing him forthwith. [*Ibid*, pp.271-72]



On the morning of 5 February Col. Maddock went rushing to Gandhiji's room, where Gandhiji was closeted with Andrews. He was to come for Gandhiji's dressing at 9 a.m. Gandhiji was surprised to see him at 7.30 a.m. Before Gandhiji had had time to introduce Andrews to him, Col. Maddock said : "I have come with news. You have been ordered to be released unconditionally."

"I thank you," Gandhiji said, "but I hope you will let me stay here a few more days as your patient and guest."

"With pleasure," the Colonel answered, "but on condition that you will continue to obey my orders as before."

Gandhiji was then removed to a small bungalow in the hospital compound. Col. Maddock told Andrews that he must make sure that Gandhiji was protected from over eager crowds of people coming to see him, for Gandhiji was still far from fully recovered. Andrews accordingly issued an appeal asking people as well as newsmen to spare Gandhiji as far as possible. [*Mahadevbhaini Diary* (Gujarati), Vol.VI, pp.49-52]

Gandhiji remained at the hospital as a free man from 5 February to 10 March 1924. During this period the hospital was transformed into a place of pilgrimage for people from all over India.

As soon as news broke of Gandhiji having been released, there was widespread rejoicing. The share bazar in Bombay was closed and the sharebrokers collected Rs. 500 on the spot to feed the cows. The bullion bazar and the jewellery stores were closed. Reports came from different parts of the country of celebrations to mark the occasion. Some of the places from where reports came were Sholapur, Pandharpur, Madha, Sangola, Bijapur, Bagalkot.,



Hungund, Bilgi, Karachi, Larkana, Tharparkar, Kathiawar, Ahmedabad, Panch Mahals, Broach, Surat, Bombay, Suburban areas, Nasik, Ahmednagar, Poona, Bijapur, Satara, Belgaum, Dharwar, Kanara, Ratnagiri and Kolaba. [*Source Material*, Vol.III (2), pp.288-95]

Gandhiji himself was rather sorry that the Government had prematurely released him. He wrote to Mohammed Ali, the president of the Congress, on 7 February : "Such a release can bring me no joy, for I hold that the illness of a prisoner affords no ground for his release."

Gandhiji expressed his gratitude to both the jail and hospital authorities, who had been all attention during his illness. The nurses, too, had served him with sisterly care. Knowing that he could get no better treatment anywhere else, Gandhiji said he had decided, with Col. Maddock's permission, to stay under his care till the wound was healed.

Referring to the problems of the country, which had become far more perplexing than they were at the time of the Bardoli resolutions, Gandhiji continued :

It is clear that without unity between Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians and other Indians, all talk of Swaraj is idle. This unity...so far as Hindus and Mussulmans are concerned, I observe, suffered a severe check. Mutual trust has given place to distrust. An indissoluble bond between the various communities must be established if we are to win freedom. Will the thanksgiving of the nation over my release be turned into a solid unity between the communities ?

Calling for the implementation of the Bardoli programme, he added :



If we could but visualize the growing pauperism of the land and realize that the spinning-wheel is the only remedy for the disease, the wheel will leave us little leisure for fighting. I had during the last two years ample time and solitude for hard thinking. It made me a firmer believer than ever in the efficacy of the Bardoli programme and, therefore, in the unity between the races, the charkha, the removal of untouchability and the application of non-violence in thought, word and deed to our methods as indispensable for Swaraj. If we faithfully and fully carry out this programme, we need never resort to civil disobedience and I should hope that it will never be necessary.

He continued :

My thinking prayerfully and in solitude has not weakened my belief in the efficacy and righteousness of civil disobedience. I hold it, as never before, to be a man's or a nation's right and duty when its vital being is in jeopardy. I am convinced that it is attended with less danger than war and whilst the former, when successful, benefits both the resister and the wrongdoer, the latter harms both the victor and the vanquished.

He said it gladdened his heart to see among the messages many from the Moderates. He went on :

I have, and Non-cooperators can have, no quarrel with them. They too are well-wishers of their country and serve to the best of their lights. Indeed, we want to regard Englishmen too as our friends and not misunderstand them by treating them as our enemies. And if we are today engaged in a struggle against the British Government, it is against the system for which it stands and not against Englishmen who are administering the system. I know that many of us have failed to understand



and always bear in mind the distinction and in so far as we have failed, we have harmed our cause. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.IV, pp.51-54]

Gandhiji's non-violence demanded that he should put the hospital authorities at ease. He, therefore, used hospital linen and hospital clothes. Insistence on khadi would have caused difficulties in getting the gauze and other dressing material and bandages. But as soon as he was released he put on his khadi loincloth and used khadi bed-sheets and bedding. He said he would begin to spin as soon as he was strong enough to sit without support.

Mahadev Desai could not stay on in Poona because of his responsibilities as editor of *Young India* and *Navajivan*. On 10 February Devadas wrote to him : "The stitches in Bapu's wound have caused ulcers inside. He had 99 degrees of fever as a result."

But Col. Maddock's letter of 15 February was reassuring; he wrote that ulceration was a common malady in such cases and that there was no cause for worry. He also informed Mahadev that the source of the pain – four stitches that had turned septic – had been removed and that there was no trace of pain left. The fever on 9 February which Devadas had mentioned might have been caused, in Col. Maddock's opinion, "by the visits of an excessive number of men." [*Ibid*, p.56]

Although for the most part Gandhiji's time during his stay at Sassoon Hospital was taken up by the problems of the Gurdwara movement, he nevertheless found time to address himself to various other questions and meet various other people, including representatives of the foreign Press.



American columnist Drew Pearson, who had been refused permission to see Gandhiji in jail, was able at last to have his questions, sent through Devadas, answered by Gandhiji. Answering Pearson's questions Gandhiji defined swaraj as "a full partnership for India with other parts of the Empire" and "full citizens rights throughout the British Dominions for all the King's subjects, irrespective of caste, colour or creed."

Gandhiji said he had been attempting to introduce religion into politics. And by religion he meant "not Hinduism, which I prize most highly, but the religion which transcends Hinduism – the basic truth which underlies all the religions of the world." It was "the struggle for truth – for self-expression." He called it the truth force – the permanent element in human nature, constantly struggling to find itself, to know its Maker.

The interview appeared in about 50 newspapers of the U. S. A., along with many newspapers in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Cuba and South Africa. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.195-98]

Gandhiji also found time to issue on 14 February a long statement for the Press on the anti-Indian campaign that had been intensified in South Africa. In January 1924 had appeared the so-called Class Area Bill, which had greatly agitated the Indians in South Africa and had drawn severe censure from the press and political opinion in India.

Gandhiji in his statement said :

The anti-Asiatic agitation on the part of Europeans in South Africa is no new thing. It is almost as old as the first settlement of unindentured Indians in South Africa, and is principally due to trade jealousy on the part of white retail traders.... The present agitation, I remember, was begun as



early as 1921, and the Class Areas Bill is, no doubt, one result of that agitation.

Pointing out that the Bill was a breach of the compromise of 1914 arrived at between the Union Government and the Indian community, with the concurrence of the Imperial and Indian Governments (for the compromise had laid down that no further anti-Asiatic legislation was to be passed by the Union Government), the understanding being that the then existing anti-Asiatic legislation would in time come to be repealed. The Imperial Government, if they would be true to their trust, were bound at any cost to insist upon the terms of the compromise being observed, Gandhiji emphasized.

The difficulties of the Union Government also arose from the fact that it was dependent for its existence solely upon the will of Europeans of South Africa, to the exclusion of Indians and Natives. As the Imperial Government permitted this flaw, it was in honour bound to prevent untoward results arising from it.

The Bill was intended to apply to all the four provinces of the Union. It enabled the Government to segregate all the domiciled Indians and other Asiatics for residence and trade. It was an extension of the Location system introduced by the Transvaal Government in 1885.

Segregation, Gandhiji asserted, if carried out to the full, meant nothing less than compulsory repatriation without any compensation. The Bill appeared to preserve to a certain extent the existing rights, but experience showed how such reservations in practice had proved almost useless.

On 10 March 1924, Gandhiji left Sassoon Hospital for Bombay. Before he left the Hospital the students of Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Medical School in Poona



presented an address to him. Col. Maddock and members of the Hospital staff were present at the meeting. Gandhiji expressed his gratitude to Col. Maddock and paid tribute to his skill as a surgeon. He said he was happy the students had assured him that they would wear swadeshi clothes. He ended the speech by wishing long life to Col. and Mrs. Maddock. [*Ibid*, p.237]

In the evening Gandhiji, accompanied by Shankerlal Banker and Anasuyabehn Sarabhai, entrained for Bombay. Arriving there on the morning of the 11th, he proceeded to the bungalow of Sheth Narottam Morarji at Juhu. He was to stay there for the next few months.

Now it was the turn of Juhu to be transformed into a place of pilgrimage. Throughout his waking hours Gandhiji was besieged by crowds of *darshan* seekers, newspaper men seeking interviews and political leaders seeking his advice and guidance on various matters. In a letter to Gandhiji Rabindranath Tagore wrote : "I am happy to know that you have been freed. But I am sorry to know that our countrymen also are now free to torment you." [*Mahadevbhaini Diary* (Guj.), Vol.VI, p.65]

At Juhu, Mahadev Desai thus describes Gandhiji's daily routine :

Rising at 4, prayer and singing of *bhajans* followed by a short period of rest. At 7 a walk on the beach for about half an hour with the aid of a stick, accompanied by Andrews. After breakfast two or three hours are taken up by interviews on important business. Lunch at 11. From noon to 4 p.m. dictation of letters, articles, etc. From 4 to 5, meetings with visitors. Then the evening walk for about half an hour. After the evening prayer, Gandhiji keeps awake for an hour or so if there is some important matter to discuss and then goes to bed at 9.30 p.m. [*Ibid*, p.73]



Shortly, after his arrival at Juhu a representative of *Stead's Review* interviewed Gandhiji. Answering a question whether he placed home-spinning above education, Gandhiji said : “Do you know that at least one-third of our 350,000,000 are chronically underfed? They want bread and butter before education.”

Asked if there would be universal suffrage under Home Rule, Gandhiji said:

Practically, I mean every citizen desirous of vote would get a vote. I do not see the use of compulsory enrolment without compulsory voting. Votes of the people who must be driven to the poll are of questionable value. My idea is to open enrolling depots all over the country where those desiring to vote can register names on payment of a small fee – just enough to make the voting machinery self-supporting. I am convinced that we shall obtain in this way popular mandates as intelligent as in any other country. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.238-42]

8

K. P. Kesava Menon, in a letter of 12 March 1924, informed Gandhiji that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had chalked out a programme of work with regard to untouchability and steps were being taken to see that public roads were also open to the unapproachables (untouchables who could not let themselves be seen by caste Hindus). He mentioned the public road round the temple at Vykam which was freely used by Christians, Muslims and caste Hindus, but which the Ezhavas, Thiyyas and Pulayas were not permitted to use. The Congress had originally arranged for a procession of Pulayas to pass on that road on the morning of 1 March but the programme had been postponed till 30 March. He requested Gandhiji for a message. [*Ibid*, pp.560-61]

Gandhiji on 19 March wrote in reply :



This is a species of satyagraha. At this stage I do not need to draw attention to its conditions. There should be no show or force if any of our people oppose their progress. You should meekly submit and take all the beating, if any. Everyone taking part in the procession should be acquainted with the conditions and be prepared to fulfil them. There should be only a limited number. There should be no defiance.... [*Ibid*, p.339]

The Satyagraha duly started on 31 March with three volunteers peacefully entering the prohibited area and being promptly arrested, while orderly crowds watched the spectacle. The first batch was sentenced to imprisonment for six months. K. P. Kesava Menon informed Gandhiji that the next batch offering Satyagraha on 1 April had also been arrested. Gandhiji in his congratulatory telegram to Kesava Menon said : "Hope stream will continue till success achieved." [*Ibid*, pp.272-73]

Gandhiji wanted it to be clearly understood that untouchability was an issue that solely concerned Hindus and that Hindus alone must act to purge themselves of the sin. He advised George Joseph, a Travancore Congressman, not to get involved in the Satyagraha. On 6 April he wrote to him : "You can help by your sympathy and by your pen, but not by organizing the movement and certainly not by offering satyagraha." [*Ibid*, p.391]

After a few days the authorities changed their tactics in dealing with the Satyagrahis. Instead of arresting them the police began to prevent their access to the prohibited areas. George Joseph informed Gandhiji that the Satyagrahis had decided to squat in front of the road and fast in relays. Gandhiji told Joseph that fasting could not be resorted to against a tyrant, "for it would be a piece of violence done to him." Fasting could only be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him. What the Kerala Congressmen could do was to



wait in deputation on the Dewan and the Maharaja and to get up a monster petition signed by Hindus who might be well disposed towards the movement. [*Ibid*, pp.419-20]

But George Joseph as well as the other local leaders of the movement were shortly afterwards arrested and imprisoned. The workers appealed to Gandhiji for people to be sent from other parts of India to lead the movement. In a message to the Press Gandhiji said :

It is a question how far a local movement, on reaching a critical stage, can be turned into an all-India movement.... To concentrate active energies of leaders from different provinces on a single local movement seems to be difficult if not an impossible task. I am hoping however that leaders in the Madras Presidency will not allow the movement to die for want of proper lead.

George Joseph, upon being arrested on 12 April, had also wired to Rajagopalachari to lead the movement. Rajaji sought Gandhiji's advice. Gandhiji told him : "If health permits, you may go, not necessarily court arrest but regulate movement." [*Ibid*, pp.437-38]. Rajaji said he was physically unequal to the strain of the campaign, but pressed Gandhiji for leaders, men and money to continue the satyagraha. [*Ibid*, p.443]

The Satyagraha continued, though the task of the Satyagrahis was being made more and more difficult by the authorities. A telegram to Gandhiji from a Satyagrahi worker said the authorities had fenced all roads. The Satyagraha committee considered scaling or removing the fencing or to begin complete or partial fasting. Gandhiji advised both against fasting and breaking of scaling fences. The question, he said, was not what was effective, but what was proper.



[*Ibid*, p.492]. The breaking or scaling of the fences, he said, would not be civil disobedience but uncivil and criminal disobedience. [*Ibid*, p.517]

As regards outside help which the Vykomb Satyagrahis sought both in the form of men and money, Gandhiji said any matter arising locally must be fought out locally. The whole of India or a central organization must not take up the fight. It would lead to chaos and confusion. The central organization would be weakened by the frittering of its energies in such a way, and the local areas would not develop the necessary strength to tackle such questions unaided. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency of each local area would make the whole of India strong.

Gandhiji further emphasized that in so far as the fight at Vykomb hinged on the disability of a certain class of people to use a road because they were "unapproachable," it was a purely Hindu question and non-Hindus had no place in the struggle.

It was, however, becoming difficult to keep the fight strictly a Hindu question. For it was also seen as a civil rights issue. People from other communities were extending their support to the Satyagrahis. The Akalis in the area had started a free kitchen for the Satyagrahis.

Gandhiji wrote :

The Vykomb Satyagraha is, I fear, crossing the limits. I do hope that the Sikh free kitchen will be withdrawn and that the movement will be confined to Hindus only.... The Hindu reformers of Malabar will estrange the entire Hindu sympathy if they accept or encourage non-Hindu interference or assistance beyond sympathy. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.7]



Gandhiji advised that, as a demonstration of the feelings of caste Hindus in the matter, the Satyagraha committee might arrange “an absolutely peaceful and non-violent procession from Vykomb to Trivandrum and back, consisting of caste Hindus alone to meet the Maharaja and represent to him the necessity for the removal of the disability of the non-caste Hindus.” He further suggested that the Satyagraha at Vykomb might be suspended during the time the procession was on the march. [*Ibid*, p.94]

In his articles in *Young India* and in statements to the Press Gandhiji again and again emphasized that the Satyagraha must be kept a local struggle and a Hindu struggle. In an interview to *The Hindu*, on 17 May 1924 he said :

If I could possibly persuade the Christian and Mohammedan sympathizers who had gone to jail as Satyagrahis , I would ask them to tell the authorities that they had offered Satyagraha in error and that, therefore, if the authorities intended to discharge them, they might do so... the sacrifice of Messrs Joseph, Sebastian and Abdur Rahim carries no merit with it. [*Ibid*, p.67]

The Satyagraha continued through the months in a most orderly and non-violent way, notwithstanding counsel of desperation from such well-meaning people as Sree Narayan Guru, the spiritual leader of the Thiyaas, that the Satyagrahis should advance along the barricaded roads and scale the barricades. Gandhiji expressly forbade any such procedure. If you may scale barricades, why not break open temple doors and even pierce through temple walls? How are volunteers to press through a row of policemen except by using physical force? [*Ibid*, p.259]



But though under Gandhiji's watchful eye the volunteers remained wholly non-violent, the orthodox Sanatanists against whom the Satyagrahis were pitted, soon tired of the equipoise they had shown in the earlier stages of the Satyagraha. Reports came that *goondas* were being set upon the volunteers. They beat them up, threw lime into their eyes and tore up their clothes. The violence being employed was of a barbaric type. And it appeared that the Travancore administration was not doing anything to protect the satyagrahis.

Gandhiji wrote :

.... The Travancore authorities have now practically abandoned the Satyagrahis to the tender mercies of *goondas*.... Everyone knows that orthodoxy is often unscrupulous. It has as a rule prestige and public opinion behind it in comparison with the reformer. It, therefore, does things with impunity which the poor reformer dare not. But what baffles one is the attitude of the Travancore authorities.... Has such an advanced state like Travancore abdicated its elementary function of protection of life and property?

Even in the face of such violence Gandhiji advised the Satyagrahis that they must remain cool under every provocation and courageous under the hottest fire. Loss of a few hundred lives would not be too great a price to pay for the freedom of the unapproachables. Only the martyrs must die clean. Satyagrahis, like Caesar's wife, must be above suspicion. [*Ibid*, pp.345-46]

The Satyagrahis continued throughout 1924 to entreat Gandhiji to visit Travancore and guide their Satyagraha to victory. It was not, however, until much later, in March 1925, that he could make the visit to Travancore.



Gandhiji arrived at Vykom on 10 March 1925. Meanwhile restlessness on the part of the satyagrahis had been growing. The orthodox sections, with the active help and connivance of the State authorities, had become more unbending in their resistance to the reform. In February the Travancore Legislative Council with a vote of 22 to 21 had thrown out the "freedom of the road" resolution brought before it by some of the elected members of the Council. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVI, pp.198-99]

Gandhiji counselled patience to the Satyagrahis :

What is a year's suffering on the part of a few reformers in their attempt to break down the iron wall of prejudice? To lose patience is to lose the battle. They must fight to the finish. What is the alternative anyone can have in view? The breaking of heads will not serve the purpose. Orthodoxy will stiffen its back and will suck nourishment out of the blood of its martyrs. For if the orthodox are injured, sympathy will increasingly be drawn towards them though their cause is wrong. To attempt to force entry will invite stronger barricades. [*Ibid*, pp.199-200]

Immediately upon arrival at Vykom on 10 March, Gandhiji invited the local caste Hindu leaders for discussion. He pointed out to them the incongruity of closing the road to a section of the Hindus while Muslims, Christians and others were free to use it. He asked whether, if the untouchables became converts to Islam or Christianity, they would then be allowed to use the road. And what would they do if the Maharaja were to issue a *smriti* throwing open the roads, even like the Shankaracharya *smriti* which they cited in support of the prohibition?

Gandhiji placed before them three proposals. The first was a referendum either in Vykom or in the whole of Travancore but restricted only to caste Hindus. The Sanatanists answered that the verdict of the majority could not possibly bind



those who had settled convictions. In the second place Gandhiji offered to have learned Shastris examine the authority upon which the orthodox temple-goer based his settled convictions. The Sanatanists said they would in that event be free to reject any interpretation not favouring their position. Gandhiji then undertook to nominate one Shastri as arbitrator on behalf of the Satyagrahis and invited the Sanatanists to nominate one to represent them. The Dewan would be the umpire and Gandhiji said he would on behalf of the Satyagrahis bind himself to accept the decision of the arbitration. The Sanatanists still refused to budge from their position. [*Ibid*, pp.261-63]

Gandhiji pointed out that there were only 60,000 Brahmins as compared to 800,000 non-Brahmins and 17 lakh untouchables in Malabar. While he was gratified at the untouchables' educational advancement he felt they should not be refused the rights of common humanity. [*Ibid*, p.304]

But the Sanatanists remained adamant. The administration, presided over by the Dewan, made it clear that while the Government did not intend to justify the custom, the custom was there and had to be reckoned with. It was based on religious belief and such beliefs were dear to the people who held them. The Government had done their utmost to remove several disabilities under which the untouchables laboured, but the grant of permission to enter areas considered sacred by certain other sections of the Hindu community was of quite a different character and would violate established rights based on religious faith. [*Ibid*, pp.579-81]

Speaking at a public meeting the same day, 10 March, Gandhiji again counselled patience to the Satyagrahis. He said :

Untouchability is an error of long standing. I have therefore told my Satyagrahi friends to exercise tremendous patience. Time is always on the



side of those who will wait upon it...if the Satyagrahis will only play the game well, have patience, and will be able to endure silent and slow suffering, I have no doubt that victory is theirs. [*Ibid*, p.268]

Rajagopalachari, who had started an Ashram at Pudupalayam on 6 February 1925 to carry on constructive work, had in the meantime met Raghaviah, the then Dewan of Travancore. He persuaded him "to expedite things and do his best to complete this act of reform during his period of office" as Raghaviah was to retire soon. [Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Rajaji Story*, Vol.I, p.160]

The Sanatanists and the authorities supporting them gradually relented. On 18 June 1925, K. Kelappan Nair informed Gandhiji that the Devaswom officials were prepared to open half the temple roads to the untouchables the following day if the Satyagraha was withdrawn. The Satyagrahis, under instruction from Gandhiji, remained unyielding. Without openly proclaiming the fact the authorities, however, opened a few more roads and requested Gandhiji to take no forward step. Gandhiji agreed. On 28 July 1925, he wrote to W. H. Pitt:

... My business is to meet as far as it is possible those who may be interested in solving the same question, whether as friends, opponents or neutrals. I am now corresponding with Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, who, as you know, is my co-worker in this matter, and on whose judgment I place the greatest reliance. I am asking him even to go to Vykam or Trivandrum if necessary. Meanwhile I shall continue to observe perfect reticence in public. No forward step will be taken without due notice to you and without the greatest deliberation.

Complete victory, as it turned out, took another eleven years of struggle to achieve, when it came in the form of the Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the Maharaja, an event which Gandhiji described as "a miracle".



Gandhiji's visit to Travancore proved of immense educational value to the Vykam Satyagrahis. He spoke at length not only to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram at Vykam, but also addressed large public gatherings at Quilon, Valkalai, Trivandrum, Parur, Alwaye, Trichur, Pudukalayam, etc. He met the Maharani Regent of Travancore and Sree Narayana Guru. The Maharani, he told a meeting of Ezhavas, considered that the roads at Vykam and similar roads elsewhere should be open to all classes, but she could take no action unless she had public opinion behind her. It was, therefore, for the Satyagrahis to organize public opinion "in a perfectly legitimate, peaceful and constitutional manner" and thus break down the opposition of blind orthodoxy. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVI, pp.293-94]

During the tour Gandhiji was often called upon to answer questions about his views on the caste system and the restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage. Gandhiji made it clear that he drew a distinction between untouchability and the caste system. The caste system was "a healthy division of work based on birth." [*Ibid*, p.540]. But the existing ideas of caste were a perversion of the original. He did not regard the abolition of restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage as essential reforms. These restrictions had a sanitary as also a spiritual value as they promoted self-control. Self-control was a thing Gandhiji had always valued highly.

The Vykam Satyagraha stands out as one of the most sustained and purest of satyagraha campaigns for the removal of an age-old social inequity supported by orthodoxy, superstition, custom and authority. It drew volunteers from all over India. It was, as Gandhiji put it, one of the many holy wars against "irreligion masquerading as religion, ignorance appearing in the guise of learning." [*Ibid*, p.159]



CHAPTER XXI: REBUILDING NATIONAL UNITY

1

After settling down at Sheth Narottam Morarji's Villa at Juhu, Gandhiji began to consider resuming the editorship of *Young India* and *Navajivan*. By 21 March, though still weak, he had made up his mind that it was a task that could no longer be postponed. He informed George Joseph and Rajagopalachari and requested them to send articles, since he could not by himself provide all the matter. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, pp.290 and 292]

The first issue brought out under his editorial control was that of 3 April 1924. Gandhiji in a note addressed to the readers past and present said :

I have no new programme. My faith in the old is just as bright as ever, if not brighter....

I want to see God face to face. God I *know* is Truth. For me the only certain means of knowing God is non-violence, – ahimsa – love. I live for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of Truth. Only a free India can worship the true God. I work for India's freedom because my swadeshi teaches me that, being born in it and having inherited its culture, I am fittest to serve *her* and *she* has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation, but to benefit all in the true sense of the word.

Coming to the business side, Gandhiji continued :

I do not believe in publishing newspapers indefinitely at a loss or by means of advertisements. If a paper supplies a felt want, it must pay its way.... But, during the last two years, as the reader is aware, the list [of subscribers of *Young India*] has fallen from 21,500 to 3,000 and it is now



being run at a loss. Happily, *Navajivan* has made up for it. But even that method is wrong. *Young India* must stand on its own bottom or fall.

Navajivan indeed had been doing so well that its management, headed by Swami Anand, had put aside Rs. 50,000 for public work and Gandhiji intended to use the sum for the promotion of khadi in Gujarat. [*Ibid*, pp.341-42]

As for Hindi *Navajivan*, like that of *Young India*, its readership, too, had shown a marked fall during Gandhiji's absence from the scene. From 12,000 it had come down to 1,400. Gandhiji warned the readers that unless the paper became self-supporting, for which the minimum readership required was 4,000, he would have to shut it down. [*Ibid*, pp.351-52]

In the state of health Gandhiji was in, writing for the papers in English and Gujarati every week and also editing them made considerable demands on his energies. Writing to Dr. M. A. Ansari on 5 April he said :

Crowds of visitors would not leave me alone, and from today I am commencing some hours' silence practically every day so that I might have some quiet and I might also be able to overtake the correspondence which is daily growing in volume. I have already added Wednesday as a day of silence to Monday so that I may be able to cope with the editing of *Young India* and *Navajivan*. [*Ibid*, p.369]

But it proved a difficult undertaking for the papers to regain lost ground. In *Young India* 15 May 1924 Gandhiji wrote :

My editing, though it has somewhat increased the number of subscribers, has not made for any material increase. The papers are by no means as popular as they were before, because, perhaps, of the subsidence of excitement. *Young India* and *Hindi Navajivan* have not yet



begun to pay their way, and unless English readers of *Young India* and Hindi readers of *Hindi Navajivan* interest themselves in the upkeep of these weeklies and secure more subscribers, the question of stopping them may soon arise. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.52]

The Swarajists were anxious to know how Gandhiji would react to what they had done and were engaged in doing inside and outside the Congress. Accordingly Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan hastened to Juhu towards the end of March for talks with Gandhiji. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIII, p.336 and *Chronology*]. They extended their stay at Juhu till well into the third week of April. Talks largely centred on untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity and the question of Council-entry was not taken up, because, owing to his indisposition, C. R. Das had not been able to be present.

On 14 April Motilal Nehru stated that though he had been staying with Gandhiji, talking with him, on the question of Council-entry "they had neither embraced nor fought with each other yet." [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June 1924, pp.599-600]

On 18 May 1924, in his first public appearance following his release, Gandhiji presided at the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in Bombay. In his speech he said :

To me it [Buddhism] is part of Hinduism. Buddha did not give the world a new religion; he gave it a new interpretation. He taught Hinduism not to take but to give life. True sacrifice was not of others but of self.... It has become a fashion in some quarters nowadays to say that India's downfall dates from her acceptance of Buddha's teachings. It is tantamount to saying that love and piety, if sufficiently practised, will degrade the world. In other words, according to the critics, evil should



triumph in the end. It is my unalterable belief that India has fallen not because it accepted Gautama's teaching, but because it failed to live up to it. The priest has ever sacrificed the prophet. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.85]

2

C. R. Das was able at last to visit Gandhiji. Along with Motilal Nehru he had prolonged talks with him on the Council-entry question. On 22 May 1924 the two parties, Gandhiji on the one side and C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru on the other, issued separate statements admitting failure of the talks.

Gandhiji in his statement said :

I am sorry to have to say that I have not been able to see eye to eye with the Swarajists Nor is the difference between them and myself one of mere detail.... I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with Non-cooperation as I conceive it. Nor is this difference a mere matter of interpretation of the word 'non-cooperation' but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems.... I say that to be out of the legislative bodies is far more advantageous to the country than to be in them....

Gandhiji was however, anxious that Congressmen should close their ranks. He reminded the No-changers that the Delhi and Cocanada resolutions had permitted those who had no conscientious objection to enter the Councils and the Assembly, if they wanted to do so. He would, therefore, be no party to putting any obstacles in their way or to carrying on any propaganda against them.

The Swarajists had of course already fought the elections held in November 1923, and entered the Councils in a big way. They had gained sweeping victories almost everywhere. They had fought the election in the name



of the Congress. The Moderates were routed. Gandhiji advised C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru that the Swarajists should, instead of following a general policy of obstruction, endeavour to give strength to the constructive programme through the legislatures. They should move resolutions requiring the Central or Provincial Governments :

- "(1) to make all their cloth purchases in hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar;
- (2) to impose a prohibitive duty on foreign cloth;
- (3) to abolish the drink and drug revenue; and
- (4) at least correspondingly reduce the army expenditure."

The Swarajists had already declared their faith in the constructive programme. Gandhiji, therefore, called upon the No-changers to work in unison with the Pro-changers and others for the furtherance of that programme. [*Ibid.* pp.109-11]

Das and Motilal Nehru, in their statement on the same day regretted not having been able to convince Gandhiji of the soundness of the Swarajists' position regarding Council-entry. They reaffirmed the view that "Council-entry is and can be thoroughly consistent with the principle of non-cooperation as we understand that principle to be."

They explained their programme in the Council as follows :

- (1) To throw out budgets unless and until the system of Government is altered in recognition of our rights or as a matter of settlement between the [British] Parliament and the people of this country;
- (2) To throw out all proposals for legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy proposes to consolidate its power...;



(3) To introduce all resolutions, measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of our national life and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy...;

(4) To follow a definite economic policy, based on the same principle, to prevent the drain of public wealth from India by checking all activities leading to exploitation.

To make this policy effective, the Swarajist leaders said they felt they should "occupy every place which is open to the members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures by election."

Outside the Legislatures, the statement said, the Swaraj Party would whole-heartedly support the constructive programme of Gandhiji and work that programme unitedly through the Congress organizations. They also intended to supplement the work of the Congress by starting labour and peasant organizations throughout the country in order to prevent exploitation of labour by capitalists or by landlords. They expressed the view that notwithstanding some differences, there was "abiding and fundamental unity amongst both parties of the Indian National Congress." [*Ibid*, pp.585-88; *The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.603-04]

But the Swarajist position that they should work the constructive programme through the Congress organizations was not acceptable to Gandhiji. He wanted them to do so through the Legislatures and their own organization. Writing in *Young India* of 29 May 1924, he further elaborated his statement of 22 May :

The difference between the Swarajists and myself is honest and vital.... Each party is now free to give the fullest play to its views unhampered by any consideration save that of common cause.



It is therefore necessary to consider the way the Congress organization is to be worked.... It is clear to me that it cannot be jointly worked. I hold the boycott of titles, etc. to be an absolutely integral part of the Congress programme.... It follows, therefore, that the executive organization of the Congress must not contain titled persons, Government schoolmasters, practising lawyers and members of legislative bodies.... The All-India Congress Committee and all the local executive committees are such bodies, and they should contain only those members who wholeheartedly believe in and are prepared to carry out the policy.... The idea that all opinions should be represented on these bodies must be abandoned....

.... The most natural thing, in my opinion, therefore, is for the Swarajists to work the constructive programme through their own organizations... they can help the constructive programme by working it mainly through the Councils and the Assembly.

I for one can be no party to a tug of war in which each party tries to capture the Congress executive.... Each party honourably and without jealousy and ill-will working separately... can help one another.

... I have written simply with an eye to effective working of Congress executives. That working is possible only if the executives are run only by one party. If the Swarajist view is more popular, the executive bodies should be solely in their hands. The Congress must always represent the popular view whatever it may be....

... In my opinion the Delhi resolution, and more especially the Cocanada resolution, does not contemplate joint control of the



executives.... I feel that both the parties can effectively help each other only if they work separately. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.154-57]

In an interview to Associated Press on 31 May Gandhiji said : "I do not believe in coalition government at any time, but certainly not when there are vital differences of opinion or, if you will, different mentalities, making for different and diametrically opposite courses of action." [*Ibid*, p.161]

3

Gandhiji at this time felt that the majority opinion being with the No-changers, they should control the Congress. Writing in *Young India* of 19 June under the caption "The Acid Test" Gandhiji said he proposed to move at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. scheduled to be held on 27-28 June four resolutions to the following effect :

(1).... The A.I.C.C. resolves that all the members of the various representative Congress organizations shall... regularly spin for at least half an hour every day and shall send to the Secretary of the All-India Khadi Board at least ten *tolas* each (this was later changed to 'two thousand yards'] of even and well twisted yarn... the first consignment to reach the secretary not later than the 15th of August 1924, and thereafter in regular monthly succession. Any member failing to send the prescribed quantity by the prescribed date shall be deemed to have vacated his office

(2) Inasmuch as complaints have been received that provincial secretaries and other members of Congress organizations do not carry out the instructions issued to them ... the A.I.C.C. hereby resolves that those in charge of matters referred to them, failing to comply with the instructions of officers thereto appointed, shall be deemed to have vacated their offices....



(3) In the opinion of the A.I.C.C. it is desirable that the Congress electors elect to various offices in the Congress organization only those who in their persons carry out to the full the Congress creed and the various Non-cooperation resolutions of the Congress, including the five boycotts, namely, of all mill-spun cloth, Government law-courts, schools, titles, and legislative bodies; and the A.I.C.C. hereby resolves that the members who do not believe in and do not in their own persons carry out the said boycotts shall vacate their seats and that there should be fresh elections in respect of such seats....

(4) The A. I. C. C. regrets the murder of the late Mr. Day by the late Gopinath Saha.... The A.I.C.C. strongly condemns this and all such political murders and is emphatically of opinion that all such acts are inconsistent with the Congress creed and its resolution of non-violent Non-cooperation....

Gandhiji wrote further :

I must have soldiers who would obey and who have faith in themselves and in their general and who will willingly carry out instructions.... The resolutions are designed to test the qualifications of the soldiers.

All the four resolutions then constitute my application for employment as general and lay down my qualifications and limitations. Here there is no imposition of autocracy, no impossible demand. [*Ibid*, pp.267-69]

Gandhiji's statements and his four resolutions gave rise to fierce controversy in political circles. The cry was raised that the Swarajists were now to be hounded out of the Congress and that Gandhiji was again angling for



dictatorship. The Anglo-Indian Press made use of the controversy to discredit the Swarajists, and especially to wean away their Muslim following. No-changers of the more militant variety were not the ones to lag behind in denouncing the Swarajists. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June 1924, p.605(a)]

On the eve of the A.I.C.C. meeting at Ahmedabad from 27 to 30 June 1924, Gandhiji issued an open letter to the members of the A.I.C.C., explaining his stand. He emphasized the importance of khadi as means of gaining swaraj, "sooner than the chill in atmosphere around us will warrant." Khadi had two aspects : terrible and benign. In its terrible aspect it could, through boycott of foreign cloth, "kill the demoralizing British self-interest." In its benign aspect khadi gave a new life and hope to the villager. It alone could bring Congressmen in touch and in tune with the villagers. He frankly expressed his distrust of the Swarajists in this respect, among whom khadi was on the wane, so much so that many of them did not even wear khadi.

Gandhiji admitted that entry into legislative bodies could and did give some relief, so did the law-courts. "The Government institutions could not have existed if they had nothing attractive about them. Only this is no new discovery."

He proceeded :

If the Government schools and law-courts and legislatures are good enough to attract us, our opposition is clearly to the *personnel* and not to the system.... If the wish is merely that we rather than *Englishmen* man the system, I grant that the boycotts are not only useless but harmful. The logical outcome of the Government policy is to Europeanize India.... I can have no interest in that deadly process save to put the whole of my humble weight against it. My swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization.



I want to write many new things, but they must be all written on the Indian slate. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.285-88]

4

The A.I.C.C. meeting began in Ahmedabad on the evening of 27 June. When Gandhiji moved his first resolution on khadi and spinning, Motilal Nehru raised a point of order, saying that in so far as the resolution dealt with the qualifications of members it violated articles 19 and 47 of the Congress Constitution, which provided for the qualifications of members and that the A.I.C.C. was not competent to make fresh rules. C. R. Das then expressed his view that under Article 31 of the Constitution, Gandhiji's resolution was out of order.

Gandhiji said his view was that the A.I.C.C. had full powers of the Congress when the latter body was not in session. Besides, his resolutions did not restrict the right of the electors but only advised the electors to do the needful. [*Ibid*, pp.304-05]

Motilal Nehru, articulating the Swarajists' position, said they believed in the constructive programme but did not believe that by itself and without any other activity it would or could lead to swaraj. The Congress belonged to the Swarajists as much as to the opposite party and they would not allow, if they could help it, "the Constitution to be changed according to the caprice of a narrow majority.... The demand that the Swarajists should go out of the executive is... an unreasonable demand."

The Swarajists thereupon withdrew from the meeting.

Gandhiji said he was absolutely unperturbed. He could not be frightened by such withdrawal. The resolution was then put to the vote and carried by 67 votes against 37. If the Swarajists' votes were to be added the majority would be



a very narrow one. Gandhiji, therefore, moved to rescind the penalty clause which laid down that members failing to send the required quantity of yarn every month would have to vacate their offices. The A.I.C.C. agreed. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.608(c)-17]

The other three resolutions moved by Gandhiji were carried by comfortable majorities.

But Gandhiji regarded the voting as a triumph of C. R. Das, and said so in an article in *Young India* of 3 July 1924 under the title "Defeated and Humbled". The proceedings had distressed him and at one stage, in the middle of a speech he had broken down. "I must," he wrote, "strive for a majority at the next Congress and endeavour, so far as it is possible, to act impartially..."

Both the parties are said to have resorted in the past to unscrupulous practices in the matter of election of delegates and members of the subordinate organizations. The best way of avoiding corruption is to be indifferent to the result after having adopted all honest measures for influencing voters.

The No-change programme must be what it means.... The Swarajist method cultivates British opinion and looks to the British Parliament for swaraj. The No-change method looks to the people for it. The two methods represent two opposite mentalities.... Whilst one school claims to give political education through the Councils, the other claims to give it exclusively by working among the people and evoking its organizing and administrative capacity One teaches the people that the constructive programme alone cannot achieve swaraj, the other teaches the people that it and it alone can achieve it.



Unfortunately I was unable to convince the Swarajists of this obvious truth. And I saw constitutional difficulty in the way of securing a homogeneous organization. We must now, therefore, do the next best thing. We must silently work up the constructive programme without regard to what will happen in December.... [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.334-40]

The withdrawal of the penalty clause from the resolution making spinning obligatory averted for the time being an open split between the two wings of the Congress. But the differences remained as they were.

C. R. Das in a Press interview said the Swaraj Party did not object to spinning, but they strongly resented anything being forced upon them and they thought it was an attempt to exclude them unconstitutionally from the Congress executive.

Motilal Nehru further elucidated the Swarajist standpoint. He said the capture of the Councils was not an end but only a means, that the real work of preparing the country was being done by the Congress as a whole and consisted in carrying out the constructive programme with a view to preparing the country for civil disobedience. The Swaraj Party would help in that work. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.651-52]

The Ahmedabad A.I.C.C. session made it clear that the schism in the ranks of the Congress between No-changers and Swarajists was now complete. Neither party was in a mood to make concessions to the other. The rift reflected the general dissolution of the national unity forged by the Non-cooperation movement, which seemed to have become a thing of the past. The disunity was reflected at all levels : between Hindus and Muslims, within the Congress and



between Congressmen and Liberals. This caused much distress to Gandhiji. The paramount need, he saw, was bringing about national unity.

It was necessary for this purpose to present to the country the "peaceful and winsome" aspect of Satyagraha, keeping in abeyance its aggressive aspect. He invited all to follow the peaceful path. "Cooperators, Non-cooperators, staunch No-changers, Pro-changers, Swarajists, Liberals, Conventionists, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jews, all can join together in this work," he said in a speech on 31 August. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, p.59]

Recommending the threefold programme, i.e., removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and hand-spinning Gandhiji said: "Let us put aside the issues of boycotting courts, Councils, etc. We cannot all agree on them". [*Ibid*, p.62]

Noting that Non-cooperation had taken the form of "non-cooperation in practice with one another instead of the Government" and had, "having failed to produce the immediate effect of destroying the system... recoiled upon us with double strength," Gandhiji suggested that "we should find out the lowest common measure among all the political parties and invite them all on the Congress platform for achieving that common measure." [*Ibid*. p.121]. He realized that in unity lay strength. He must not let them fritter away their energies, so badly needed to work for Swaraj. Gandhiji saw no way to remove even the Hindu-Muslim tension, which was daily becoming worse, except by all the parties coming together to work on a common programme. He proposed that :

1. The Congress should suspend all boycotts except that of foreign cloth till the session of 1925.
2. The Congress should, subject to (1), remove the boycott of Empire goods.



3. The Congress should confine its activity solely to the propaganda of hand-spinning and hand-spun khaddar, the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity, and in addition its Hindu members should actively work for removal of untouchability.

4. The four-anna franchise should be abolished and in its place the qualification for membership should be spinning by every member for half an hour per day and delivery to the Congress from month to month of at least 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn....

The implications of these proposals, Gandhiji explained, were that :

(a) the Swarajists should be free to organize themselves without any opposition from the Congress or No-changers.

(b) the members of other political bodies should be invited and induced to join the Congress;

(c) the No-changers should be precluded from carrying on any propaganda either direct or indirect against Council-entry;

(d) those who do not personally believe in any of the four boycotts will be free, without any disgrace whatsoever, to act as if the boycotts did not exist. Thus non-cooperating lawyers will be free to resume practice if they choose and title-holders, school-masters, etc. will be free to join the Congress and be eligible to the executive.

A good deal of Gandhiji's attention and energies were claimed by the fast deteriorating communal relations and consequent frequent and almost ubiquitous communal riots. In *Young India* of 29 May 1924, he came out with a detailed analysis of the problem. Writing under the title "Hindu-Muslim Tension:



Its Cause and Cure”, he first referred to the charges labelled against him by Hindus and Muslims, who thought him responsible for the growing communal discord.

The Hindu argument, expressed in some letters in filthy and unprintable language, was that Gandhiji by identifying himself with the Khilafat and asking the Hindus to support the Muslims on the question, had given it an importance it would not otherwise have received and given prestige to Maulvis they had never enjoyed before. Muslims, who had now been roused, had declared a *jehad* against Hindus.

The Muslim charge was that at Gandhiji's call they had participated in the Non-cooperation movement with enthusiasm, giving up schools and law-courts and had suffered thereby, while Hindus had gone back to schools and courts when the movement appeared to be petering out. Hindus were now resorting to *shuddhi* and *sangathan* to weaken Muslims.

So far as the communal riots were concerned, in some places, such as Mullan, Saharanpur, Agra and Ajmer, Hindus suffered most, whereas in some other places such as Palwal in the Punjab, Byade in Dharwar district, Kartarpur and Arrah, Hindus had been the aggressors. In the Punjab, the seat of the greatest trouble, the causes for the tension were more than merely religious. They were related to Government jobs.

The immediate cause, as Gandhiji saw it, was the loss of faith in non-violence both on the part of Muslims and Hindus. Muslims argued that they did not believe in non-violence; they must hate their enemy. Hindus considered Gandhiji a Christian in disguise who was distorting the meaning of the *Gita*, which enjoined killing as a duty under certain circumstances.



Gandhiji said he was asking the people to adopt non-violence for the purpose of regulating the relations between the different races, and for the purpose of attaining swaraj. "Hindus and Mussalmans, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis must not settle their differences by resort to violence.... It is a sign not of strength but of weakness to take up the pistol on the slightest pretext. Mutual fisticuffs are a training, not in violence, but in emasculation."

Gandhiji expressed his view that as a rule the Mussalman was a bully and the Hindu a coward. Where there were cowards there would always be bullies. Organizing *akharas* was no solution. The remedy against cowardice was not physical culture but the braving of dangers. The Bania and the Brahmin must learn to defend himself, even violently if not non-violently, or surrender his womenfolk and possessions to the *goondas*.

Gandhiji referred to the growing distrust of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and Swami Shraddhanand among Muslims and said that the distrust was unfounded. None of these great leaders was an enemy of Muslims; they had rendered great services to the country and were devoted to Hindu-Muslim unity. It was true that Swami Shraddhanand believed in the possibility of bringing every Muslim into the Aryan fold, just as most Muslims thought that every non-Muslim would some day become a convert to Islam.

Gandhiji expressed the view that the Arya Samaj, to which Shraddhanand belonged, and Swami Dayanand Saraswati, its founder, had made Hinduism narrow. *Satyarth Prakash*, the Arya Samaj Bible, was a disappointing book. It contained misrepresentation of Jainism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism itself. Although Dayanand was an iconoclast, he had enthroned idolatry by idolizing the letter of the Vedas and by trying to prove that they contained everything known to science.



Gandhiji appreciated the fact that wherever there were Arya Samajists there was life and energy. But, having a narrow outlook and pugnacious habits, they quarrelled with people of other denominations or among themselves.

Gandhiji had similarly been warned against Maulana Abul Bari and the Ali brothers as being anti-Hindu fanatics. He defended them as straightforward people devoted to Hindu-Muslim unity.

Gandhiji then referred to the *Shuddhi* and *Tabligh* movements. They were keeping up the tension in the country and he deprecated both. Hinduism had no place for *Shuddhi*. Hinduism believed that all religions were more or less true. The real *Shuddhi* lay in each one trying to arrive at perfection in his or her own faith. If the Malkana Rajputs wanted to return to the Hindu fold, they had a perfect right to do so, only there should be no propaganda which reviled other religions. Money was similarly being paid to people to induce them to accept Islam. Various other immoral means were being recommended to convert Hindus to Islam, which he deprecated.

Gandhiji was pained to see that in the Punjab a section of the Press was scurrilous and even filthy. Such sheets were being conducted by Arya Samajists and also by Mussulman writers. Each vied with the other in reviling the religion of the opponent.

Two constant causes of friction were cow-slaughter and music before the mosques. Before a pact on the questions could be brought about it was necessary to restore friendly feelings between the two communities. A lasting heart unity between the communities was a precondition for swaraj. The key to this, Gandhiji said, lay with Hindus. If they set their house in order, there could be no doubt that Muslims would respond. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.136-54]



Gandhiji's statement caused a furore in the country and for days it was the subject of talk among all political circles. Arya Samajists especially were much piqued by Gandhiji's criticism of Swami Dayanand and *Satyarth Prakash*.

On 17 June 1924, the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha in a rejoinder objected to Gandhiji's attack on the Arya Samaj in a purely political document. This, the Pratinidhi Sabha said, had, instead of easing the situation, introduced fresh complications.

Proselytization, the Arya Samaj statement went on, had always been an essential part of the Vedic Dharma. On various occasions tens of thousands of non-Hindus had been taken into the Vedic fold.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha took particular exception to Gandhiji's criticism of Swami Dayanand, "the apotheosis of truth, purity and probity". [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.652(a)-652(b)]

Gandhiji was flooded with letters from various parts of North India protesting against his critical remarks against Swami Dayanand and *Satyarth Prakash*. He told them that "their protests betray want of toleration. Public men and public institutions cannot afford to be thin-skinned. They must stand criticism with good grace." So far as the *Shuddhi* was concerned let the Arya Samajists first Hinduize the Hindus, which task would tax all their energy and take up all their time. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.228-30]

Gandhiji's statement made no impact. Arya Samajists, and Hindu *Sangathan* movement and Muslim *Tabligh* movement were generating the filthiest propaganda. Indian language papers, full of abuse and scurrilous tirades against the opposite faith were mushrooming everywhere. The gulf was daily



being further widened. In the riots Hindus were the worst sufferers and asked for the protection of British arms. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.25]

Gandhiji's endeavours to establish unity between the Hindu and Muslim masses created a scare among certain sections in the West. In passionate letters Gandhiji was advised to eschew the "unholy" alliance with the Muslims who were seeking supremacy in the East with the help of Bolshevik Russia. They accused Gandhiji of encouraging Bolshevism in India under the guise of religion. Gandhiji wrote :

The alliance there is between the Ali brothers and myself, i.e., between a few valued Mussalman friends and myself. I would love to call it an alliance between Mussalmans and Hindus – not myself. But that seems to have been a day-dream.... It is tragic that it excites wonder and even apprehension. What can be more natural than that Hindus and Mussalmans, born and bred in India, having the same adversities, the same hopes, should be permanent friends, brothers born of the same mother, India? ... The greatest menace to the world today is the growing, exploiting, irresponsible imperialism, which through the enslavement of India is threatening the independent existence and expansion of the weaker races of the world. That imperialism is a negation of God. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.18-19]

As for Bolshevism, Gandhiji confessed he did not know the meaning of it. Some people painted it in the blackest colours. Some others hailed it as deliverance for the downtrodden masses. What was one to believe?

Gandhiji's remarks on Bolshevism roused the ire of M. N. Roy, who, in a long article published by Gandhiji in *Young India* of 1 January 1925, proceeded to expound the principles and practices of Bolshevism and to debunk Gandhism.



Roy said the gospel of freedom lost all practical value in the hands of Gandhiji since it was subordinated "to an intricate conception of morality, religion and God". The principles of socialism, he explained, were (1) to overthrow capitalist system of production, (2) abolition of private property, (3) reorganization of the means of production and distribution, and (4) transformation of the present social order into a classless society. The October Revolution in Russia had sought to accomplish this by (1) overthrow of Czarist despotism, (2) overthrow of the bourgeoisie, (3) destruction of landed aristocracy, (4) nationalization of large industries, (5) take-over of foreign trade by the State, (6) transfer of legislative and administrative authority to the Soviets, and (7) abolition of private property and class privileges.

The reign of terror that followed the Revolution, Roy explained, was made necessary by the resistance of the Russian aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Since God and religion were used in the service of the resistance by the counter-revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks had to take up the fight against God and religion, too. [*Ibid*, pp.604-08]

In a note on Roy's article. Gandhiji wrote :

...if Mr. Roy's article is a correct representation of Bolshevism, it is a poor thing. I can no more tolerate the yoke of Bolshevism, as described by Mr. Roy, than of capitalism. I believe in conversion of mankind, not its destruction, and for a very obvious reason. We are all very imperfect and weak things and if we are to destroy all whose ways we do not like, there will be not a man left alive. Mobocracy is autocracy multiplied a million times. But I hope, I am almost sure, that real Bolshevism is much better than Mr. M. N. Roy's. [*Ibid*, p.531]



On 11 July a riot broke out in Delhi over a minor scuffle, which in the course of days led to organized attacks by Muslims on Hindus, resulting in the death of three Hindus and injuries to 50. A few days later, mobs composed of Muslim butchers forcibly took cows to slaughter through Hindu localities in defiance of orders and attacked Hindus, killing 12 of them and injuring 100. Hindu houses and shops remained closed for days on end in protest.

Then serious trouble arose in Gulbarga in the Nizam's dominions, when Muslim mobs attacked a Puja procession of the Hindus and desecrated temples. Rampaging Muslim mobs ruled the streets for many days.

On 9 and 10 September 1924, Kohat in the North-West Frontier Province witnessed a most appalling riot. The immediate cause was the publication and distribution by one Jiwan Das of the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, of a pamphlet which was calculated to wound Muslim religious susceptibilities. It contained a virulently anti-Islamic poem which was highly offensive in tone. Muslims demanded action and Jiwan Das was taken into custody and asked to execute a bond. On 8 September Jiwan Das was released on bail.

Muslims were furious. On 9 September, huge Muslim mobs, having divorced their wives in their resolve to do or die, attacked and burnt Hindu shops and Hindu localities and continued the ghastly campaign on the 10th on an even larger scale, the rioters having been reinforced in the meantime by crowds from neighbouring villages.

The authorities, fearing the wholesale slaughter of the Hindu population of the city, arranged to have them removed to the cantonment. Soon afterwards Hindus started a mass exodus to Rawalpindi.



A Government enquiry held into the riot admitted that the "loss of life and property in these riots was deplorably great" and expressed "grave concern that some members of the forces of law and order were involved in looting."

On 12 September, rioting broke out in Lucknow over Hindu *arati* and Muslim *namaz* and many persons were killed.

Riots, arising out of similar causes, followed in Shahjehanpur on 21 September, Allahabad and Calcutta on 8 October and Jabalpure on 9 October. [The Indian Quarterly Register, April-June, 1924, pp.25-31]

9

Gandhiji found the situation unbearable. He decided that he must fast. At first he was inclined to make it a forty-day fast. On second thoughts he decided that his fast should be for 21 days. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, p.203]

Gandhiji started the fast on 17 September. No one had had any inkling that such a fast was on the cards. Indeed Brijkrishna Chandiwalla, a close associate of Gandhiji, had met him on the 16th and had invited him to his house for a meal on the 17th and Gandhiji had accepted the invitation. [Brijkrishna Chandiwalla, *Gandhiji ki Dilli Diary*, Vol.I, (Hindi), Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi, 1969, p.139]. The announcement of the fast, therefore, came as a surprise and a sudden blow to everyone. Gandhiji wrote to C. F. Andrews, Motilal Nehru, Mathuradas Tricumji, Vasumati Pandit, Annie Besant, Rajagopalachari and Jawaharlal Nehru, informing them of his decision to fast as an atonement. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.157-76]

Mohammed Ali, at whose house in Delhi Gandhiji was staying at the time, was terribly upset and taxed Gandhiji with breach of faith towards his co-workers like Hakim Saheb, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Shaukat Ali and himself. He gave free utterance to the bitterness he felt. Gandhiji told him that it was a matter between



his God and himself, that there were matters in which there could be no interposition between God and man. [*Ibid*, p.156]

In a press statement announcing the fast Gandhiji said :

The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my own dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am therefore imposing on myself a fast of 21 days commencing from today and ending on Wednesday, 8 October. I reserve the liberty to drink water with or without salt. It is both a penance and a prayer.

As penance I need not have taken the public into my confidence, but I publish the fast as (let me hope) an effective prayer both to Hindus and Mussalmans, who have hitherto worked in unison, not to commit suicide. I respectfully invite the heads of all the communities, including Englishmen, to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us reinstate Him in our hearts. [*Ibid*, pp.171-72]

Mahadev Desai, like many others, could not see any justification for Gandhiji undertaking the penance. What error, after all, had Gandhiji committed?

Gandhiji said he might be charged with having committed a breach of faith with Hindus, whom he had asked to befriend Muslims. He wrote :

I asked them to lay their lives and their property at the disposal of Mussalmans for the protection of their holy places.... And yet what do I find to be the result? How many temples have been desecrated? How many sisters come to me with complaints? Hindu women are in mortal



terror of Mussalman *goondas*.... How can I ask the Hindus to put up with everything patiently? And yet I must ask Hindus even today to die and not to kill. I can only do so by laying down my own life. I can teach the way to die by my own example. [*Ibid*, pp.174-75]

Shaukat Ali also tried to persuade Gandhiji to give up the fast and undertake a tour for communal unity. Gandhiji remained unmoved. He said :

There have been murders.... There are hundreds of sisters.... They are in mortal fear today. To them I want to show by my own example the way to die.

Fight I do not mind, if it be fair, honourable, brave fighting between the two communities. But today it is all a story of unmitigated cowardice. They would throw stones and run away, murder and run away, go to court, put up false witnesses and cite false evidence.... I must recover the power to react on them. [*Ibid*, pp.181-84]

The announcement of the fast by Gandhiji had immediate impact on the communal situation in the country. The Arya Samaj suspended the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements and Muslims their *Tabligh*. The communal Press also stopped its vituperation and slander of the opposite community. Even the Anglo-Indian Press became subdued.

The leaders of the two communities were stirred into action. Mohammed Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Swami Shraddhanand issued an appeal to some 200 prominent leaders of the country to assemble in Delhi for a conference. The appeal, the text of which was telegraphically conveyed to the addressees, ran as follows :



Moved by the daily growing proportion of Hindu-Muslim dissensions Mahatma Gandhi has begun twenty-one days' fast by way of penance and prayer.... Considering the length of the fast and his shattered health, who can underrate the risk? It is therefore necessary for us all to decide immediately what we can do in these twenty-one days to retrieve the situation and relieve the Mahatma's agony of distress. Please join the conference here on the 23rd of September.

The appeal had wide response. Many Englishmen, too, gave their assent. Among them was Rev. Foss Westcott, Metropolitan of Calcutta.

All over the country prayers were offered for the life of Gandhiji. In Delhi, the Metropolitan himself conducted the prayers. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.148]

10

The Unity Conference assembled in Delhi on 26 September, instead of 23 September as originally intended, and went on till 2 October. Motilal Nehru was elected president of the Conference and Mohammed Ali chairman of the Reception Committee. More than 300 persons from all over India attended. The gathering represented not only Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other communities of India but also Europeans. Among these were Rev. Foss Westcott, Rev. King and Rev. Tilt of the Cambridge Mission, Principal Canon Davis, Arthur Moore, editor of the *Statesman*. Mrs. Stanner, and Gandhiji's old friends H. S. L. Polak and C. F. Andrews.

On the very first day of its deliberations the Conference passed a resolution declaring its emphatic opinion "that the utmost freedom of conscience and religion is essential" and condemning "any desecration of places of worship, to whatsoever faith they may belong, and any persecution or punishment of any



person for adopting or reverting to any faith," and "any attempts by compulsion to convert people to one's faith or to secure or enforce one's own religious observances at the cost of the rights of others."

The resolution further authorized the president to convey to Gandhiji the united wishes of the Conference that he should "immediately break his fast in order to permit the Conference to have the benefit of his cooperation. advice and guidance in deciding upon the speediest means of effectively checking the evil which is fast overspreading the country." [C.W.M.G ., Vol.XXV pp.215-16]

Motilal Nehru accordingly called on Gandhiji. Gandhiji found himself unable to give up the fast, for, said he, "a promise once made or a vow once taken for a worthy object may not be broken." [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.151]

On 27 September the Conference appointed a Subjects Committee of 80 persons, including the following :

Hakim Ajmal Khan, Swami Shraddhanand, Mohammed Ali, G. K. Nariman, Sardar Mangal Singh, Rev. Dr. Foss Westcott, Annie Besant, H. N. Kunzru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Khwaja Hasan Nizami, Lala Hans Raj, Sarojini Naidu, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Azad, C. R. Das, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, B.S. Moonje, N.C. Kelkar, Suleman Nadvi, Mohammed Shafi, M. A. Ansari, Hasrat Mohani, M. R. Jayakar, Dr. Kitchlew, Shaukat Ali, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jairamdas Doulatram, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Arthur Moore, C. Y. Chintamani, T. A. K . Sherwani, Purushottamdas Tandon, Vithalbhai Patel and Bhagavandas.

The very first resolution, considered and passed by the Subjects Committee, presumably based on a draft by Gandhiji, ran as follows :



This Conference deplores the dissensions and quarrels that are now going on between Hindus and Mussalmans in several places in India resulting in loss of life, burning of property and desecration of temples. The Conference regards them as barbarous and contrary to religion. The Conference tenders its warm sympathy to the sufferers.

The Conference is of opinion that it is unlawful and irreligious for a person to take the law into his own hands by way of retaliation or punishment. The Conference is of opinion that all differences, no matter of what nature, should be referred to an arbitrator or if that be impossible, even to a court of law. [*Ibid*, pp.152-53; C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.214-15]

On 28 September the Subjects Committee formed a sub-committee of 11 persons to consider the various resolutions before the Subjects Committee and prepare alternative drafts if necessary. The members of this sub-committee were : Hakim Ajmal Khan, Rev. Foss Westcott, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mohammed Ali, Swami Shraddhanand, Babu Bhagavandas, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maulana Azad, Mufti Kifayatulla, C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. B. S. Moonje and Motilal Nehru, President.

On the 29th, sitting all day without any break, the Subjects Committee considered the resolutions. The main resolution, Resolution No. 4, generated a great deal of heat and its most contentious clause, the one relating to cow-slaughter, could not be passed. On 30 September, the debate continued. According to Dr. Foss Westcott, as quoted by Mahadev Desai, "Neither party seemed to be able to trust the professions of goodwill made by the other, and generous advances were treated as a bait to secure some more substantial advantages." [Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, p.62]



Among the few who strove earnestly to prevent the Conference from breaking down was Maulana Azad. Mahadev Desai quotes a Hindu leader attending the conference on the role played by Azad :

On the present occasion he surpassed himself in the pathos and fervour of his eloquence and the generosity of his sentiment, prompted (as he himself pointed out) by the special circumstances of India, consistently with the strict observance of the practice of his own faith. The appeal which he made to both communities was the turning point of the discussion. He asked his co-religionists to remember that cow-slaughter, even for purposes of sacrifice, was not a fundamental part of their religion, and he assured his Hindu friends that there were not a few Mussalman leaders who had not only never tasted beef themselves but were endeavouring to reduce the use of it among Mussalmans. [*Ibid*, p.63]

After an adjournment of four days during which the Subjects Committee was busy giving final shape to the resolutions, the Unity Conference assembled on October 1 at 5 p.m. The attendance this time was thinner because a number of people who had come from distant parts of the country, including Rev. Foss Westcott, C. Y. Chintamani and some members of the Legislative Assembly, had left Delhi.

The Conference, passed the following resolutions, already cleared by the Subjects Committee :

Resolution No. 3 :

There shall be a Central National Panchayat of not more than 15 persons, with power to organize and appoint local panchayats... to enquire into and settle all disputes and differences... where necessary and desirable.



Gandhiji (Chairman}, Hakim Ajmal Khan, G. K. Nariman, S. K. Dutta and Sunder Singh Lyallpuri were appointed to form the Panchayat.

Resolution No. 4 :

In this resolution the Conference recorded its opinion as follows :

(a) That every individual or group shall have full liberty... to follow any religious practice with due regard to the feelings of others and without interfering with their rights....

(b) That all places of worship... shall be considered sacred and inviolable and shall on no account be attacked or desecrated....

(c) (1) That Hindus must not expect that the exercise of the right of cow-slaughter by Muslims can or will be stopped by the use of force... and must trust to the good sense of Muslims.... (2) Nothing stated in the above clause shall... authorize cow-slaughter in a place where it has not taken place before. (3) Any dispute of facts should be settled by the National Panchayat formed under Resolution No. 3. (4) Cow-slaughter shall not take place in a way offensive to the religious sentiments of the Hindus. (5) The Muslim members of the Conference hereby call upon their co-religionists to do everything in their power to reduce cow-slaughter.

(d) (1) That Muslims must not expect to stop Hindu music near or in front of mosques by force.... (2) Nothing stated in the above clause shall... authorize the playing of music in front of mosques where it has not been played before.... (3) The Hindu members of this Conference call upon their co-religionists to avoid playing music before mosques in such a manner as to disturb congregational prayers.



(e) That Muslims must not expect to stop by force... the playing of music... by Hindus...in their houses or temples... even if the house or temple is situated in close proximity to a mosque, but they should trust to the good sense of the Hindus....

(h) That every individual is at liberty to follow any faith and to change it whenever he so wills....

That every individual or group is at liberty to convert or reconvert another by argument or persuasion, but must not attempt to do so... by force, fraud or other unfair means....

(j) That no community should attempt to stop by force the construction of a new place of worship by a member of another Community on his own land... built at a reasonable distance from an existing place of worship of any other community.

In the discussion on the resolution the question of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* came up. Lajpat Rai defended them as being not directed against Muslims but intended solely as a movement by Hindus "for developing their bodies".

The discussion on the resolution concluded the following day, 2 October, when it was unanimously passed, in spite of a few dissenting voices raised in regard to the wording here and there.

Altogether the Conference passed nine resolutions. The other resolutions being on the avoidance of abusive writings in the Press (Resolution No. 5), expression of regret of Hindus on acts of impropriety against mosques wherever committed (Resolution No. 6), on need for equal respect being shown to all other religions by Hindus and Muslims (Resolution No. 7), condemnation of boycott of members of one community by another wherever this might have happened



(Resolution No. 8), and finally an appeal to all to offer prayers for Gandhiji's life and hold thanksgiving meetings in towns and villages on October 8 when Gandhiji broke his fast (Resolution No. 9).

The Conference concluded on a note of hope, with the speeches of C. R. Das, Mrs. Naidu, Swami Shraddhanand and the Ali brothers. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.154-60]

Gandhiji's fast in the meanwhile continued.

11

For the first week of the fast Gandhiji stayed in Mohammed Ali's house. During the whole of that week he was able to sing at the prayers, move around and attend to his ablutions and negotiate the stairs and take a walk. But the weakness was increasing. Mohammed Ali's house was a busy place – the Ali brothers' papers, the *Hamdard* and the *Comrade* were brought out from there. The doctors thought it desirable to move Gandhiji to another, quieter place. Accordingly on 26 September he was shifted to Lala Sultan Singh's place "Dilkusha" in the Sabzimandi area. [Brijkrishna Chandiwalla, *Gandhijiki Dilli Diary*, Vol.I, (Hindi), p.144]

Before the end of the second week he had become too weak even to leave his bed. But the prayers and spinning continued. The doctors attending on him, viz., Drs. Ansari, Abdur Rahman and Sen, counselled that he should refrain from spinning, since the exertion must aggravate the weakness. They were puzzled when they noticed that at the end of half an hour's spinning Gandhiji's pulse had become steadier. The doctors also failed to make Gandhiji go easy on the writing, of which he continued to do a great deal. [*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, (Gujarati), Vol VI, p.209]



After the first week Gandhiji found himself unable to sing at the prayers. Madan Mohan Malaviya came to visit him. Gandhiji did not talk but requested Malaviya to read to him the *Dhruva Akhyan* from the *Bhagavata*. For about two hours he attentively listened to the narrative. On another occasion Malaviya read out to him the *Prahlad Akhyan* from the same epic. Balkoba, younger brother of Vinoba Bhave, was always at hand to sing *bhajans* whenever Gandhiji wished him to do so. All this was spiritual food for him. Gandhiji could do without food for the body but not without the food for the spirit.

Dr. Ansari and Dr. Abdur Rahman regularly visited Gandhiji morning and evening and Dr. Sen, a pathologist, monitored any changes in his urine. One day he reported that the level of acetone and aceto-acetic acid present in the urine was much higher than would be considered safe. The doctors advised Gandhiji to take at least small amounts of sugar to remedy this. They feared that the toxins could damage his brain. Hakim Ajmal Khan, though busy with the work of the Unity Conference, came running when informed of the situation and added his voice to that of the doctors. When he came, C. R. Das and Basanti Devi Das were with Gandhiji. Gandhiji, who was observing his Monday silence, wrote down on a piece of paper in Urdu: "God willing, the urine report will be negative tomorrow." Hakim Ajmal Khan went away but he and the two doctors were not reassured. How could the urine become normal unless he agreed to take sugar in some form?

Dr. Abdur Rahman said : "The level of toxins in the urine is too high. Your pulse rate is good, the heart is good, the respiration is good, but one can never tell. This (the toxins) could affect the brain and lead to paralysis." They again pressed Gandhiji to agree to take a little sugar. Gandhiji told them that in any case it was too late an hour for him to take sugar, for he was under a vow to take



nothing after sunset. He assured the doctors that there was nothing to worry about for the night. He refused to permit them to administer him glucose intravenously.

The doctors decided to spend the night in the house, just in case. In the meantime Dr. Sen had examined Gandhiji's urine again in the evening. The result was negative. He could not believe it. Could there be a mistake? He repeated the examination, with the same result. Dr. Ansari and Dr. Abdur Rahman were informed. They were all surprised and puzzled. It seemed a case of a miraculous effect of the mind on the body. No food, no glucose in any form had entered Gandhiji's system and yet his urine which had been loaded with aceto-acetic acid in the morning was now free from it. The doctors were amazed and just marvelled.

A number of people came to enquire about Gandhiji's health that night. Among them was Dr. Foss Westcott, who had been summoned by Andrews.

Gandhiji told Mahadev Desai to request the Bishop to join in the prayer and sing "Lead Kindly Light." The Bishop had forgotten the lines. Andrews wrote down the hymn for him. He appeared to hesitate over a line, the Bishop said : "Let us ask Gandhi." But it was not found necessary. The wording was as Andrews had recollected it. The Bishop sang the hymn and Gandhiji slept. [*Ibid*, pp.209-16]

Notwithstanding some anxious moments caused to the doctors and others, Gandhiji was able to stand the fast well enough and 8 October at last arrived. It happened to be the auspicious Dussehra day, the day on which Rama was believed to have vanquished Ravana.

Just before noon Gandhiji invited everyone in the house to join him in prayer. He thanked the doctors who had so assiduously been looking after him and then asked Imam Abdul Kadir Bawazir to recite a prayer from the Koran. After



that he asked Andrews to sing "When I survey the Wondrous Cross." Vinoba Bhave then recited some verses from the *Upanishads*. He was followed by Balkoba singing the Gujarati *bhajan* "*Vaishnava Jana.*"

Addressing Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mohammed Ali, Shaukat Ali and Abul Kalam Azad, Gandhiji called upon them to promise him that they would, if necessary, lay down their lives for Hindu-Muslim unity. They must ensure equal freedom of worship for all. Otherwise neither Hinduism nor Islam had any meaning.

Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Azad gave the required promise to Gandhiji on behalf of the Muslims present on the occasion.

Gandhiji then broke the fast by drinking some orange juice offered to him by Dr. Ansari. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, pp.160-160(a)]

12

There had been pressure from many colleagues that Gandhiji should agree to preside over the 1924 Congress to be held at Belgaum. C. R. Das wrote to him : "The masses still feel that you alone must lead." Gandhiji had to agree. Gandhiji and the Congress leadership were in the meantime fully engaged in putting together again the fragmented political and communal unity of the country. Gandhiji was striving hard to restore the workers' faith in non-violence and communal unity. The Viceroy, however, on the recommendation of the Government of Bengal, suddenly threw a "bomb", as Gandhiji called it. On 25 October 1924, Lord Reading issued an Ordinance called the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance 1924. This placed in the hands of the local authorities sweeping powers of search, seizure, arrest without warrant and summary trial of persons suspected of anarchical crimes.



In a statement justifying the Ordinance the Governor-General asserted that a revolutionary conspiracy existed in Bengal, that the two main terrorist organizations responsible for violent crimes had been resuscitated towards the end of 1922 with new members in large numbers having been recruited, arms and ammunition including "a new and highly dangerous type of bomb" having been collected and projects of assassination of certain police officers and other persons devised. A series of outrages were mentioned, including a double murder at Kona, looting of a post office and the murder of Day. The statement went on to say that the Ordinance was directed solely to deal with these and like crimes and was in no way intended to touch or affect the interests or liberties of any citizens, whether engaged in private or public affairs.

Yet everybody knew that the purpose of the Ordinance was to suppress the Swaraj Party and the Congress in Bengal. From the dawn of 25 October, the day on which the Ordinance was promulgated, people of Calcutta saw large detachments of police patrolling the streets in the Indian quarter of the city, surrounding houses, entering them in strength and conducting searches for hours together and then taking into custody nationalists who could by no stretch of imagination be connected with any sort of crime. The raids began at 2 a.m. in the morning and lasted the whole day. Some sixty houses were raided, mainly the Congress offices, the offices of the Swaraj Party, the Satyagraha office and the houses of prominent Swarajists. Subhas Chandra Bose, executive officer of the Calcutta Corporation and right-hand man of C. R. Das, and more than 40 others including some prominent members of the Swaraj Party, were taken into custody.



The searches were ostensibly carried out to recover revolvers, bombs and explosives of other nature. What the police carried away was only books and pamphlets and documents of the Swaraj Party.

Similar raids were carried out in Howrah, Noakhali, Barisal, Dacca, Pabna, Comilla, Tarkeshwar, Hughli, Narayanganj, Chandpur, Faridpur, Chittagong and other places, with untold numbers of houses raided and Swarajists in large numbers arrested. Within the week more than 100 Swarajists had been arrested under the Ordinance. [*Ibid*, pp.160-62]

A wave of angry protests swept over India from one end to the other. Gandhiji was distressed, not at the Government's lawlessness, he said, but at "our inability to give a prompt reply." Action, he said, could only be answered with action. But the growing Hindu-Muslim discord presented an obstacle in the way of any effective action on the part of the Indians. Writing to Motilal Nehru on 30 October, he said : "We must not do anything in haste or anger. We must therefore bow before the storm." He emphasized the necessity of prosecuting vigorously the three tasks of promoting Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability and promotion of khadi. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, p.270]

Writing in *Navajivan*, of 2 November 1924, Gandhiji said : "Vehement writing, even if it is charged with truth, is no answer to violent action. It can be answered only with some form of action... we could overcome this violent action through peaceful deeds alone." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, p.280]

The matter of Government's repressive actions and India's inability to give a fitting reply to it by organizing non-violent counteraction weighed heavily on Gandhiji's mind. The question of unity was most important and urgent. if the Congress was to take up a stand against the new oppressive policies of the Government. In an article in *Navajivan* on 14 September 1924, he asked: "Is there



any programme which may unite all parties? That programme should consist of items essential for the general public.”

He elaborated the possible programme as follows :

1. The Congress should suspend four out of the five boycotts for a year, and should continue only the boycott of foreign cloth.
2. Besides the above-mentioned threefold programme [namely, khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability), the Congress should carry on the existing National Schools and, if possible, open more such schools. It should not engage itself in any other activity.
3. The Congress should neither help nor hinder the Swarajists or other parties in their public activities.
4. Members of other political bodies should be allowed to get elected to executive committees, etc., of the Congress.
5. The four-anna franchise should be abolished and every member should be made to spin for half an hour a day and to deliver 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn. All of them should wear pure khadi.

But Gandhiji was not certain that his suggestions, especially No. 5, would be acceptable to the Swarajists. What would happen then? – he asked. His answer was clear. He would not even then seek to dominate the Congress by wrestling with them. [*Ibid*, pp.141-43]

On 4 November, on urgent summons of C. R. Das Gandhiji went on a visit to Calcutta and held prolonged consultations with No-changers and Swarajists of the province. These consultations resulted in an agreement being arrived at between Gandhiji on the one hand and Swarajist leaders C. R. Das and Motilal



Nehru on the other. The agreement was announced in a joint statement signed by the three leaders on 6 November 1924. The statement *inter alia* said :

We the undersigned strongly recommend the following for adoption by all parties and eventually by the Congress at Belgaum :

The Congress should further resolve that different classes of work of the Congress may be done as may be found necessary by different sections within the Congress and should resolve that the spread of hand-spinning, hand-weaving and all the antecedent processes...and the promotion of unity between ... Hindus and Mohammedans, and the removal of untouchability by the Hindus from amongst them[selves] should be carried on by all sections within the Congress, and the work in connection with the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be carried on by the Swarajya Party on behalf of the Congress...and for such work the Swarajya Party should make its own rules and raise and administer its own funds .

...in order to popularize hand-spinning and its product khaddar, the Congress should repeal Article 7 of the Congress constitution and should substitute the following therefor :

No one shall be a member of any Congress Committee or organization who is not of the age of 18 and who does not wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar at political and Congress functions or while engaged in Congress business and does not make a contribution of 2,000 yards of evenly spun yarn per month of his or her own spinning or, in case of illness, unwillingness or any such cause, a like quantity of even yarn spun by any other person. [*Ibid*, pp.288-89]

Explaining his position to the No-changers the following day, Gandhiji said that once it was realized that Non-cooperation could not be carried on, they must



see that there was no alternative but to retreat to the point where he had arrived. Violence was so deeply embedded in the hearts of the people that it would be a crime to carry on Non-cooperation on a national scale at that time. Besides, the agreement did not involve anything that was basic, nor was it a sacrifice of any principles.

It was also wrong to suppose, Gandhiji said, that he had brought down khadi to a matter of ceremonial wear. A resolution to wear khadi was one thing and a disqualification for membership for not wearing khadi quite another. Voting was a very definite act. There must be no vagueness about the qualifications for it, nor must they be too difficult for an ordinary man to possess.

Gandhiji continued :

However, if you feel that I have sacrificed the essence, you should oppose me...vigorously.... My object today is to end chaos and bring order, to put an end to disputes and bring about harmony, to unite a lifeless people and infuse them with strength and fearlessness. If I have given rise to a party which is nurtured on blind faith alone, it is harmful to the country. [*Ibid*, pp.292-96]

Gandhiji wrote to Rajagopalachari, who had sent a scathing indictment of the agreement :

I must convert or be converted or retire. Bardoli was the boldest experiment in non-violence in one direction. The agreement is the boldest experiment in non-violence in another direction. [*Ibid*, p.324]

Gandhiji further clarified his position in an article in *Young India* of 20 November :



Many Englishmen regard it (the agreement) as an ignominious surrender to the Swarajists on my part. Many No-changers regard it as a lapse if not a betrayal. A friend says that it has caused consternation among students. Why, they ask, should they remain in National Schools if Non-cooperation is suspended ? They are the greatest sufferers and they have not been considered in the Pact at all....

Surrender on my part it undoubtedly is. It is a conscious surrender, but not, as an English paper puts it, to the party of violence. I refuse to believe that the Swaraj Party is a party of violence...

But recognition of the party as an integral part of the Congress does not mean surrender by individuals of their Non-cooperation. It means an admission that the Swaraj Party is a strong and growing wing of the Congress. And if it refuses to take a back seat without a fight and if it is necessary or even expedient to avoid a fight, their claim to a definite official recognition is irresistible. [*Ibid*, p.335]

In Gandhiji's view the repression let loose by the Government, following the promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance by the Viceroy, could only be answered by the unity of the widest sections of political opinion in the country. In a statement issued in Calcutta on 7 November he said:

Repression should result in uniting the political parties in India, because... that repression is an attack upon the Swaraj Party.... If all parties unite in expressing unequivocal disapproval of its [Government's] policy, the Government will realize that public opinion is entirely against it. [*Ibid*, p.297]



In an effort to evolve such a unity, Mohammed Ali, the Congress President, issued an appeal to a wide variety of parties and individuals to assemble for a conference in Bombay on 21 and 22 November when the All-India Congress Committee had been summoned to meet. Besides the members of the A.I.C.C. and non-official members of the Central Assembly and Provincial Councils, the parties and groups invited to send representatives were : (1) the Central Khilafat Committee, (2) the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, (3) the Hindu Mahasabha, (4) the Muslim League, (5) the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, (8) the Liberal Federation, (9) the National Convention, (10) the Arya Sarvadeshik Sabha, (11) the Arya Pradeshik Sabha, (12) the European Association, (13) the Parsee Panchayat, (14) the Anglo-Indian Association, (15) the Sikh Sudhar Sabha and (16) the Parsee Rajkiya Sabha. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.184 (iii)]

Gandhiji in a circular letter sent to various people, including Srinivasa Sastri, G. A. Natesan and T. B. Saprú, explained that the idea was to focus, if it was at all possible, every variety of opinion on the Bengal repression, which, so far as he could judge, was directed against constitutional agitation when it became inconvenient to the Government, rather than against anarchical activity. The idea further was to find out whether it was possible to bring together on the Congress platform all parties for joint work on a common constructive programme conducive to national growth, each party otherwise retaining its own individuality. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXIV, pp.304-05]

Some 400 persons responded to the appeal of the Congress President and the Conference duly met on 21 November at Muzaffarabad Hall in Bombay. It was presided over by Dinshaw Petit.



It was as representative a political gathering of Indians as could be imagined or desired. There were parliamentarians such as C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel, Srinivasa Sastri, C. Y. Chintamani, M. A. Jinnah and Annie Besant; there were legal luminaries such as Bhulabhai Desai; there were orators such as Bepin Chandra Pal, S. Satyamurti and M. R. Jayakar; there were journalists such as Mohammed Ali, Rangaswami Iyengar and K. Natarajan. The business community was represented by Dinshaw Petit, Lala Harkishen Lal, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, P. C. Sethna, Kamat, Shroff and Devji Kanji. There were, besides, Maulvis, Pandits, Jain leaders, non-Brahmin politicians and half a dozen Europeans. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, April-June, 1924, p.189]

On the first day of its deliberations the Conference considered and approved Gandhiji's proposal that a small committee be appointed, which should proceed to consider the resolution and arrive at a common draft to be presented to the Conference.

This committee, which sat under the chairmanship of Gandhiji, finalized a resolution, which was passed by the Conference on 22 November. The resolution strongly disapproved and condemned the action of the Governor-General in promulgating the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance 1924, as being a direct invasion upon individual liberty. It demanded its immediate withdrawal. The resolution further demanded the withdrawal of Regulation III of 1818, which empowered the Government to arrest and confine persons "without warrant, without trial, and without statement of reasons." The resolution recorded the conviction of the Conference "that the present political situation in India is due to denial of just rights long overdue to the people and that the speedy establishment of Swaraj is the only effective remedy therefor." [*Ibid*, p.189]



On Gandhiji's motion the Conference also set up a Unity Committee, with representatives drawn from most parties represented at the Conference. This Committee was "to consider the best way of reuniting all political parties in the Indian National Congress and to prepare a scheme of swaraj, including a solution of the Hindu-Muslim and like questions in their political aspects, and to report not later than the 31st of March 1925, the Conference to meet not later than the 30th April and the report to be published a fortnight before the Conference meets." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.341-42]

15

At the A.I.C.C., which met on the 23rd after the dispersal of the All Parties Conference, Gandhiji moved the resolution approving the Calcutta agreement. Speaking on the motion he said he had entered into the agreement with Swarajists in his individual capacity and they must assent to it only if it appealed to everybody's reason. He went on :

I cannot afford to neglect the Swarajists. I know they are a growing party. I know that they represent a very strong body of public opinion in favour of Council-entry. I know also that they possess the best intellect in the country. Without the cooperation of such a body, who want to capture the Councils, I feared I would not be able to make any headway. Besides the Swarajists there are the Liberals, the Independents, the Conventionists. They are all ranged against the no-change programme....

The No-changers believe in...the capacity of khaddar. I do believe in the capacity of khaddar.... Such is not, however, the idea of the Swarajists. Many of them have sentimental objection. That being so, I had to make a concession.... I think it is wrong that we should divide our ranks on this point.



His surrender to the Swarajists was for Gandhiji "a test of the commitment of No-changers". Their duty was "self-effacing, silent and sustained service without grumbling and without the expectation of reward." [Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Rajaji Story*, Vol.I, p.153]

The A.I.C.C. on 23 November passed the resolution giving approval to the Pact by an overwhelming majority, only George Joseph and T. R. Krishnaswami Iyer voting against it.

The way was now clear for the ratification of the Pact by the forthcoming Congress scheduled to be held in Belgaum under Gandhiji's presidentship.



CHAPTER XXII: BELGAUM CONGRESS AND AFTER

1

The thirty-ninth session of the Indian National Congress opened in Belgaum on 26 December 1924 under the presidentship of Gandhiji. The most important political question on the agenda of the Congress was of course the ratification of the agreement arrived at between Gandhiji and the Swarajists in Calcutta in November.

The crux of the problem, as Gandhiji put it, was that –

a gulf seems to be yawning between educated India and myself with some notable exceptions, and, save for a few young educated Indians of little fame, the intellect of the country seems to be ranged against my ways of thought and action and yet, as I seem to be popular with the masses, and a lover of the country as themselves, they want me to direct the Congress at this critical juncture in the history of the country.

Explaining his position, Gandhiji went on:

Though I remain a confirmed Non-cooperator and civil resister, I recognize that there is no atmosphere for Non-cooperation or civil disobedience on a national scale. My attempt will therefore be in the direction of bringing all parties together without distinction of race or colour or creed on the ground of mutual toleration and thus to demonstrate, if possible, that the Congress Non-cooperation was not conceived in or based on hate or malice. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.356-57]

Gandhiji's surrender to the Swarajists on the question of khadi franchise had made the position of the No-changers "truly pathetic". There was also "an uproar among non-cooperating students" who had withdrawn from Government



schools. Why should they have been made to suffer, they asked. Gandhiji's counsel to these students was:

Non-cooperation was suspended in order that those who have not realized its value might have an opportunity to abandon it, and the stain or stigma attached to such abandonment might be removed. We do not benefit from a sacrifice which we find onerous and mistaken. The Congress will remove its demand for such sacrifice and enable such students to freely attend Government schools. [*Ibid*, p.445]

Before the Congress opened Gandhiji had a meeting with the No-changers among the delegates and again assured them that so far as he was concerned, the Councils were not for him an alternative. He could think of no programme more potent than the charkha, and appealed to those who would adopt the spinning franchise to work for it earnestly throughout the year. He asked for lists to be prepared of those who would be willing to give the required 24,000 yards of yarn at the year's end without fail, and who would be ready to die for the country if necessary. [*Ibid*, pp.448-49]

In the Subjects Committee, which began its meetings from 23 December, Vithalbhai Patel, an ardent Pro-changer, asked Gandhiji not to press for the adoption of the spinning franchise. Ninety per cent Congressmen, he assured Gandhiji, would be opposed to any change in the franchise. Gandhiji made it clear that he would not want any change effected only to please him. [*Ibid*, pp.451-52]

At another meeting of the Subjects Committee on 25 December L. B. Bhopatkar brought forward an amendment to the khadi clause in the agreement. The amendment was to the effect that when adults did not undertake to spin and wear khaddar on all occasions, it was unfair to expect children to do so. That hurt Gandhiji. He clarified that the minimum requirement that khadi be worn on all



political and ceremonial occasions did not mean that they should discard khadi the moment they finished the Congress business at Belgaum. It was expected that all must wear khadi on all occasions. [*Ibid*, pp.454-55]

In his opening speech at the Congress on 26 December Gandhiji, adverting to the pact with the Swarajists, said:

A revolutionary change is being proposed before the nation, a change, I think, ... as revolutionary as the change embarked upon by the nation ... in 1920 at the Special Session at Calcutta. I even admit...that the change that I have proposed and placed before the nation is possibly more revolutionary still.... I make bold to say that it is calculated to bring you within measurable distance of swaraj. [*Ibid*, p.468]

2

In his presidential address Gandhiji reviewed the policy of the Congress as it had evolved, especially since 1920. From that year onwards, he said, the Congress had ceased to function by means of resolutions addressed to the Government for redress of grievances. It did so because it had ceased to believe in the beneficial character of the Government. The Government's breach of faith with the Mussalmans over Khilafat and then the Rowlatt Act and O'Dwyerism culminating in the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh had opened the eyes of the people to the true nature of the system.

It was realized that the system depended for its existence upon cooperation of the people, whether conscious or unconscious, voluntary or forced. With a view, therefore, to mending or ending the system it was decided to boycott Government titles, law-courts, educational institutions, legislative bodies and foreign cloth. Though not a single boycott had been wholly successful, the boycotts did have the effect of diminishing the prestige of the Government.



Non-violent Non-cooperation, though it had made the people conscious of their power, had also unfortunately resulted in an eruption of intolerance against those who did not non-cooperate. Gandhiji continued:

... We are face to face with a situation that compels us to cry halt. For whilst individuals hold firmly to their belief in Non-cooperation, the majority of those who are immediately concerned have practically lost faith in it, with the exception of boycott of foreign cloth. Scores of lawyers have resumed practice. Some even regret having ever given it up. Many who had given up Councils have returned to them and the number of those who believe in Council-entry is on the increase. Hundreds of boys and girls who gave up Government schools and colleges have repented of their action and have returned to them. I hear that Government schools and colleges can hardly cope with the demand for admission. In these circumstances these boycotts cannot be worked as part of the national programme, unless the Congress is prepared to do without the classes directly affected. But I hold it to be just as impracticable to keep these classes out of the Congress as it would be now to keep the Non-cooperators out.... What is applicable to Hindu-Muslim unity is, I feel, applicable to the unity among different political groups. We must tolerate each other and trust to time to convert the one or the other to the opposite belief. We must go further. We must plead with the Liberals and others who have seceded to rejoin the Congress....

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

Although all other boycotts had been suspended, boycott of foreign cloth had been retained in the Pact, Gandhiji said. This was necessary to make the



masses of India self-sufficient in cloth and to end the immoral Lancashire trade, raised and sustained on the ruin of millions of India's peasants. The many proved immoral acts of Britain, Gandhiji asserted, were traceable to this one immoral traffic and the wanton and wicked destruction by the British "of the one cottage industry of India that kept the wolf from the doors of thousands of homes scattered over a surface 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad."

Gandhiji expressed his happiness that Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das had accepted the spinning franchise on behalf of the Swaraj Party.

Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji said, was not less important than the spinning-wheel. The necessity of it for swaraj was almost universally accepted. He shared Maulana Shaukat Ali's "robust optimism" that the prevailing Hindu-Muslim tension in the country was a mere temporary distemper. The Khilafat movement had brought about an awakening among the slumbering masses of India. It had given a new consciousness to the classes as well as the masses. Now that the Khilafat movement had lost its charm of novelty, interested persons had started trading upon the religious bigotry or selfishness of both the communities. The communal feuds during the preceding two years were a result of it. Religion had been travestied. Trifles had been dignified by the name of religious tenets, which, the fanatics claimed, must be observed at any cost. Economic and political causes had been brought into play for the sake of fomenting trouble. The culminating point was reached in the Kohat riots. The Hindus could live in the midst of Mussalmans, who were in an overwhelming majority in that region, only if the latter would undertake to treat them as friends and equals. A Government could only give protection against thieves and robbers. No Government could give protection against a wholesale boycott of one community by another.



The Unity Conference of Delhi, Gandhiji said, had paved the way for a settlement. The Committee of the All Parties Conference set up at Bombay was expected to find a workable and just solution of the problem. The goal, of course, must be the removal, at the earliest possible moment, of communal and sectional representation and acceptance of a common electorate which would elect representatives on the sole ground of merit. This principle must be made to apply to the services, too. But till that time came, minorities who suspected the motives of the majorities must be allowed to have their way, he advised. The majority must set the example of self-sacrifice. [*Ibid*, pp.477-78]

Gandhiji proposed, for the consideration of the Committee appointed by the All-Parties Conference at Bombay, a Swaraj Scheme comprising the following:

1. Manual work alone as qualification for franchise and not property or status or literary ability;
2. Reduction of military expenditure;
3. Judicial reform, with the final court of appeal to be not in London but in Delhi. The role of arbitration and the Panchayats to be increased. Reduction in the number of intermediate courts. Abolition of Case Law;
4. Revenues from intoxicating drinks and drugs to be abolished;
5. Reduction of salaries in civil and military services to make them compatible with the general condition of the country;
6. Redistribution of provinces on linguistic basis;
7. Monopolies given to foreigners to be examined and full guarantees to be given to all vested rights justly acquired;
8. Guarantee of status to Indian Princes, subject to right of asylum to subjects of the Princes;



9. Repeal of all arbitrary powers;

10. The highest post to be open to all who may be qualified. Examinations for civil and military services to be held in India;

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

12. Official language of a province to be the vernacular of that province; of the Privy Council, the final court of appeal, to be Hindustani written in Devanagari or Persian script. The language of the Central Government to be Hindustani; the language of international diplomacy to be English. [*Ibid*, pp.480-81]

Coming to the Bengal Ordinance and the repression let loose by the British rulers following its proclamation, Gandhiji said he had no hesitation in stating that it was directed not so much against revolutionary crime as against the Swaraj Party. The speeches of the Viceroy and the Governor of Bengal justifying the Ordinance confirmed his view. The situation described by them had not been proved to exist. Assuming that it did exist, the remedy was worse than the disease. Further, even if extraordinary powers were considered necessary, they should have been taken through the legislatures.

Of course the revolutionaries who believed in the cult of violence were only retarding India's progress. The rulers were better armed and better organized than the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries would do better to devote their lives to the cause of non-violence.

Gandhiji regarded the repression as a chronic symptom of a chronic disease. The formula, he said, was European dominance and Asiatic subjection. In Malaya, Mauritius, Kenya, South Africa, Fiji, everywhere it was the same story.



Repression was nothing new for India. Its periodic eruption in some shape or other, in some province or other, must be considered as a normal condition for the country till it came into its own.

The need was for the Congress to forge its sanctions. In order to do so unity was essential – unity between Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and unity between Swarajists, No-changers, Liberals, Home Rulers, Muslim Leaguers and others. [*Ibid*, pp.486-89]

3

The President called on C. R. Das to move the resolution on the Calcutta Pact. The resolution recorded the endorsement of the Pact by the Congress, hoped that the unity between the two wings of the Congress would enable persons belonging to other parties also to join the Congress and welcomed the introduction of hand-spinning in the franchise. The resolution went on to say:

In view of the foregoing the Congress expects every Indian man and woman to discard all foreign cloth and to use and wear handspun and handwoven khaddar to the exclusion of all other cloth....

The Congress appeals to the merchants engaged in the foreign cloth and yarn trade to appreciate the interests of the nation and discontinue further importation of foreign cloth and help the national cottage industry by dealing in khaddar....

Part B of the resolution repealed Articles VII of the Constitution of the Congress dealing with franchise and qualifications for members of Committees of the Congress, and laid down in its place the following qualifications:

...that no one shall be a member of any Congress committee or organization who does not wear handspun and handwoven khaddar at



political and Congress functions or while engaged in Congress business, and does not make a contribution of 24,000 yards of evenly spun yarn per year of his or her own spinning, or in case of illness, unwillingness, or any such cause, the same quantity of yarn spun by any other person....

No person shall be entitled to vote at the election of representatives or delegates, or any committee or sub-committee... if he has not contributed the yarn subscription or the instalments due....

Every Provincial Congress Committee shall send to the General Secretary, All-India Congress Committee, from month to month returns of membership and of the yarn received by it in virtue of this article.... [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-Dec., 1924, pp.431-33]

C. R. Das, speaking on the resolution, said it was one by which the two parts of the Congress would be united. Neither of the parties could say that the other party was outside the Congress. It was the answer of the Congress to the challenge of the bureaucracy which had passed the Bengal Ordinance in the hope that the Congress, divided against itself, would not be able to face up to it.

C . R. Das admitted that the Councils programme would not bring swaraj to the country, but would certainly remove an obstruction in the way of swaraj. He laid emphasis on the second part of the resolution, which was concerned with the boycott of foreign cloth. It was a programme which not only would demolish the claim of the bureaucracy that the Congress was a divided house, but also build up national life. The Swaraj Party had never been opposed to spinning. It had only wanted to include other activities also.

Maulana Mohammed Ali seconded the resolution. The No-changers, he advised, without minding what the Swarajists were doing, should keep their goal, namely the boycott of foreign cloth, in view, and work for its attainment before



the end of the year 1925. Everybody, instead of shouting '*Gandhiji ki Jai*', should shout '*Khaddar ki Jai*.'

Hasrat Mohani opposed the resolution. He argued that the suspension of Non-cooperation once would mean suspension of Non-cooperation for ever. The franchise that was proposed would not be of any help.

Maulana Azad Sobhani, Swami Govindanand and some others also opposed the resolution, while Abhyankar and N. C. Kelkar lent it their support.

Gandhiji then put the resolution to vote. It was carried by an overwhelming majority, only about 30 persons voting against it. [*Ibid*, pp.417-21]

The resolution on Hindu-Muslim tension deplored the riots that had taken place in Kohat, resulting in loss of life and destruction of property, including temples and gurdwaras, and asserted that the local authority had failed to perform its primary duty of protecting life and property. The Congress further deplored the enforced exodus of the Hindu population from Kohat and strongly urged the Mussalmans of Kohat to assure their Hindu brethren of full protection of their lives and property and to invite them to return as their honoured friends and neighbours. The Congress advised the Hindu refugees not to return to Kohat except upon an honourable invitation from the Kohat Mussalmans.

The Congress expressed its heart-felt sympathy for the sufferers in the Gulbarga riots and condemned the desecration of the places of worship in that town. [*Ibid*, p.434]

The resolution on untouchability, while expressing satisfaction at the progress in Hindu opinion regarding the removal of untouchability, called upon Hindu members of Provincial Congress Committees to devote greater attention to the service of untouchables. The Congress congratulated the Vykom



Satyagrahis on the non-violence, patience, courage and endurance demonstrated by them, and called upon the State authorities of Travancore to recognize the justice of the Satyagrahis' claim and grant early relief. [*Ibid*, p.435]

In his concluding speech Gandhiji once again appealed to the Swarajists and No-changers to overcome their mutual animosity. He said:

I ask you to bury the hatchet. Bury the jealousies underground and cremate them wherever you like. But take away with you the sacred resolution that you have passed and say, "Let the heavens fall, but the bond that binds us today, the tie that has bound the Swarajists and No-changers, shall never snap." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, p.510]

On the conclusion of the Congress Gandhiji, C. R . Das and Motilal Nehru met to consider the formation of the Working Committee. They decided on the following names: Mahatma Gandhi, President, Revashankar Jhaveri, Jamnalal Bajaj, Jawaharlal Nehru, Shuaib Qureshi, B. F. Bharucha – all office-bearers. The elected members were C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, N. C. Kelkar, Mohammed Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Mangel Singh, M. S. Aney and Varadarajulu Naidu. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-Dec., 1924, pp.440]

The omission of No-changers, such as C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankerlal Banker was by way of a concession to the Swarajists. The No-changers grumbled that Gandhiji was surrendering too much to the Pro-changers. Gandhiji wrote:

I have been charged with having yielded everything to the Swarajists. If I have done so, I pride myself on the fact. Full surrender must be full. The fact, however, is that no presure whatsoever was put upon me to withdraw a single No-changer's name. I deliberately withdrew C. Rajagopalachari's, Vallabhbhai's and Shankerlal Banker's names. It was a



matter of honour to have Sarojini Devi and Sardar Mangal Singh on the Committee. Mr. Kelkar was anxious to retire in favour of Mr. Aney. I would not listen to it. And I was anxious to have Mr. Aney as soon as his name was mentioned. Let the reader rest assured that the whole selection was made in a spirit of perfect comradeship. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, p.543]

4

Taking advantage of the presence of Gandhiji and other leaders of the Congress at Belgaum, various other bodies decided to have their conferences at Belgaum during the Congress week. There were thus an Untouchability Conference, a Cow-Protection Conference and an All-India States Peoples' Conference, held respectively on 27, 28 and 30 December. Gandhiji spoke at all the three and also presided at the Cow-Protection Conference.

In his presidential address at the last mentioned gathering Gandhiji said the question of cow-protection was not less momentous than that of swaraj. Indeed swaraj would be devoid of any meaning until a way had been found of saving the cow. In popular parlance a Hindu was defined as one who believed in cow-protection and had reverence for the cow. It was held by some scholars that in the Vedic times Hindus sacrificed the cow. This interpretation of Vedic texts, Gandhiji held, could not be correct.

While cow-protection remained the supreme duty of the Hindus, Gandhiji was unable to endorse some of the methods adopted for the purpose. He had indeed written in *Hind Swaraj* that cow-protection societies were in fact so many cow-killing societies. That conviction of his had grown stronger since his return to India.

Hindus must disabuse their minds of the notion that they had to make Christians and Mussalmans to desist from cow-killing. Cow-protection did not



consist in making non-Hindus refrain from beef-eating and cow-slaughter. Even in swaraj it would be, for the Hindu majority, unwise and improper to coerce by legislation a Mussalman minority into submission to statutory prohibition of cow-slaughter.

Hindus must put their own house in order. The goading of bullocks drawing carts and cruel methods employed in milking cows in the dairies, such as blowing, were most loathsome. Yet it was the Hindus who resorted to such practices.

Cow-slaughter and man-slaughter, Gandhiji declared, were the two sides of the same coin and the remedy for both was identical, i.e., to develop the ahimsa principle and endeavour to win over one's opponent by love. [*Ibid*, pp.515-22]

There were also conferences of national teachers and students at Belgaum. [*Ibid*, pp.545-46]. Gandhiji was not happy at the way so many different conferences had been packed into the Congress week. He felt that it did not serve the national purpose. In his view only such conferences were permissible alongside the Congress as were calculated to aid and strengthen the Congress. As it was, these conferences made unnecessary calls upon the leaders' time. [*Ibid*, p.527]

5

Immediately after the conclusion of the Belgaum Congress Gandhiji proceeded on a hectic tour, preaching the gospel of khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability and national education.

Gandhiji did not believe that the relaxation of the condition of self-spinning in the matter of yarn franchise would in any way be detrimental to khadi work. As he put it:



Now the Congress expects everyone to spin 2,000 yards per month or to get that quantity spun for him by another. Thus the workers have to keep in continuous touch with the spinners. Therein lies in my opinion the strength of the franchise. It gives the people political education of a high type. [*Ibid*, p.529]

Of the two groups of Congressmen who had accepted the yarn franchise, "the willing" and "the unwilling," while the former would be spinning themselves, the latter, too, had accepted the necessity of spinning as such, though not necessarily on their own part. [*Ibid*, p.538]

Throughout January and February Gandhiji remained on the move, going round in Gujarat and Kathiawar and paid short visits to Delhi and the Punjab. In Kathiawar he emphasized the need for spinning and eradication of untouchability and opened several National Schools and hostels. He attended numerous conferences, too. In the second week of January alone he attended the Petlad District Farmers' Conference at Sojitra, the Bharatiya Kshtriya Conference, the Ladies' Conference and the Untouchables' Conference at the same place and a Kaliparaj (an appellation for the Adivasis who had to earn their livelihood through manual labour) Conference at Vedchhi near Bardoli. At all these conferences khaddar was much in evidence. At the Kaliparaj Conference Gandhiji induced the audience to take a number of vows: one was about eschewing drink, which was the curse of these people, another was about khaddar and a third about discarding stone ornaments worn by their womenfolk. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVI, pp.24-27]

Answering a question to what extent he was committed to the programme and methods of the Swaraj Party Gandhiji said:

I am personally committed neither to the programme nor to the methods of the Swaraj Party. As a Congressman I recognize its undoubted



influence in the country and therefore its right to represent the Congress – a right which it now enjoys by arrangement but which it otherwise might have secured by a party vote. [*Ibid*, p.10]

The bringing about of unity between the two warring factions, Swarajists and No-changers, did much to re-establish the authenticity of the Congress in the eyes of the people. But Gandhiji had set his heart on enlarging the Congress to include different shades of political opinion in the country. Unity at all levels, he said again and again, was the need of the hour.

6

The All-Parties Conference held in Bombay in November 1924 had been an effort in the direction of unity at all levels. The Conference had not produced any concrete result. But it had set up a committee on 23 January 1925. This committee met in Delhi on 23 January 1925 under the presidentship of Gandhiji.

Among those present were Motilal Nehru, M. A. Jinnah, the Ali brothers, Sir Mohammed Shafi, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Lady Emily Lutyens, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sardar Mangal Singh, Dr. S. K. Datta, Ramaswamy Mudaliar, Lala Sukhbir Singh, R. P. Parandikar, Babu Bhagavandas, Srinivasa Iyengar, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Swami Shraddhanand, Sir Abdul Qayum, C. Y. Chintamani, Rangaswami Iyengar, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, H. N. Kunzru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Lala Harkishen Lal, M. R. Jayakar, Maulana Azad, Dr. Ansari, V. J. Patel, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Bepin Chandra Pal and Shanmugum Chetty.

Gandhiji explained that the purpose of the Conference was to explore avenues for communal and political unity and formulate a Swaraj scheme. He suggested the appointment of a sub-committee to work out the possible lines of agreement.



There was resistance from all sides to the appeal for unity under the umbrella of the Congress. The Liberal Party in a resolution said it would rejoin the Congress only if (1) the object of the Congress was changed to Dominion Self-Government to be obtained by constitutional methods, (2) Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience were definitely abandoned as also the yarn franchise and (3) the Swaraj Party were not constituted the only accredited representatives of the Congress in Legislatures.

Gandhiji informed the Conference that the suggestions from other political bodies were also along similar lines.

The Conference appointed a sub-committee as suggested by Gandhiji (a) to frame such recommendations as would enable all parties to join the Congress; (b) to frame a scheme for the representation of all the communities, races and sub-divisions on the legislative and other elective bodies under Swaraj; and (c) to frame a Swaraj scheme that would meet the needs of the country.

Gandhiji said that if the meeting could arrive at a satisfactory, real and honourable solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem, the Brahmin-non-Brahmin problem, and the like, they would have made a very substantial advance towards Swaraj. If the meeting could find a scheme which would commend itself to all parties, it would constitute a very big step towards swaraj. If the representatives present at the meeting could see eye to eye on these main questions, then there would be no difficulty in all parties uniting on the Congress platform and making a unanimous demand in the name of the nation.

M. A. Jinnah, speaking for the Muslims pleaded for the retention of separate electorate as provided in the Lucknow Pact. That was necessary, he said, because the large bulk of both the communities had no real confidence in each other. He argued that while the increased representation for the Muslims in



provinces where they were in a minority, should be retained, their representation in Bengal and the Punjab, where they enjoyed majorities, should be increased. Thus in Bombay a Muslim population of 28 per cent had been given 33 per cent representation; in the U.P., where the Muslims were 14 per cent, they had got 30 per cent representation; in the C.P. and Madras, 7 per cent Muslims had got 15 per cent representation. In Bengal and the Punjab, however, where the Muslims formed 56 per cent and 54 per cent of the populations, their representation was 40 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. Muslims, Jinnah said, now claimed that in these two last named provinces Muslims should not be reduced to minorities and in the other provinces the safeguard to them should be retained as in the Lucknow Pact. This was a demand that could scarcely be called reasonable.

Lala Lajpat Rai called the Lucknow Pact a great blunder. He himself had not been present in Lucknow when the Pact was negotiated. He described communal representation as negation of nationalism and as practically dividing the country into water-tight compartments. "Let us not try to divide the loaves and fishes," he said, "but try to evolve a scheme which would further the interest of Swaraj."

Mrs. Annie Besant suggested that a separate sub-committee on Hindu-Muslim unity should be formed, and this was agreed to. This sub-committee was headed by Gandhiji. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-June, 1925, pp.65-73]

The sub-committee met in Delhi on 1 March, 1925, only to adjourn *sine die* because, according to a statement issued by Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru, of the 53 members of the sub-committee only 14 could attend the meeting, and "there was moreover no material for coming to any definite conclusions." Gandhiji remarked that it had become impossible in the prevailing conditions of suspicion to frame any scheme that could be called a united scheme. [*Ibid*, p.77]



In a statement to the press on 5 March 1925 Gandhiji said:

Unity is inevitable. It will take longer than I had expected. The estrangement is undoubtedly growing.... What can one do with those who want to be ruled? The Hindu-Muslim problem is therefore just now an insoluble puzzle. I propose to keep out of it, holding myself available whenever wanted.... Meanwhile in the spinning-wheel and untouchability, I have more than enough to occupy my time and that of those who think like me. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVI, pp.233-34]

7

Gandhiji presided at the Kathiawar Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on 8-9 January 1925. It was an important engagement.

In his presidential address at the Conference Gandhiji dwelt at length on the peculiar problems of Indian States in general and the Kathiawar States in particular and the policy of the Congress *vis-à-vis* the States and their subjects. That policy, he explained, must be one of non-interference, if only because any interference by those who were fighting for their own freedom must be ineffective.

Of course the people of British India and those of Indian States were one and so were the subjects of different States. The pressure of circumstances must, therefore, lead to the unification of policies of the various States in spite of separate jurisdictions.

Gandhiji pointed out that the condition of Indian States was pitiable, for the Princes did not enjoy any real power. Power to inflict capital punishment could not be described as real power, which consisted in the ability of the Princes to protect their subjects.



There were many complaints against the Princes, Gandhiji added, one most frequently heard being that they were too fond of going on pleasure trips to Europe. He deplored the practice and reminded the Princes that no State or organization which was not popular or beneficial to the people could continue to exist. Even King George could not leave England without the consent of his ministers. The lavish expenditure incurred on their European trips was wholly indefensible.

There was, further, a tendency among the Princes to levy from their subjects taxation which was beyond their capacity to pay. Gandhiji was pained to observe that our ancient tradition, namely, that revenue was intended only for popular welfare, had been receiving but scant attention. He appealed to the Princes to encourage the wearing of khaddar by their subjects. They could themselves set an example and their ladies could take up spinning. The Princes, he said, could also do much to ameliorate the condition of the depressed classes in their States and work to eradicate untouchability.

For the most part people of the States were themselves responsible for the defects in the States, Gandhiji added. If public opinion was opposed to a particular action on the part of the Princes, it would be impossible for the latter to carry it out. It was the duty of the subjects to non-cooperate with unpopular measures, just as it was the duty of a son to non-cooperate with any unjust action of his father. Of course, non-cooperation to be pure must be charged with tolerance and self-suffering. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.550-64]

Earlier, in 1924, Gandhiji had done some plain-speaking to the Arya Samajists and roused them to wrath. Now in 1925, he gave expression to his



opinion on a practice considered Islamic and displeased quite a few conservatives among Mussalmans.

In a note in *Young India* of 26 February 1925, Gandhiji mentioned having received, in his capacity as President of the Congress, a telegram regarding the stoning to death in Afghanistan of two members of the Ahmediya sect. He wrote:

I understand that the stoning method is enjoined in the Koran only in certain circumstances, which do not cover the cases under observation. But as a human being living in the fear of God, I should question the morality of the method under any circumstances whatsoever. Whatever may have been necessary or permissible during the Prophet's lifetime and in that age, this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran. Every formula of religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVI, p.202]

Gandhiji could not have imagined, when he penned the above comment, that in doing so he would be stirring up a hornets' nest. Angry letters followed thick and fast. Zafar Ali Khan of the Punjab Khilafat Committee in amazement and pain wrote to Gandhiji that "by challenging the right of the Koran to regulate the life of its followers in its own way, you have shaken the belief of millions of your Muslim admirers in your capacity to lead them." [*Ibid*, pp.225-26]

Dr. Mohammed Ali, the president of the Ahmediya Anjuman, charged that Gandhiji was being unfair to Islam, as in truth "the Koran enjoins no such punishment as stoning for any offence whatever." [*Ibid*, p.283]



Some other correspondents, such as Maulana M. Safdar and Khwaja Kamaluddin, were also of the view that the punishment of stoning to death was not prescribed in the Koran. [*Ibid*, pp.413-14]

Answering critics such as Maulana Zafar Ali, Gandhiji said it was they who had diminished the prestige of Islam by their defence of an indefensible practice. No amount of casuistry could defend the penalty of stoning to death in any event, or that of death, whether by stoning or otherwise, for apostasy. [*Ibid*, p.415]

9

In Kohat negotiations between the representatives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs for a reconciliation had continued throughout December and as a result, under official prodding, an agreement was signed on 12 January 1925. The terms were as follows:

1. That all criminal cases connected with the Kohat disturbances of September 1924 be dropped and given up, and no criminal cases of any sort be put forward in the guise of civil suits against one another, either individually or as a community;
2. That the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims will raise no objection and put no obstacles in the way of restoration and reconstruction of their respective places of worship which existed before the disturbances;
3. That the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs will give one another full and genuine assistance in restoring to its owner any property seen and clearly identified by the owner to be his, and for which he can offer clear and legitimate proof;
4. That the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs sincerely assure one another that there will be no organized boycott due to the disturbances on either



side in the Kohat city or its suburbs, and that every effort will be made to maintain friendly relations with one another.

Those arrested in connection with the disturbances, with the exception of Jiwan Das, the publisher of the alleged offending pamphlet, were released on bail. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-June, 1925, p.28]

Meanwhile the Congress session at Belgaum and the Muslim League session at Bombay had passed resolutions on the riots that were wholly contradictory in tenor.

The Congress resolution, passed on 27 December 1924, said:

... The Congress deplores the riots that recently took place in Kohat resulting in loss of life and destruction of property including temples and gurdwaras, and is of opinion that the local authority failed to perform its primary duty of protection of life and property. The Congress further deplores the enforced exodus of the Hindu population from Kohat and strongly urges the Mussalmans of Kohat to assure their Hindu brethren of full protection of their lives and property and to invite them to return as their honoured friends and neighbours.... The Congress advises the public, whether Hindu or Mussalman, not to accept the finding of the Government of India as also of others on the Kohat tragedy and to suspend judgment till the board appointed by the Unity Conference or some other equally representative body has enquired into the unfortunate event and come to a decision upon it. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1924, p.434]

The session of the All-India Muslim League, held in Bombay on 30-31 December 1924 had before it a resolution moved by Zafar Ali Khan, but actually drafted by Mohammed Ali as an amendment to another resolution that originally stood in the name of Zafar Ali Khan.



The resolution as now moved read:

The All-India Muslim League... feels it to be its duty to place on record that the sufferings of the Kohat Hindus were not unprovoked, but that on the contrary the facts brought to light make it clear that gross provocation was offered to the religious sentiments of the Mussalmans and Hindus were the first to resort to violence....

The Muslim League is not at present in a position to form judgment as regards details of the allegations published by the Government or by the members of the two communities concerned and asks the country also to suspend its judgment until a committee on which Mussalmans as well as Hindus are adequately represented, has enquired into the whole affair and has reported its findings.

The League...trusts that, while the Hindus in future will avoid provoking the Mussalmans, the latter will refrain from resorting to violence....

The resolution as originally intended by Zafar Ali Khan read:

That the League deplores the Kohat tragedy and sympathises with the sufferers, both Hindus and Mussalmans, and while placing on record its firm conviction that Hindus started the riots in the first instance, appeals to both the communities to forget the past and to resume their old peaceful relations. The League hopes that the Mussalmans of Kohat, being the predominant element in the population of the town, will receive their Hindu neighbours with open arms.

Zafar Ali Khan dropped the resolution in favour of Mohammed Ali's amendment, which now became the main resolution.



Jinnah objected that the resolution was illogical inasmuch as it expressed judgment in certain matters after asking the people to suspend judgment. Shaukat Ali defended his brother's draft. The resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, with only Jinnah and a few others voting against it. [*Ibid*, pp.481-82]

Gandhiji was pained. The following day, i.e ., on 1 January 1925, he wrote to Mohammed Ali:

Never do anything in a hurry. The resolution of Zafar Ali Khan is really better than yours. You have meant well but you have done badly. Your resolution reads as if Hindus richly deserved what they got. You state as facts that provocation was from Hindus, that violence too was commenced by them. You state that... the Hindus were not the only ones to suffer, meaning thereby that both suffered almost equally or, if not equally, certainly not so much as to call for any special mention....

... You have erred grievously in that you have made no mention of the destruction of temples. How I wish you had remained silent. I have read the resolution again and again and the more I read it the more I dislike it. Yet you must hold on to it if you don't feel that it is wrong. What I want to do is to act on your heart and thereby on your head. I am not going to desert you whilst I have faith in you. The resolution is a revelation of the working of your mind. However crude the language, it shows your belief. I must therefore put forth greater effort still and see if I cannot bring you to a correcter perspective... [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.V, pp.11-12]

Gandhiji had been eager to visit Kohat personally to enquire into the disturbances and create a climate for communal concord. He had, as eady as in



October 1924, sought the Viceroy's permission to visit that town. But Lord Reading had refused it, saying it would be "most unwise and undesirable". [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXX, pp.238, 261 and 266-67]

Gandhiji, therefore, decided to go to Rawalpindi, the nearest town, to which the Hindu refugees from Kohat had fled. Lala Lajpat Rai and many others had been pressing him for months to pay a visit to Rawalpindi. Early in February 1925, therefore, Gandhiji proceeded to Rawalpindi, along with Shaukat Ali. Leaving Delhi on 3 February, he reached Rawalpindi on 4 February. He was accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Dr. Paras Ram and Jairamdas Doulatram.

The Muslim Working Committee at Kohat refused to send its representatives to assist in the enquiry. But two of its members, Kamal Jilane and Ahmed Gul, who were also members of the Khilafat Committee, did go to Rawalpindi and gave evidence on 6 February. Gandhiji, referring to his examination of the two witnesses, later remarked that it had been the most valuable work he had done during the year. "I made such a closely searching cross-examination after many long years," he is reported to have said. [Mahadev Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*, Vol.V, pp.261 and 263]

According to the testimony of these two Muslim witnesses, although the immediate provocation for the riots was offered by the pamphlet published and distributed by Jiwan Das of the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, which offended Muslim sentiment, and the failure of the authorities to prosecute Jiwan Das although they had promised to do so, in reality the causes of the flare-up went much deeper.

There were, firstly, large-scale conversions of Hindus methodically going on. The number converted each year being 100 to 150 according to one witness and 40 according to the other. Every Friday in every mosque a certain number of conversions took place. Those converted included even married Hindu women.



And once converted to Islam, they could not be allowed to go back to their husbands. It was a shocking revelation. Gandhiji was distressed to see that Shaukat Ali was not shocked. When asked for his view in the matter, Shaukat Ali was evasive and said he was not acquainted with *Hadis* – the book that dealt with Islamic practice – since it was written in Arabic and he had, therefore, to accept the word of those who could read it. The enormity of the wrong of such conversions obviously did not strike him. [*Ibid*, pp.262-63]

Reverting to the Kohat situation after his return from Rawalpindi, Gandhiji again expressed dismay over the number of conversions in Kohat – up to 150 every year – "alarming in a province where the Hindu population is hardly 15,000." Giving his view of the causes of the riot, Gandhiji said:

The Hindus woke up to this sad fact. The Muslims could not tolerate this awakening and, to the party that was on the look-out for vengeance, that pamphlet provided a handy opportunity. Were the pamphlet the only reason, they would have either got the man imprisoned, or slashed to pieces either him or even all others connected with the pamphlet. But here the whole Hindu community was subjected to atrocities instead. The Muslims I questioned narrated to me everything about their conversion activity in a casual manner, as if it were a matter of no moment.... It passes my endurance when people are made Muslims by bribery or coercion as was the case there. [*Ibid*, pp.364-65]

The two leaders, Gandhiji and Shaukat Ali, were thus unable to agree on a common report on the tragedy. Their separate statements – Gandhiji's dated 19 March but actually written on 9 February – were published in *Young India* of 26 March 1925.



Gandhiji's conclusion was that though the causes of the riots were many, among the more immediate was the Muslim resentment over the Hindus' protest against forcible conversions to Islam of men and married women, as also the desire of the Mussalman traders of Kohat to oust the Hindus from that city.

In his statement Gandhiji laid bare the extent of the damage caused to property and places of worship of Hindus and Sikhs and severely castigated the Government for its failures and acts of omission and commission. The authorities, he maintained, had betrayed callous indifference, incompetence and weakness. They had criminally disregarded the warnings given by the Hindus many days earlier and repeated on 9 September and had failed to afford them protection. They had not provided food to the refugees after their removal and left them to their own devices. It was gross betrayal of duty on their part not to have appointed an impartial committee to enquire into the riots.

Gandhiji criticised the compromise arrived at under official prodding as intrinsically bad. It made no provision for restoration of lost or damaged property. He repeated his appeal to the Muslims of Kohat to invite Hindu refugees back to Kohat and give them assurances or protection and help in rebuilding their temples and gurdwaras. He was emphatic that if both parties wanted Government intervention, his services would be of no use. He would take no part in negotiations with the Government. Both the communities, he said, needed to protect themselves from the Government, whose policy it was to set the one against the other. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXV, pp.337-44]

Shaukat Ali, in his statement, denied that there had been any forced conversions of Hindus or that the Muslims had been the aggressors on 9 September. He, however unwillingly, admitted that the Muslims resented the prosperity of the Hindus and trade jealousies too played a part, when he ascribed



the ill feelings that marked Hindu-Muslim relations in the Frontier Province to the fact that Hindus were better educated and had amassed fortunes and at times showed this aggressively. Since the Hindus had several barristers and pleaders amongst them, he asserted, they had prepared their case well, whereas the Muslim case had gone by default.

Shaukat Ali agreed with Gandhiji on the official responsibility for the riots. He argued that steps would have to be taken to better the lot of the Frontier Muslims to ensure lasting peace between the communities. "In Kohat, Peshawar and in the whole of the Frontier Province," he argued, "municipalities had nominated members, and the 97 per cent Muslim population has the same representation as the 3 per cent Hindus, i.e., 50 per cent of each are nominated by the Government."

Shaukat Ali pleaded that the outrage in Kohat was not a one-sided affair, both the communities were equally to blame. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-June, 1925, pp.102-06]. He refused to admit that Muslims had been the aggressors. This hurt Gandhiji.

10

In the last week of March 1925 Gandhiji returned from Travancore after his visit to Vykom, *via* Madras and Bombay and set out on a tour of Kathiawar. He addressed crowded meetings at Madhada, Dhasa, Bagasara, Palitana, Lathi, Mangrol and other places. The emphasis throughout was on khadi and eradication of untouchability.

Towards the end of April Gandhiji left on a prolonged tour of Bengal, spending the following three months in that province.



On 3 May 1925, Gandhiji attended the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Faridpur under the presidency of C. R. Das. In his presidential address, C. R. Das dealt with the genesis of the revolutionary movement in Bengal and held the British Government and its policies, ever since the Viceroyalty of Curzon, responsible for giving rise to it. He called upon the Government to "divest itself of its wide discretionary powers of constraint, and follow it up by proclaiming general amnesty of all political prisoners." This should be followed by recognition by the Government, of India's right to Swaraj. His party on its part would undertake that it would not encourage revolutionary propaganda by word, deed or gesture, and make every effort to put an end to such a movement. He called for reconciliation and peace, for the world was tired of conflict. [*Ibid*, pp.387-95]

Gandhiji, following C. R. Das, said in reading C. R. Das's address in English he had wondered if C. R. Das had not pilfered his own feelings. He would be prepared to subscribe to what Das had said without altering a single word or a single phrase.

Gandhiji went on to say that he himself was as impatient for Swaraj as anyone else. If it were possible he would "hurl defiance at the great British throne and say, 'Out with you'." But he had to admit his incapacity and the incapacity of the country. Quoting Annie Besant he said "it required some amount of courage even to live in the face of odium, censure, neglect and boycott – even from those whom you have treasured as nearest and dearest to you." How was then freedom to be attained for the country? Not certainly by killing, not certainly just then even by dying, but by plodding. That was the reason why Gandhiji had ventured to place before the country those three things: Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and the spinning-wheel.



Gandhiji appealed to the Bengalis to adhere to the yarn franchise and make it even more restrictive. It should be obligatory upon every man and woman, every boy and girl, to spin for at least half an hour and to wear khaddar, not merely on ceremonial occasions but always. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVII, pp.27-35]

On 29 March 1925, C. R. Das had issued a manifesto covering much the same ground as in his Faridpur speech with regard to the Swarajist position on revolutionary violence. He had clearly distanced the Swaraj Party from any attempt to encourage political assassination and intimidation. This, he assured the Europeans, he and his Party found absolutely abhorrent. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-June, 1925, p.87]

Sections of Europeans had welcomed the manifesto as a gesture. In the House of Commons debate on 31 March, Secretary of State Birkenhead called upon Das "to take a further step" and "to go forward and cooperate with Government in repressing the violence he deprecates." [*Ibid*, p.88(a)]

Non-Swarajist Congressmen were baffled by the manifesto and asked what lay behind it. Was the Swaraj Party, having given up Non-cooperation, moving towards cooperation with the Government? Gandhiji, when asked for his opinion in the matter, defended C. R. Das. Das, he said, had made no attack on Non-cooperation in his speech. Moreover Non-cooperation was not a relevant issue, it was also no longer the creed of the Congress. As to any agreement that the Swaraj Party might arrive at with the Government, Gandhiji would have to consider its terms. In that matter Gandhiji had not given any power of attorney to the Swarajists. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVII, pp.80-87]

The Bengal tour developed in a general way as a khaki promotion tour. Gandhiji visited numerous places and addressed numerous public meetings and



meetings of workers and inspected khadi production centres. In the month of May alone he inspected five of them, viz., Abhoy Ashram at Comilla, Dr. P. C. Ghosh's Ashram at Malikanda. Pravartak Sangh at Chittagong, Satsang Ashram at Pabna and Duadando Khadi Kendra. Heading the list of khadi work organizations in Bengal was of course Khadi Pratishthan, being run by Acharya P. C. Ray and Satis Chandra Das Gupta. Its headquarters was at Sodepur near Calcutta, and it had branches all over the province.

On 29 May Gandhiji paid a visit to Santiniketan and spent three days there. Tagore, welcoming Gandhiji, said:

"Santiniketan, the ever young queen of our hearts, welcomes you."

Gandhiji explained to Tagore the significance of the khadi programme and the revival of spinning. The talks also covered *varna vyavastha*. (the four social classes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, meaning the priests and scholars, warriors, businessmen and labour class) which Gandhiji justified as being based on a vocational division of society. Tagore argued that making vocations dependent upon birth was unscientific and unnatural and denied personal choice and freedom. [*Ibid*, pp.172-73]

Speaking to the students at a meeting at Santiniketan, Gandhiji told them that he did not ask them to give up their poetry, literature or music. He was only asking them that side by side with these pursuits, they should devote an hour every day to the charkha. [*Ibid*, p.181]

On 3 June 1925, Gandhiji visited Darjeeling, where he was guest of C. R. Das for five days. C. R. Das had been ailing and on 16 June, a few days after Gandhiji had parted from him, he passed away.



C. R. Das was then at the peak of his glory. He had captured the Congress organization, disarmed the No-changers and secured Gandhiji's unstinted support for his Council-entry programme. He had also forged the Swaraj Party into the strongest political force in the country, whom the rulers had come to fear.

Gandhiji was at Khulna on 16 June and was about to set out for Assam. On receiving news of Das's death he returned to Calcutta, cancelling the Assam tour. Gandhiji paid glowing tributes to Deshbandhu Das at the many condolence meetings held in Khulna, Calcutta and elsewhere. At a public meeting at Khulna he declared:

I publicly declare that I shall, consistently with my principle, try to give henceforward, if it is possible, even more help to the followers of Mr. Das than I have up to now done in their Council programme. [*Ibid.* p.251]

In *Young India* Gandhiji wrote:

Faridpur was his crowning triumph. That utterance of his is a demonstration of his supreme reasonableness and statesmanship. It was a deliberate, unequivocal, and for him final acceptance of non-violence as the only policy, and therefore political creed of India.

... I entered into the pact with him with my eyes open. I have since done my little best to help the Party. His death renders it doubly my duty to stand by the Party now that the leader is gone. I shall do nothing to impede its progress where I may not be able to help. [*Ibid.* p.264]

Gandhiji was indeed giving serious consideration to strengthening Swarajists in the Congress still further.



As many had feared, the introduction of the yarn franchise in the constitution of the Congress did not achieve the desired end. Motilal Nehru was to note later that only 9,197 persons had tendered their quota of yarn. Could they, he asked, pretend to be a representative body ? [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1925, p.24]. If the yarn franchise had not been a success, Gandhiji was prepared to do away with it, so that those who had no fondness for constructive work and wanted to pursue political work alone were not kept out of the Congress.

Gandhiji would not allow any let up in the pursuit of constructive work, with its emphasis on spinning and khadi. At the same time it remained his endeavour throughout 1924 and 1925 to unite all shades of patriotic political opinion under the aegis of the Congress. The need, as he saw it, was not to restrict but to expand the Congress to make it more representative and able to stand up to the new wave of oppression unleashed by the rulers with the promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance.

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On 7 July 1925, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, made a statement in the House of Lords, in which he lambasted the Swaraj Party for not extending its cooperation in working the Reforms.

He went on to say:

It has been the habit of spokesmen of Swarajist thought to declare in anticipation that no constitution framed in the West can either be suitable or acceptable to the people of India.... If our critics in India are of the opinion that their greater knowledge of Indian conditions qualifies them to succeed where they tell us that we have failed, let them produce



a constitution which carries behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the great peoples of India....

Such a contribution to our problems would...be most carefully examined by the Government of India, by myself, and I am sure by the Commission, whenever that body may be assembled. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, Jan.-June, 1925, pp.337-48]

Birkenhead also made the gratuitous observation that when the British intervened in India it was in the process of disintegration and could not have continued to cohere with its 320 million people practising nine great religions and speaking 130 different languages. [*Ibid*, pp.337-48]

Gandhiji called Birkenhead's pronouncement insincere. He wrote:

Let Lord Birkenhead say that he will accept any reasonable constitution that may be prepared by a party or parties overwhelmingly representative of Indian public opinion and he will have a constitution in a week's time.... The fact is that there is no sincere ring about the offer.

Gandhiji also rejected Birkenhead's contention that India, with her many religions and languages, was not one nation. For all practical purposes and for protection from outside the Indian border, he declared, India was one nation. [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVII, pp.389-91]

On 19 July 1925, Gandhiji wrote to Motilal Nehru, who had succeeded Deshbandhu as the leader of the Swaraj Party:

During these few days I have been taxing myself what special exclusive contribution I can make to the memory of Deshbandhu and the situation created by Lord Birkenhead's speech, and I have come to the conclusion that I should absolve the Swaraj Party from all obligations under



the Pact of last year. The result of this act is that the Congress need no longer be a predominantly spinning association. I recognize that under the situation created by the speech, the authority and the influence of the Swaraj Party need to be increased.... Under the Pact the Congress activity is restricted to the constructive programme mentioned therein. I recognize that this restriction should not continue in the altered circumstances that face the country. Not only do I, therefore, personally absolve you from the restriction, but I propose to ask the forthcoming meeting of the A.I.C.C. to do likewise and place the whole machinery of the Congress at your disposal so as to enable you to bring before that body such political resolutions as you may consider necessary in the interest of the country." [*Ibid*, p.398]

Motilal Nehru accepted Gandhiji's offer "in all humility" and Gandhiji accordingly summoned a meeting of the A.I.C.C. at Patna on 22 September 1925. In a note to the members of the A.I.C.C. on 3 September, Gandhiji notified them of the change proposed to be made in the constitution and his intention at the same time to inaugurate another organization, the All-India Spinners' Association.

The resolution on the revision of the franchise clause was moved by Motilal Nehru at the A.I.C.C. when it met on 22 September. The relevant section of the resolution read:

Every person, not disqualified under article IV and paying a subscription of four annas per year in advance, or 2,000 yards of evenly spun yarn of his or her own spinning, shall be entitled to become a member of any primary organization controlled by a provincial Congress Committee....

The part of the resolution dealing with Council work read:



Whereas the Congress, in its 39th session held at Belgaum, endorsed an agreement... whereby Congress activity was restricted to the constructive programme mentioned therein.... And whereas subsequent events have shown that this restriction should not continue under the altered circumstances that face the country and that the Congress should henceforth be a predominantly political body.

It is hereby resolved that the Congress do now take up and carry on all such political work as may be necessary in the interest of the country and for this purpose do employ the whole of the machinery and funds of the Congress.... [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1925, pp.23-24]

When a member objected that a change in the constitution could only be brought about by the Congress and that the A.I.C.C. was not competent to do so, it was brushed aside, with Motilal Nehru declaring that the A.I.C.C. was fully competent to do so.

An amendment to the resolution was moved and passed demanding that all Congress members be habitual users of khaddar. This caused much consternation among Swarajists. J. M. Sen Gupta said the effect of such an amendment would be to reduce the membership of the Congress. Motilal Nehru said such a condition would be difficult to enforce.

Gandhiji agreed and said the resolution would clip the wings of the Swarajists, who were already agreed to wear khaddar on ceremonial occasions.

The amendment was then again put to vote and convincingly defeated. [*Ibid*, pp.23-24]. Thus Gandhiji handed over the Congress to the Swarajists in September 1925 at Patna. But the Swarajists were soon to face a storm within their own ranks.



For carrying on activity in regard to khadi and spinning, which was now separated from political work, the setting up of an All-India Spinners' Association was announced. The constitution of the Association, drafted by Gandhiji, declared that the Association had been "established with the consent of the All-India Congress Committee, as an integral part of the Congress organization, but with independent existence and powers."

An Executive Council, to hold office for five years, was nominated, with the following members: 1) Mahatma Gandhi, President, 2) Maulana Shaukat Ali, 3) Rajendra Prasad, 4) Satis Chandra Das Gupta, 5) Maganlal Gandhi, 6) Jamnalal Bajaj (Treasurer), 7) Shuaib Qureshi, 8) Shankerlal Banker and 9) Jawaharlal Nehru (the last three being Secretaries).

The constitution further said that "the Council shall take over all the funds and assets belonging to the All-India Khadi Board and all Provincial Khadi Boards with full powers to administer these and other funds and shall discharge their existing financial obligations." [C.W.M.G., Vol.XXVII, pp.227-30]

Speaking at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. Gandhiji assured the members that the Association was intended to be a purely commercial body to look after the economic side of khaddar.

Justifying the transfer of power to the Swarajists' hands Gandhiji said it was in the best interests of the country. "No interest is injured. No single person is disfranchised. No single party is in a worse position than it was before the change. Non-cooperators need not complain, because Non-cooperation as a national policy has been suspended. The constructive programme remains unaffected.... The Council programme which was being worked by the Swaraj Party in the name



of the Congress will now be worked by the Congress through the Swaraj Party. This may be called a distinction without a difference." [*Ibid*, p.260]

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While Gandhiji's efforts were thus directed towards strengthening the Swaraj Party in all possible ways, the Swarajists themselves had gradually been giving up their policy of "constant, continuous and uniform obstruction" in the Councils and were accepting nominations in committees and standing for presidencies of Councils and the Assembly. A section of party leadership in Maharashtra wanted the shift in the policy to be taken still further and for the Party to declare its policy as one of "responsive cooperation".

Things came to a head when on 8 October 1925, a Government communique announced that His Majesty the King-Emperor had approved of the appointment of S. B. Tambe, the President of the Central Provinces Council and a member of the Swaraj Party, as member of the Executive Council of the Governor of the Central Provinces.

Tambe said he had accepted the Councillorship in his individual capacity and not as a member of the Swaraj Party. M. R. Jayakar, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bombay Council and N. C. Kelkar, the leader of the Maharashtra Swaraj Party, supported the action of Tambe.

On 1 November 1925 a joint meeting of the three Provincial Swaraj Parties in the C.P. (C.P. Hindi, C.P. Marathi and Berar) was held at Nagpur at which a resolution was passed strongly condemning the action of Tambe in accepting Executive Councillorship as a flagrant breach of the principles and discipline of the Party and treachery to it. The Berar members' amendment to delete the words "treachery to it" was defeated.



Jayakar and Kelkar thereupon resigned from the Executive Council of the Swaraj Party and inaugurated a campaign in favour of the policy of responsive cooperation.

Lala Lajpat Rai and Sarojini Naidu intervened early in November. A truce was signed between Motilal Nehru, representing the leadership of the Swaraj Party and Jayakar and Kelkar, representing the rebels. The breach in the Party was, however, never healed. [*The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1925, July-December, pp.36-56]

15

Gandhiji's handing over the Congress to the Swarajists was characteristic of his technique of conquering his opponents. He stooped to conquer in order to keep the Congress united and to enable it to give an effective fight to the British. He knew the Swarajists would, one day, realize the futility of the Councils. And they were to do so before long. Both at Bardoli in 1928 and later during the great Salt Satyagraha of 1930 they were to offer satyagraha unitedly with the constructive programme workers under the Gandhiji's leadership. But that is a story for the next volume.

It may be noted here that it was only during the first decade after his return to India that Gandhiji was able to educate the Indian people and make them understand the science of Satyagraha, a science which he said was a science still in the making. In subsequent Satyagraha struggles, Gandhiji, as the leader, was arrested very early so that it was not possible for him to provide guidance or issue leaflets or hold discussions with the satyagrahis from day to day in the course of the Satyagraha struggle, as he did during the Non-cooperation movement and before that during the mill-workers' strike at Ahmedabad, during the Kheda Satyagraha and in the course of the Champaran struggle against the exploitation



of peasants by indigo planters. This first decade, therefore, is important for students of Satyagraha.

It may also be noted that the concepts which he had developed in South Africa, whether it was with regard to community living and setting up of an Ashram, or with regard to education of children, or use of a weekly journal as the means of communication with his followers as well as his opponents in the fight against injustice and exploitation, remained the same though in India he could further develop and strengthen them.



APPENDICES : NOTES : BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES : GLOSSARY



APPENDIX-I

THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE CHAMPARAN AGRARIAN ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

1) The tinkathia system, whether for growing indigo or any other crop, should be completely abolished.

2) If any agreement be executed for growing indigo it should be done on the following conditions:

a) The agreement should be voluntary.

b) The term should not exceed 3 years.

c) The selection of fields in which indigo is to be grown should rest with the ryots.

d) The rate of sale of indigo plants should be settled by the ryots according to their choice.

e) The price of indigo plants should be paid on weight. If the ryots agree, the plant instead of being weighed on a scale its weight may be appraised by arbitrators.

3) In Motihari and Peepra concerns the enhancement should be reduced by 26 p.c. and in Turkaulia concern by 20 p.c.

a) In Jalaha and Sirni factories the enhancement should be reduced as in Motihari and Peepra.

b) The tenants in whose record of right the tinkathia *lagan* has been mentioned will have to pay enhancement on their rent in accordance with the above proportion.



c) The Rajghat factory has not claimed any indigo *lagan*. The ryots of that factory have executed *sattas* for growing indigo on condition that no enhancement would be made in their rental. Hence the factory did not apply for enhancement before the Settlement authorities. The ryots of that locality want to give up indigo now. Hence an opportunity should be given to the said concern to apply for enhancement.

4) The ryots who have paid *tawan* (either in cash or through hand-notes) to the factories will get back one-fourth of it from them. In those villages which have been given in lease to the factory recently the entire amount of *tawan* would be returned to the ryots. The Bettiah Court of Wards will not realize the enhancement *jama* from them for a period of 7 years.

5) The realization of *abwab* is altogether illegal. In future the ryots should not pay any amount to the Zamindars in excess of what is entered in their *khatian* or Record of Rights.

6) It is illegal to realize any fee for mutation of name of an heir or a ryot. In other cases such fee should be realized on a fixed scale. The Board of Revenue would be informed that it should consider about fixing of such a scale for mutation in the Bettiah Raj and the *mokarridars* should also be asked to realize fee on the same scale.

7) The *Charsa-mahal* should be abolished in the Bettiah Raj, but no final orders should be issued in this connection till this matter is fully enquired into in the Ramnagar Raj also.

8) It is illegal to issue licence for selling kerosene oil and this system should be altogether abolished.



9) In the Bettiah Raj the tenants can purchase half the share in timber on payment of proper price to the *malik*, but if in any *elaka* it may be apprehended that trees would be cut away (in large numbers) the Manager of the Bettiah Raj may limit the number of petitions of ryots in this respect.

10) The Zamindars, *mokarridars* and the lessees should be informed that they should keep sufficient *parti* (fallow) and grazing grounds for cattle in their *elaka*.

11) It is illegal to impose and realize fines from the tenants. The ryots should be informed about it and the Zamindars, *mokarridars* and the lessees should be prohibited from realizing the same.

12) The term of a cart-*satta* should not exceed 5 years and the agreement about it should be voluntary.

13) Labour should be voluntary.

14) In connection with the recommendation of the Committee about issuing receipt for payment of each *kist* or instalment of rent the Government would prescribe a form, if possible, for the same.

15) The District Board would be informed to keep direct management of the pounds as an experimental measure and not to lease them out to factories or other lessees.

Rajendra Prasad , *Satyagraha in Champaran*, pp. 179-81



APPENDIX II

GANDHIJI'S SUMMARY OF THE ROWLATT BILLS

Summary of Bill No. 2 of 1919

The object of the Bill is to make provision that the ordinary criminal law should be supplemented and emergency powers should be exercisable by the Government for the purpose of dealing with dangerous situations.

The Government has obtained the previous approval of the Secretary of State-in-Council in England for enacting this law.

Section 1. This Bill may be called the Criminal Law Emergency Powers Bill.

It extends to the whole of India.

Some Noteworthy Sections

[Section 3.] If the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied that offences of a certain character are prevalent in the whole or any part of India and that, in the interest of public safety, it is necessary to provide for speedy trial of such offences, he may, by notification in the *Gazette [of India]*, bring this Act into force in the area specified in the notification.

Section 4. Where the Local Government is of opinion that any person should be tried in accordance with the provisions of this Act, it may order any officer of the Government to prefer a written information to the Chief Justice against that person.

Such order may be made in respect of any [scheduled] offence *even if such offence was committed before the issue of the notification* in the *Gazette* bringing the Act into force in a particular area.



The information shall state the offence charged and, so far as known, the name, place of residence, and the time and place when and where the offence is alleged to have been committed and all particulars within the knowledge of the prosecuting officer so that the accused might know the offence he is charged with.

The Chief Justice may by order require any information to be amended so as to supply further particulars and such information or amended information shall be served upon the accused.

Section 5 provides that, upon such information being served, the Chief Justice shall nominate three of the High Court Judges for the trial of the information.

Section 6. The court may sit at such place or places in the Province as it may consider desirable, though the Governor-General-in-Council has the power, by a notification, to order the transfer of the trial to any other place if considered necessary in the interest of justice.

Section 9. After the charge is framed, the accused shall be entitled to ask for an adjournment for a period not exceeding ten days.

Section 10 provides that the court is bound to arrange for the evidence of each witness to be recorded only in summary.

Comment: Even a layman will readily see that recording only the summary of evidence can lead to serious miscarriage of justice. No judge can know in advance, before all the witnesses have been examined, what weight to attach to which part of evidence.



Section 11. The court, if it is of opinion that such a course is necessary in the public interest or for the protection of a witness, may prohibit or restrict the publication or disclosure of its proceedings or any part thereof.

Section 12. No questions shall be put by the court to the accused until the close of the case for the prosecution. Thereafter, and before the accused enters on his defence, the court shall inform the accused that he is entitled, if he so desires, to give evidence on oath on his own behalf, and shall at the same time inform him that if he does so he will be liable to cross-examination.

If the accused states that he desired to give evidence on oath, the court may put any question to him the reply to which may prove his guilt.

Section 14 provides that in the event of any difference of opinion among the members of the court, the opinion of the majority shall prevail.

Section 15. If in the course of the trial, the accused is discovered to have committed any offences other than the one he is charged with, he may be charged with and convicted of these as well.

Section 17. The judgment of the court shall be final and conclusive and no High Court shall have authority to revise any order or sentence of the court.

PART II

Section 20. If the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied that movements which, in his opinion, are likely to lead to the commission of offences against the State are being promoted in the whole or any part of India, he may, by a notification, bring the provisions of this Part into effect in the area specified in it.

Section 21. Where, in the opinion of the Local Government, there are reasonable grounds for believing that any person is or has been actively



concerned in any movement of the nature referred to above, it may give all or any of the following directions: That such person

- (a) shall execute a bond of good conduct for a period not exceeding one year;
- (b) shall remain or reside in any area specified in the order;
- (c) shall notify his residence and any change of residence as ordered;
- (d) shall abstain from any act which, in the opinion of the Local Government, is calculated to disturb the public peace or is prejudicial to the public safety;
- (e) shall report himself to such police officer and at such periods as may be specified in the order.

Comment: Under this Section , an order of this kind may be passed against any person merely on suspicion and without a trial.

Section 23. Any officer [authorized by the Government] may use all means reasonably necessary to enforce compliance with an order as above.

Section 24. An order issued under Section 21 above shall continue in force for a period of one month only.

Section 25. When the Local Government makes an order as above, such Government shall, as soon as may be, forward to the investigating authority to be constituted under this Act a concise statement in writing setting forth all particulars relevant to the order and the grounds for making it.

The investigating authority shall then hold an inquiry *in camera*, summon the person in question at some stage in its proceedings and hear any explanation he may have to offer, provided that the investigating authority shall not disclose



to the person any fact the communication of which might endanger the public safety or the safety of any individual, and provided further *that neither the Local Government nor the person in question shall be entitled to be represented at such inquiry* by a pleader.

The inquiry shall be conducted in such manner as the investigating authority considers best suited to elicit the facts of the case *and, in making the inquiry, such authority shall not be bound to observe the rules of the law of evidence.*

On completion of the inquiry, the investigating authority shall report its conclusions to the Local Government.

If the investigating authority has not completed the inquiry within the period for which the duration of the order is limited, the Local Government may extend the period on a recommendation to that effect by the investigating authority.

Section 26. On receipt of the report of the investigating authority, the Local Government may discharge the order made by it or may make any other order which it is authorized to make; any order so made shall recite conclusions of the investigating authority and a copy of the order shall be furnished to the person in question.

No order made by the Local Government shall continue in force for more than one year, provided that, on the expiry of the order, it may make another order if it is satisfied that such a course is necessary in the interests of public safety.

No order made as herein provided shall continue in force for more than a year from the date on which it was made, though on the expiry of such an order the Local Government may renew it for a further period of one year.



An order may also be discharged at any time by the Local Government, or altered or substituted by any other order without reference to the investigating authority mentioned above.

Comment: This means that the Local Government may issue any order at its discretion and that even the nominal investigating authority will serve no useful purpose.

Section 27. Any person who fails to comply with an order as above shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to a thousand rupees, or with both.

Section 29. The investigating authority shall consist of three persons of whom one shall be a person having held a judicial office not inferior to that of a District and Sessions Judge and one shall be a person not in the service of the Government.

Section 30. The Local Government shall appoint Visiting Committees to interview the persons under restraint at specified periods and shall by rules prescribe the functions of such committees.

PART III

Section 32. If the Governor-General-in-Council is satisfied that in the whole or any part of India offences of a certain character are prevalent to such an extent as to endanger the public safety, he may, by notification in the *Gazette* bring this Part into force in the area specified therein.

Section 33. Where, in the opinion of the Local Government, any person has been or is concerned in such area in any offence of that kind, it may make in respect of such person any order authorized in Part II and may further order (a) the arrest of any such person without warrant; (b) the confinement of any such



person in such place and under such conditions and restrictions as it may specify; (c) the search of any place specified in the order which, in the opinion of the Local Government has been, is being or is about to be used by any such person in such a manner as to endanger the public safety. The arrest of such a person may be effected at any place where he may be found by any police officer or any other officer to whom the order may be directed.

An order for confinement of a person or the search of a place may be carried out by any officer to whom it may be directed and such officer may use all reasonable means for enforcing the same. The person so arrested may, pending further orders, be committed in custody by the arresting officer for a period not exceeding fifteen days.

An officer executing an order for the search of any place may seize and dispose of anything found in such place, which he has reason to believe is being used or is likely to be used for any purpose prejudicial to the public safety.

Section 36. Where an order has been made under Section 33, the provisions of Sections 22 to 26 shall apply in the same way as if the order were an order made under Section 21.

Comment: See comment on Sections 22 to 26.

Section 37. Any person who fails to comply with any order made under the provisions of Part III shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, or with both.

PARTS IV AND V

On the expiration of the Defence of India Act, every person who was held prisoner under Section 37 [at the time of the expiration of the Act] and who has in the opinion of the Local Government been concerned in any scheduled



offence, and every person who is [on such expiration] in confinement in accordance with the provisions of the Bengal State Prisoners Regulation, 1818, shall be deemed to be in prison under [the provisions of] Part III above.

No order under this Act shall be called in question in any court, and no suit or prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act. All powers given by this Act shall be in addition to any other powers conferred by or under any enactment.

BILL NO. 1 OF 1919

The object of this Bill is to amend the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code so as to put effective curbs on activities dangerous to the State. It creates a new offence, as under:

Any person found in possession of a seditious document or intending to publish or circulate such document will, unless he proves that it was in his possession for a lawful purpose, be punishable with imprisonment extending to a period of two years or with fine, or with both.

In this Section, a seditious document is defined as a document containing any writing or sign inciting violence against the Crown or its Government or against officers or any class of officers or any individual officer in the service of the Government, or in citing anyone to wage war against the Crown or to assemble weapons with the intention of waging such war.

Comment: This means that, if any book or paper believed to be seditious is found in the pocket of an innocent youth ignorant of its contents, he would be taken to be guilty unless he proves that he was carrying it for a lawful purpose. This new offence alters one of the fundamental principles of British justice



inasmuch as, instead of the prosecution having to prove the guilt of the accused, it is the latter who will have to establish his innocence. If I am charged with anything, how can I prove that I am not guilty? This can only mean that I shall be in jail.

When trying offences against the State mentioned in the Indian Penal Code, the court is free to order , if it thinks fit, that the accused, even after he has served the sentence of imprisonment passed on him, should execute a bond of good conduct for two years thereafter. Any person who, having been served with a restraint order, under the provisions of this Bill, to report, subsequent to his release, his place of residence and any change therein, may be directed by the Local Government by an order in writing to abide by any of the following conditions:

- (a) the person in question must not enter or reside or stop in any specified area;
- (b) he should confine himself to a particular part of British India;
- (c) he must not address any public meeting called to discuss issues which might lead to breach of the peace or public excitement or to circulate any written or printed information relating to such issues or to extend support to any political matter.

Comment: This means that, even after a person has suffered enough for an alleged offence, he may not expect to be free from harassment by the Government.

C.W.M.G., Vol.XV, pp.110-16



APPENDIX III

CONGRESS CONSTITUTION ADOPTED AT NAGPUR SESSION

Article I

The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swarajya by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means.

SESSIONS OF THE CONGRESS

Article II

(a) The Indian National Congress shall ordinarily meet once every year during Christmas holidays at such place as may have been decided upon at its previous session or such other place as may have been determined by the All-India Congress Committee hereinafter referred to.

(b) An extraordinary session of the Congress may be summoned by the All-India Congress Committee either of its own motion or on the requisition of a majority of the Provincial Congress Committees, wherever it may deem it advisable to hold such a session; and the Articles of this Constitution shall apply with such modification as the All-India Congress Committee may consider necessary in respect of each such session.

COMPONENT PARTS OF THE CONGRESS

Article III

The Indian National Congress organization shall consist of the following:

- (a) The Indian National Congress.
- (b) Provincial Congress Committees.
- (c) District Congress Committees.



(d) Sub-Divisional, Taluqa or Tahsil, Firka or other Local Congress Committees.

(e) The All-India Congress Committee.

(f) Such other Committees outside India as may from time to time be recognized by the Congress in this behalf.

(g) Bodies formed or organized periodically by the Provincial, District, Taluqa or Tahsil, or other Local Congress Committees such as the Reception Committee of the Congress and the Provincial District, Taluqa or Tahsil, or other local Conferences.

Article IV

No person shall be eligible to be a member of any of the organizations referred to in the foregoing Article, unless he or she has attained the age of 21 and expresses in writing his or her acceptance of the object and the methods as laid down in Article I of this Constitution and of the Rules of the Congress.

Provincial Congress Committee

Article V

The following shall be the Provinces with headquarters mentioned against them and where no headquarters are mentioned and in every case the respective Provincial Congress Committees shall have the power to fix or alter them from time to time.

1.	Madras	Tamil	Headquarters	Madras
2.	Andhra	Telugu	“	
3.	Karnataka	Kannada	“	Gadag



4.	Kerala	Malayalam	“	Calicut
5.	City of Bombay	Marathi and Gujarati	“	Bombay
6.	Maharashtra	Marathi	“	Poona
7.	Gujarat	Gujarati	“	Ahmedabad
8.	Sind	Sindhi	“	
9.	United Provinces	Hindustani	“	Allahabad
10.	Punjab	Punjabi	“	Lahore
11.	N. W. Frontier Province	Hindustani	“	Peshawar
12.	Delhi	Hindustani	“	Delhi
13.	Ajmer, Merwara and Rajputana	Hindustani	“	Ajmer
14.	Central Provinces	Hindustani	“	Jubbulpore
15.	Central Provinces	Marathi	“	Nagpur
16.	Berar	Marathi	“	Amraoti
17.	Bihar	Hindustani	“	Patna
18.	Utkal (Orissa)	Oriya	“	
19.	Bengal and Surma Valley	Bengali	“	Calcutta
20.	Assam	Assamese	“	Gauhati



21. Burma Burmese “ Rangoon

Provided that the All-India Congress Committee may from time to time assign particular Indian States to particular Provinces and a Provincial Congress Committee may in its turn allot particular Indian States assigned to it by the All-India Congress Committee to particular Districts within its jurisdiction.

The existing Provincial Congress Committees shall forthwith proceed to reorganize themselves in terms of this Constitution and such reorganization shall be final unless and until it is revised by the All-India Congress Committee.

Article VI

(a) There shall be a Provincial Congress Committee in and for each of the Provinces named in the foregoing article.

(b) Each Provincial Congress Committee shall organize District and other Committees referred to in Article III and shall have the power to frame rules laying down conditions of membership and for the conduct of business not inconsistent with this Constitution or any rules made by the All-India Congress Committee.

(c) Each Provincaal Congress Committee shall consist of representatives elected annually by the members of the District and other Committees in accordance with the rules made by the Provincaal Congress Committees.

FRANCHISE

Article VII

Every person not disqualified under Article IV, and paying a subscription of 4 annas per year shall be entitled to become a member of any organization controlled by the Provincial Congress Committees.



ELECTORATES AND DELEGATES

Article VIII

Each Provincial Congress Committee shall be responsible for the election of delegates to the Congress.

No one shall be qualified for election who is not of the age of 21 years and who does not subscribe to the Congress creed.

The number of delegates shall be not more than one for every 50 thousand or its fraction of the inhabitants of the Province of its jurisdiction, including the Indian States therein, in accordance with the last census: provided, however, that the inclusion of Indian States in the electorate shall not be taken to include any interference by the Congress with the internal affairs of such States.

Each Provincial Congress Committee shall frame rules for the election of delegates, due regard being had to the return of women delegates and representation of minorities, special interests or classes needing special protection.

The rules shall provide for the organization of electorates and shall prescribe the procedure to be adopted for securing the proportional representation (by a single transferable vote) of every variety of political opinion.

The rules framed by each Provincial Congress Committee shall be sent to the General Secretaries of the Congress not later than the 30th April 1921, which rules shall be published for general information by the Secretaries as soon as possible after the receipt thereof.

Each Provincial Congress Committee shall send to the Reception Committee of the ensuing Session of the Congress an alphabetical list of the delegates so elected containing the full name, occupation, age, sex, religion and



address of each of them to reach the Committee not later than the 15th day of December every year, and in the case of an Extraordinary Session not later than ten days before the date advertised for the holding of such Session.

Article IX

(a) Each Provincial Congress Committee shall pay annually such subscription to the All-India Congress Committee as may be fixed by the latter from time to time.

(b) No member of a Congress Committee shall vote at the election of representatives or delegates or be elected as such unless and until he has paid the subscription due by him.

DELEGATES

Article X

Each Committee referred to in Article VIII shall issue certificates to the delegates duly elected in accordance with the form hereto attached marked Appendix A and signed by a Secretary of the Committee.

Article XI

Every delegate on presenting such a certificate and paying a fee of Rs. 10 at the Congress office shall receive ticket entitling him to admission to the Congress.

Article XII

Delegates shall alone have the power of voting at the Congress sittings or otherwise taking part in its deliberations.

RECEPTION COMMITTEE

Article XIII



The Reception Committee shall be formed by the Provincial Congress Committee at least six months before the meeting of the annual session and may include persons who are not members of the Provincial Congress Committee. The members of the Reception Committee shall pay not less than Rs. 25 each.

Article XIV

The Reception Committee shall elect its Chairman and other office-bearers from amongst its own members.

Article XV

It shall be the duty of the Reception Committee to collect funds for the expenses of the Congress Session, to elect the President of the Congress in the manner set forth in the following article and to make all necessary arrangements for the reception and accommodation of delegates and guests and, as far as practicable, of visitors and for the printing and publication of the report of the proceedings and to submit statements of receipts and expenditure to the Provincial Congress Committee within 4 months of the session of the Congress.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

Article XVI

The several Provincial Congress Committees shall, as far as possible by the end of June, suggest to the Reception Committee the names of persons who are in their opinion eligible for the Presidentship of the Congress and the Reception Committee shall, as far as possible in the first week of July, submit to all the Provincial Committees the names as suggested for their final recommendations provided that such final recommendation will be of any one but not more of such names and the Reception Committee shall, as far as possible, meet in the month of August to consider such recommendations. If the person recommended by a



majority of the Provincial Congress Committees is adopted by a majority of the members of the Reception Committee present at a special meeting called for the purpose, that person shall be the President of the next Congress. If, however, the Reception Committee is unable to accept the President recommended by the Provincial Congress Committees or in case of emergency by resignation, death or otherwise of the President elected in this manner, the matter shall forthwith be referred by it to the All-India Congress Committee whose decision shall be arrived at, as far as possible, before the end of September. In either case the election shall be final, provided that in no case shall the person so elected as President belong to the Province in which the Congress is to be held.

The President of a special or extraordinary session shall be elected by the All-India Congress Committee subject to the same proviso.

CONGRESS FUNDS

Article XVII

(a) The Reception Committee shall, through the Provincial Congress Committee of the Province, remit to the All-India Congress Committee, not later than two weeks after the termination of the Congress session, ordinary or extraordinary, half the delegation fees.

(b) If the Reception Committee has a balance after defraying all the expenses of the session it shall hand over the same to the Provincial Congress Committee in the Province in which the session was held towards the Provincial Congress Fund of that Province.

AUDIT

Article XVIII

The receipts and expenditure of the Reception Committee shall be audited by an auditor or auditors appointed by the Provincial Congress Committee



concerned and the statement of accounts together with the auditor's report shall be sent by the Provincial Congress Committee, not later than six months from the termination of the Congress, to the All-India Congress Committee.

ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

Article XIX

The All-India Congress Committee shall consist of 350 members exclusive of ex-officio members.

The ex-officio members shall be past Presidents of the Congress and General Secretaries and Treasurers of the Congress.

Each Provincial Congress Committee shall elect the allotted number of members of the All-India Congress Committee from among the members of the Congress Committees within its jurisdiction.

The allotment shall be on the basis of population according to the linguistic redistribution of Provinces or in such other manner as may appear more equitable to the All-India Congress Committee and shall be published by the All-India Congress Committee before the 31st day, January 1921.

The method of election shall be the same as already prescribed for the election of delegates.

Election to the All-India Congress Committee shall ordinarily take place in the month of November.

The first All-India Congress Committee under this constitution shall be elected on or before the 30th of June 1921. Till then, the members of the All-India Congress Committee recently elected shall continue in office.



The All-India Congress Committee shall meet as often as may be necessary for the discharge of its obligation and every time upon requisition by 15 members thereof who shall state in their requisition the definite purpose for which they desire a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee.

The All-India Congress Committee shall hold office till the election of the new All-India Congress Committee.

Article XX

The Secretaries of the respective Provincial Congress Committees shall issue certificates of membership of the All-India Committee to the persons so elected.

Article XXI

The All-India Congress Committee shall be the Committee of the Congress to carry out the programme of work laid down by the Congress from year to year and deal with all new matters that may arise during the year and may not be provided for by the Congress itself. For this purpose the All-India Congress Committee shall have the power to frame its own rules within this Constitution.

Article XXII

The President of the Congress shall be the Chairman of the All-India Congress Committee for the year following.

GENERAL SECRETARIES

Article XXIII

The Indian National Congress shall have three General Secretaries, who shall be annually elected by the Congress. They shall prepare the report of the work of the All-India Congress Committee during the year and submit it, with a



full account of the funds which may come into their hands, to the All-India Congress Committee at a meeting to be held at the place and about the time of the session of the Congress for the year, and copies of such account and report shall then be presented to the Congress and sent to the Congress Committees.

WORKING COMMITTEE

Article XXIV

The All-India Congress Committee shall at its first meeting appoint a Working Committee consisting of the President, the General Secretaries, the Treasurers and 9 other members, which shall perform such functions as may be delegated to it from time to time by the All-India Congress Committee.

SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

Article XXV

The members of the All-India Congress Committee shall constitute the Subjects Committee for the ordinary or extraordinary session following.

Article XXVI

The Subjects Committee shall meet at least two days before the meeting of the Congress in open session. At this meeting, the President-elect shall preside and the outgoing Secretaries shall submit the draft programme of the work for the ensuing session of the Congress, including resolutions recommended by the different Provincial Congress Committees for adoption.

Article XXVII

The Subjects Committee shall proceed to discuss the said programme and shall frame resolutions to be submitted to the open session.



Article XXVIII

The Subjects Committee shall also meet from time to time as the occasion may require during the pendency of the Congress Session.

CONTENTIOUS SUBJECTS AND INTERESTS OF MINORITIES

Article XXIX

No subject shall be passed for discussion by the Subjects Committee or allowed to be discussed at any Congress by the President thereof, to the introduction of which the Hindu or Mohammedan delegates, as a body, object by a majority of 3/4ths of their number, and if, after the discussion of any subject which has been admitted for discussion, it shall appear that the Hindu or Mohammedan delegates, as a body, are, by a majority of 3/4ths of their number, opposed to the resolution which it is proposed to pass thereon, such resolution shall be dropped.

Article XXX

The All-India Congress Committee shall have the power to frame rules in respect of all matters not covered by the Constitution and not inconsistent with its Articles.

Article XXXI

The Articles and the Creed of the Constitution now in force are hereby repealed without prejudice to all acts done thereunder.

C.W.M.G, Vol. XIX, pp. 190-98



APPENDIX-IV

LIST OF BOOKS READ BY GANDHIJI IN YERAVDA JAIL DURING 1922-24

Al Kalam (Maulana Shibli)

Anubhava Pradipika

Arm of God, The

Ashramvasik

Autosuggestion

Avesta (Dadachandji)

Barrack-room Ballads (Rudyard Kipling)

Bars and Shadows (Rolf Evelyn)

Bhagavata, Part-I, II

Bhagwati Sutra

Bhagyano Varas

Bhojprabandh

Bible View of the World (Rev. Lawrence)

Brahmanas:

Aitareya

Taittiriya

Budha and Mahavira (Kishorelal)

By an Unknown Disciple

Chandrakant, Part-II (Ichchharam Suryaram Desai)

Chatuh Sutri

Christianity in Practice

Crusades, The



Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume I, II, III, & IV

(Edward Gibbon)

Dharmani Ekata (Champakrai Jain)

Dialogues (Plato)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (R. L. Stevenson)

Dropped from the Clouds (Jules Verne)

Dubtoon Vahan (Rabindranath Tagore)

Early Zoroastrianism (Moulton)

Elements of Sociology (Herbert Spencer)

Enoch Arden (Tennyson)

Equality (Edward Bellamy)

Ethics of Islam (Mirza)

European Morals (Lecky)

Evolution of Cities (Geddes)

Evolution of Man (Haeckel)

Faust (Goethe)

Five Empires, The (Wilberforce)

Five Nations, The (Rudyard Kipling)

Freedom and Growth (Holmes)

Galilean

Gita (Nathuram Sharma's commentary)

Gitagovind (Jayadev)

Gitanishkarsha (Purani's translation of Aurobindo Ghosh)

Gita Rahasya (B. G. Tilak)



Gospel and the Plough, The
Gospel of Budha (Paul Carus)
Gulabsingh

Helps to Bible Study
Hibbert Lectures on Buddhism (Rhys David)
Himalayno Pravasa (Kaka Kalelkar)
Historical English Grammar
History of Civilization (Buckle)
History of Civilization in Europe (Guizot)
History of Civilization in France (Guizot)
History of Scotland, A
History of Sikhism (Macauliff)
History of the Saracens (Ameer Ali)

Indian Administration (Thakore)
Ivanhoe (Walter Scott)

Jaya-Jayant (Nanalal Kavi)
Jnaneshwari
John Howard's Life
Jungle Book (Rudyard Kipling)
Juno Karar
Kabir's Songs (Rabindranath Tagore)
Kalpani-ni-katha
Kanta
Krishnacharitra (Krishnalal Jhaveri)
Koran



Kumarpalcharitra

Lays of Ancient Rome (Macaulay)

Life and Voyages of Columbus (Washington Irving)

Life of Pitt (Lord Rosebery)

Lives of Fathers and Martyrs

Mahabharata:

Adiparva

Anushasanparva

Ashvamedhikaparva

Bhishmaparva

Dronaparva

Karnaparva

Sabhaparva

Shalyaparva

Shantiparva

Udyogaparva

Vanaparva

Maharashtra-Dharma (Vinoba Bhave)

Mahomed (Washington Irving)

Malati Madhava

Man and Superman (G. B. Shaw)

Manusmriti (Buhler)

Markandeya Purana

Master and His Teaching, The

Message of Mahomed (Wadia)

Mirsa Kumari



Modern Problems (Oliver Lodge)

Muktadhara (Rabindranath Tagore)

Muktivivek (Vidyaranyaswami)

My Philosophy and Religion (Trine)

Mystics of Islam (Nicholson)

Natural Features of India

Natural History

Natural History of Birds

Navo Karar

Old Curiosity Shop, The (Charles Dickens)

Origin and Evolution of Religion (Hopkins)

Our Hellenic Heritage (James)

Ourselves and the Universe (J. Brierly)

Panchashati

Philo Christus

Poorva Rang (Kaka Kalelkar and Narhari Parikh)

Prem Mitra

Primer of Marathi Language

Pro Christo et Ecclesia

Puratatva

Rajayoga (Vivekanand)

Rama and Krishna (Kishorelal)

Ramayana (Girdhar)

Ramayana (Tulsidas)



Ramayana (Valmiki)

Rise of the Dutch Republic (Motley)

Rise of the Sikh Power (Gokulchand)

Rosicrucian Mysteries

Sadhana (Rabindranath Tagore)

Sahaba Ekram

Saints of Islam. Part I to V (Hassan)

Samkhya Karika (Gaudpad)

Sampattishastra

Sarasvatichandra, Part-I to IV (Goverdhanram Tripathi)

Satires and Epistles of Horace

Satyagraha aur Asahayoga

Satyartha Prakasha (Dayanand Saraswati)

Science of Peace (Bhagwandas)

Scott's Poetical Works

Second Jungle Book, The (Rudyard Kipling)

Seekers after God, (Farrar)

Shad-darshan-samuchchaya Granth (Haribhadra)

Shakta and Shakti (Woodroffe)

Shrivritiprabhakar

Siddhantsara

Sitaharan (Chandrashankar)

Social Efficiency (Shivram Pherwani)

Social Evolution (Kidd)

Spirit of Islam (Ameer Ali)

Steps to Christianity

Stories from the History of Rome



St. Paul in Greece (Davis)

Supersensual Life (Jacob Boehmen)

Syadvada Manjari

Tom Brown's Schooldays (Thomas Hughes)

Trips to the Moon (Lucian)

Tropical Agriculture

Upanishads (Max Muller's Translation)

Upanishads:

Brihadaranyak

Chhandogya

Ishopanishad

Kathavalli

Kathopanishad

Kena

Mandukopanishad

Mandukya

Prashnopanishad

Upanishad Prakash, Parts I to XI

Urdu Reader No. 1, 2, 3, & 4

Usva-e-Sahaba

Uttaradhyayan Sutra

Varieties of Religious Experience (William James)

Vastupal Charitra

Vedantabhraman (Rajam Iyer)

Vikramacharitra

Vivadtandav



Way to Begin Life, The

Westward Ho

What Christianity Means to Me (Lyman Abbott)

Wisdom of the Ancients, The (Bacon)

Yogabindu

Yogadarshan (Patanjali)

Young Crusader, The

Yugadharma



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON SOME PROMINENT NATIONAL FIGURES FEATURING IN THE VOLUME

ABHYANKAR, MORESHWAR VASUDEV (1886-1935): Born in Dhanodi village of Wardha district, Abhyankar after his matriculation proceeded to England in 1906 to become a barrister, returning in 1909. In England he came in contact with Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal and Khaparde and became an ardent supporter of Tilak. At the Amritsar Congress he opposed Gandhiji's resolution accepting the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. During the Non-cooperation movement he opposed the boycott of courts and schools. After the Gaya Congress of 1922 he joined the Swarajists. However in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 he took a leading part and courted imprisonment. He had a rational approach to social problems and was opposed to Gandhiji's attempts to mix spirituality with politics.

ADAJANIA, SORABJI SHAPURJI (1883-1918): Prominent participant in the Indians' Satyagraha in South Africa. He was jailed many times, spending a total period of over 18 months in jail. After the conclusion of the satyagraha Gandhiji sent him to England to study for the bar, with funds provided by Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. While in England he served in the Ambulance Corps organized by Gandhiji following the outbreak of the war.

AJMAL KHAN, HAKIM (1863-1927): Physician, educationist and politician, was one of the trustees of the Aligarh Muslim University but resigned when the Non-cooperation movement started; active in Muslim politics from 1906; founded Tibbia College, Delhi. When Gandhiji gave the call for Non-cooperation, Ajmal Khan surrendered his title of Haziq-ul-Mulk; presided at the 1921 session of Indian National Congress at Ahmedabad in place of C. R. Das, who had been



imprisoned. When the Jamia Millia Islamia was founded in Aligarh for Non-cooperating students, Ajmal Khan became its first Chancellor.

AMRIT KAUR, RAJKUMARI (1889-1964): Daughter of Raja Sir Harnam Singh of Kapurthala who had become a Christian and consequently lost the throne. Had her education in England; her "passionate desire to see India free" took her to Gandhiji and she became one of his closest co-workers; was actively associated with the All-India Women's Conference and was its president in 1938; member of Hindustani Talimi Sangh; she was detained during the Salt Satyagraha and again during the Quit India movement in 1942 in her house; she attended the UNESCO conference in London in 1945 and in 1947 was appointed free India's first Health Minister; was elected to the Lok Sabha from Simla in 1952 and again appointed Minister of Health. She became a member of the Rajya Sabha after that; she was President of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Tuberculosis Association of India. She was also Chairman of Hind Kushta Nivaran Sangh and St. John's Ambulance Corps.

ANAND, SWAMI: Born near Limbdi in Gujarat, as a child he had been abducted by some sadhus who initiated him into asceticism. He studied at various centres of Ramakrishna Mission; in 1907 he was associated with revolutionaries in Bengal and later those of Maharashtra. Helped in editing Marathi *Tarun Hind* and also worked on Tilak's *Kesari*. Met Gandhiji in 1917 and joined him. He worked on the staff of *Young India* and *Navajivan* as composer, proof-reader and press manager from 1918 to 1928. He was associated with all the activities emanating from Sabarmati Ashram. Arrested during the Salt Satyagraha; founded Gandhi Ashram at Thana. He settled in Kausani for some time but came back to Bombay. He wrote several books about the early industrialists and businessmen who made Bombay into a big commercial centre.



ANDREWS, CHARLES FREER (1871-1940): A classical scholar and Church of England missionary; came to India in 1904 to join Cambridge Brotherhood and taught at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. Through S . K . Rudra, the Principal of the college, he came into contact with Gokhale, Lajpat Rai, Sapru, Dadabhoy Naoroji and other national leaders. He became more and more critical of the basis of British rule in India. In 1912 he met Tagore in London and became his ardent admirer. In December 1913 he was invited by Gokhale to visit South Africa. In 1914 at Durban he met Gandhiji and touched his feet, which annoyed white South Africans. He stayed at Phoenix and he and Gandhiji became lifelong friends. He visited South and East Africa and Fiji for the cause of indentured Indian labourers in those Colonies. At the time of the Round Table Conference in London in 1931 he was by Gandhiji's side, helping him to meet various important British statesmen . He actively supported the Vykom Satyagraha in 1925, and was a staunch supporter of India's freedom struggle.

ANSARI, M. A., Dr. (1880-1936): Eminent surgeon; he first met Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ajmal Khan in London; in 1912 led a medical mission to Turkey, at the time of the Balkan war; played an important part in giving shape to Congress-League Pact of 1916; presided at several sessions of the Muslim League and served in the Congress in various executive capacities as member of the Working Committee and as President; took an active part in the Khilafat movement; following the split in the Congress between No-changers and Pro-changers he remained in the camp of No-changers. In Delhi Gandhiji frequently stayed in his house in Daryaganj.

ARUNDALE, GEORGE SYDNEY (1878-1945): Son of a clergyman, Arundale graduated from Cambridge in philosophy and law in 1903 and came out to India as professor of English in the Central Hindu College, Benares. After ten years he



was made Principal. In India, which he made his home, he was drawn to Annie Besant and joined her Home Rule movement. In 1917 he was arrested and interned at Ootakamund along with Annie Besant and was freed only after a countrywide agitation. For about six years he edited a weekly *Conscience*. He was a strong supporter of the Swadeshi movement and National Education. He was president of the Theosophical Society from 1934 to 1945. He married Rukmini Devi, the great exponent of Bharat Natyam and an animal-lover and philanthropist.

AWARI, MANCHERSHA (1898-): Took Master's degree in civil engineering from Bombay University in 1918-19; participated in the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur; much influenced by association with Pandit Sunderlal, Bhagwandin, Poonamchand Ranka, R. S. Ruiker, etc. In jail in 1925 he undertook a 60-days' fast against ill-treatment of satyagrahi prisoners; spent altogether 12 years in jail; in 1932, when the Congress was outlawed, he organized a "Republican Army" and was hailed as "General" by the people. In 1952 he was elected to the M. P. Legislative Assembly.

AZAD, ABUL KALAM (1888-1958): Son of Maulvi Khairuddin, an Indian Muslim divine, who, as a child had emigrated to Mecca at the time of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, and an Arab woman, Azad had been named Firoz Bakht, though he later came to be called Mohiyuddin by the family. When Mohiyuddin was about ten the family returned to India and settled down in Calcutta. The boy, along with his brother, had already by the time completed his study of the Koran and had learnt the fundamentals of Arabic, Urdu and Persian. He received only traditional education from his father and his friends and did not attend any madressa. He was a prodigy. By the time he was fifteen he had completed, in just four years, the full course of Islamic theology *Dars-e-Nizamiah*, which generally required ten



years to complete. He had also studied philosophy and logic, rhetoric in Arabic, Persian and Turkish and traditional chemistry, astronomy and medicine. He also wrote verse and had already changed his name, when only 12, to Abul Kalam Mohiyuddian Azad Dehlavi. In 1900 when he was only 12 he started a poetic journal *Nairange Alam* which went on for eight months. At 16 he started another paper *Lisan al Sidq*, a literary journal promoting social reform. In 1908, Azad visited a number of Islamic countries: Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Turkey. In Cairo he also visited the famous Al Azhar University. He also visited France. This widened his horizon. In 1912 he started the journal *Al Hilal* to educate the Muslim masses politically. The paper soon came under the observation of the Government and was again and again asked to furnish security. In 1914, when war broke out, *Al Hilal* was banned by the Government. In 1916 Azad started another journal *Al Balagh*, which lasted just four months, for Azad was interned by the Government at Ranchi for four years. In 1920 on his release he met Gandhiji and joined the Khilafat movement. He was elected President of the All-India Khilafat Committee. He presided at the Unity Conference at Delhi in 1924. In 1928 he presided at the Nationalist Muslim Conference. In 1937 he was appointed member of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee to guide Provincial Congress ministries. He was twice elected President of the Congress, first in 1923 when he was only 35 years old and the second time in 1940. He continued in the post till 1946. After India became independent Maulana Azad was appointed Minister of Education. Azad was a man of profound erudition and encyclopaedic learning. He symbolized the nationalist aspirations of India's Muslims and he was an uncompromising foe of separatism and the two-nation theory of Jinnah and the Muslim League.

BAJAJ, JAMNALAL (1889-1942): Adopted son of Seth Vachchhraj of Wardha; married at 13 to Janakidevi who was then 9; made Hon. Magistrate in 1908 and



Rai Bahadur in 1918; met Gandhiji in 1915 and was greatly attracted and influenced by him. The relationship grew over the years. He asked Gandhiji to treat him as his fifth son and Gandhiji agreed. In 1920 he was the Chairman of the Reception Committee at the Nagpur Congress. He was treasurer of the Congress practically throughout his life. He participated in the Non-cooperation Movement and went to jail several times. In 1923, he led the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha and was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. In 1924 he founded the Gandhi Seva Sangh to help families of satyagrahis and for ideological education of workers. In the same year he was elected President of the Nagpur Provincial Congress Committee. In 1925 he was elected treasurer of the Charkha Sangh. He also founded the Sasta Sahitya Mandal. He was later Secretary of the Anti-Untouchability Committee of the Congress and conducted propaganda for temple entry. He took an active part in the Salt Satyagraha. In 1935 Jamnalal brought Gandhiji to Wardha. In 1936 Gandhiji decided to settle at Segaon, later named Sevagram. Jamnalalji gifted land, constructed huts and took care of all expenses. In 1939 he was interned at Jaipur in the course of a satyagraha for democratic rights of the State's people. In 1941 he was arrested during the Individual Civil Disobedience movement. He was a devotee of Anand Mayee Ma. In 1941 he founded the Goseva Sangh at Wardha and on Anand Mayee Ma's advice devoted the last months of his life to the service of the cow.

BANERJEA, SURENDRANATH (1848-1925): Passed ICS examination in 1871 and was posted in Sylhet as Assistant Magistrate. Dismissed from service on complaint of the English district magistrate; he taught English in various institutions. Founded the Indian Association on 26 July 1876 and toured extensively. His speeches stirred the imagination of the country. When he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for contempt of court for some comment



published in his paper *Bengali*, there were protest strikes in most major towns of India. He organized, through the Indian Association, a National Conference in Calcutta in December 1883 and another in December 1885. Beginning with the second session of the Indian National Congress, held in 1886, Surendranath played an increasingly important role in that organization. He was twice elected President, in 1895 and 1902. The Swadeshi and Boycott movement that followed the partition of Bengal in 1905 bore the imprint of his leadership and he became the uncrowned king of Bengal. With the split in the Congress in 1907, the coming of the Home Rule Leagues and emergence of Gandhiji on the national scene the programme represented by the Moderates gradually lost its relevance. In 1918 Surendranath, along with the other Moderates, left the Congress. He now devoted himself to making the Montford Reforms a success and accepted a ministry and a Knighthood. This caused a further erosion in his popularity, so much so that he suffered a crushing defeat in the election for the Bengal Legislative Council held in 1923.

BANKER, SHANKERLAL (1889-1985): Born in Bombay in a Gujarati Vaishya family Shankerlal did his B.A. from the Wilson College, Bombay and M.A. from the St. Xavier's College in 1911. He then proceeded to England for higher studies. War having broken out, he had to return to India in 1915. He was greatly influenced by reformers such as Dayanand, Ramakrishna and Vivekanand. In 1918 he had the opportunity to work in association with Gandhiji in connection with the Ahmedabad Mill-hands' strike and became his follower. He became founder member of All-India Spinners Association and an expert on khadi. He changed his dress, his food and his outlook. In 1917 he joined the Home Rule League of Mrs. Besant and was the Joint Secretary of its Bombay branch. Shankerlal's field of activity was the constructive work programme and organization of workers. He



was the founder, along with Anasuyabehn Sarabhai, of the Majur Mahajan of Ahmedabad. He contributed regularly to *Navajivan* and *Young India*. In 1922 he was tried along with Gandhiji for sedition and spent 13 months in jail with him.

BAPAT, PANDURANG MAHADEV (1880-1967): Popularly known as Senapati Bapat, for having led the Mulshi Peta satyagraha (1921); after graduating from Deccan College, Poona, in 1899, he settled down in Poona in 1913 and served on the staff of Tilak's *Mahratta*; participated in various satyagrahas, and imprisoned four times following the Mulshi Peta satyagraha, the last term of imprisonment being four years. He was elected President of Maharashtra Congress Committee. In 1931 he was again jailed for seven years for a speech he made at Ratnagiri. He was in the front rank of the Goa liberation struggle and led the Samyukta Maharashtra satyagraha in November 1956. Author of many works in English and Marathi, Bapat lived an austere life and was ever prepared, literally, to die for the country. He fasted on 8 different occasions and was in jail for a total period of 17 years .

BAPTISTA, JOSEPH (1864-1930): His early schooling was in Bombay and then Poona, where he studied civil engineering. He later went to England and took his B.A. degree from Cambridge University in 1899, in which year he also got enrolled as an advocate in the Bombay High Court. It was Baptista who first suggested to Tilak the idea of forming a Home Rule League patterned after the Irish Home Rule movement of which Baptista had been a student. In 1924 he was elected to Bombay Legislative Council and in 1926 to the Central Legislative Assembly. In 1926 he was elected Mayor of Bombay. He was a champion of labour. In 1919 along with Lajpat Rai he founded the All-India Labour Conference. In 1929 he attended the British Labour Party Conference as the Indian Home Rule delegate.



BARI, ABDUL (1876-1926): Born in Lucknow of a family that claimed descent from Prophet Mohammed, Abdul Bari was educated by Maulvis in Islamic lore. The family hated the Western system of education and Abdul Bari was never exposed to it. He was the founder president of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind. He also organized the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-e-Kaba in 1914 for protecting the sanctity of Kaba and other holy places. As a religious leader he preached Hindu-Muslim unity and did his best to minimize communal conflict. He played a prominent part in the Khilafat campaign. He opposed the Rowlatt Act and was a staunch supporter of Gandhiji's Non-cooperation movement.

BESANT, ANNIE (1847-1933): Annie Besant was born Annie Wood in London of Irish parentage. After her father died, her mother took her to Harrow for education. A Miss Marryat took a fancy to her and taught her German, French and music and took her to France and Germany. In 1867 Annie Wood married Rev. Frank Besant. The marriage was not a happy one. After two issues - a boy and a girl - they separated in 1873. In 1874 Annie Besant became a member of the National Secular Society, of which Charles Bradlaugh was the leading light. Her social reform work brought her in contact with the Webbs, Shaw, Lansbury and other Fabian Socialists. In 1889 she joined the Theosophical Society after reading Mme. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*. After the death of Col. Olcott in 1907 she was elected President of the Society, which position she held till her death in 1933. She first came to India in 1893. In 1895, settling down in Benares, she completed her translation of the *Bhagvad Gita*. In 1898 she established the Central Hindu College at Benares, which later formed the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University. In 1907, she made Adyar in Madras her permanent home. In 1914 she founded the weekly *Commonweal*. In the same year she also purchased the *Madras Standard* and renamed it *New India*. In 1916 she set up the Home



Rule League. In June 1917 she was interned at Ootacamund, along with Arundale and Wadia, her two close followers. Protests all over India resulted in the internment order being withdrawn. In August 1917, she was elected President of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. When the Montford Report was published in 1918 she advised its acceptance. At the Calcutta Special session in 1920 she was among the few leaders who opposed the Non-cooperation resolution. In 1924 she headed the committee that produced the Commonwealth of India Bill, presented to Parliament in December 1925 by a Labour member. The Bill did not go beyond the first reading. Her work for education continued steadily. She established numerous schools and colleges, for instance at Madanpalle in South India in 1915 and National University at Adyar in 1918. She also started in 1917 the Women's Indian Association. In 1917 she also founded the Scouts movement in India.

BHAGAVANDAS (1869-1959): Scholar and politician; having secured a Master's degree in Mental and Moral Sciences from the University of Calcutta at the early age of 17 he took up service as a Tehsildar in 1890 and shortly afterwards as a Deputy Collector. He resigned from service in 1899 to take up public work, especially in the field of education, and was closely associated with the Central Hindu College, Benares. He headed Kashi Vidyapith from its inception in 1921 till 1926. During the Non-cooperation movement he was jailed for 9 months. In 1928 he was an active participant in the All Parties Conference. He also took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-31. He was a social and religious reformer and an advocate of village economy. He was profoundly influenced by the Vedic ideals. He wrote *The Essential Unity of all Religions*, *Ancient Solutions for Modern Problems*, *Social Reconstruction of Modern Societies* and other works. His translation of the *Bhagvad Gita* is highly regarded by scholars and lay people.



BHANDARKAR, RAMKRISHNA GOPAL (1837-1925): Born at Malvan in Ratnagiri district in a Saraswat Brahmin family, Bhandarkar received part of his education at the Elphinstone Institution in Bombay, where he studied mathematics under Dadabhai Naoroji. Afterwards under the inspiration of Howard, he studied Sanskrit. He then taught Sanskrit at Elphinstone College, Bombay (1868-81) and Deccan College, Poona (1882). He was Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University from 1893-95. In 1903 he was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council and from 1904-08 member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Bhandarkar applied the methods of Western scholarship to the study of Sanskrit. His Indological studies earned him world renown. He was elected Honorary Member of Asiatic Societies of Britain, Germany, France, Italy, America and Russia. Besides being a scholar and historian, Bhandarkar was a social reformer. He showed that many hidebound social customs of the day had no foundation in ancient Hindu religion.

BHARGAVA, GOPICHAND, DR. (1889-1966): Born in Hissar, Punjab, Gopichand got his M.B.B.S. degree from the King Edward Medical College, Lahore in 1912. He set up medical practice in Lahore in 1913. He came into politics during the 1919 disturbances in the Punjab. He was deeply influenced by Gandhiji and participated in all the satyagraha movements. He was arrested and interned several times: in 1921 for a seditious speech, in 1923 in satyagraha for the removal of the Lawrence statue from Lahore, in 1930, 1933, 1940 for taking part in Civil Disobedience and in 1942 for the Quit India movement. He held many positions of responsibility in the Congress; he was secretary of the Lahore District Congress Committee (1921), President of the Lahore City Congress Committee (1922), member of the Working Committee of the Punjab P.C.C. (1921-26). He was a member of the All-India Spinners' Association from its inception. From 1928 onwards he was chairman of the Punjab branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh. He was



the most important political leader of the Punjab after Lala Lajpat Rai. He was Chief Minister of the Punjab after independence.

BHAVE, BALKRISHNA: Younger brother of Vinoba Bhave. Studied art at the Baroda School of Art and Gandhiji at one time intended to send him to London for further study of art. Joining the Ashram at Sabarmati he became an expert at weaving and spinning. He played on the *sitar* with great skill, had a melodious voice and sang *bhajans* with great feeling. He like his brother was a *Brahmachari*.

BHAVE, VINOBA (1895-1982): Having passed his matriculation in 1913, Vinoba was one of the first to join Gandhiji's Ashram in 1916. He spent some time in Benares in the study of Sanskrit and the scriptures. He was a linguist and besides most Indian languages also knew Arabic, Persian, English and French. Influenced by the writings of Swami Ramdas and Tilak, Vinoba dedicated himself to the service of the country. Gandhiji found in him a "rare pearl", one who had come to the Ashram "not to be blessed but to bless, not to receive but to give". Vinoba said his life was guided by the *Gita*. He discoursed on the *Gita* extensively in jail, the discourses were later printed and have had a very wide circulation. He translated the *Gita* in Marathi in the same style as the original under the title *Gitai*. Vinoba lived in accordance with the Ashram's eleven vows. He was one of the moving spirits in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha. He participated in the Dandi March in 1930 and was jailed. He was again in prison during the Quit India movement. He made selections from and translated scriptures of all leading religions: Japuji of the Sikhs, Quran, the Bible and the Vedas. Later, after Gandhiji's death he founded the Sarvodaya Sangh and took up the Bhoodan movement to bring about reform in the system of land ownership, and promoted the doctrine of voluntary sharing of whatever one had: land, wealth, intellectual attainments and one's labour.



CHANDAVARKAR, NARAYAN GANESH, SIR (1858-1923): After his education at Elphinstone College, Bombay, Chandavarkar took up the editorship of the weekly *Indu Prakash* and continued it for ten years. He then took up the practice of law at the Bombay High Court and was elevated to the Bombay High Court bench in 1901. He retired in 1912 when he became the Prime Minister of the State of Indore. He served in Indore for two years. In 1921 he was nominated to the presidentship of the Reformed Bombay Legislative Council, which post he retained till his death. He was active in the Congress in the early years of that body and was President of the session held in Lahore in 1900. In 1918 he joined the Moderates along with Surendranath Banerjea and Dinshaw Wacha. He had a deep interest in social work and was associated with a number of social work organizations, such as the Indian National Social Conference founded by Ranade, the Bombay Social Reform Association, the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India and the Social Service League. He was also associated with the Royal Asiatic Society, the Prarthana Samaj and the Students' Brotherhood. He also served as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay for four years.

CHINTAMANI, C. Y. (1880-1941): The "Pope of Indian journalism" as Srinivasa Sastri called him, C. Y. Chintamani was born at Visakhapatnam. He was not able to finish his college education. At the age of 18 he chose journalism as his profession and moved to U. P. For a time he edited *The Indian People*, a weekly journal of Allahabad owned by Sachchidanand Sinha. In 1909 at the young age of twenty-nine he became the editor of *The Leader*, the Liberal daily. He soon drifted into politics. In the elections held in 1921 under the Government of India Act, 1919 he was elected to the U. P. Legislative Council and accepted a ministership and retained it till 1923. Chintamani devoted the columns of *The Leader* to advancing the cause of liberalism in politics. He was the general secretary of the



National Liberal Federation from 1918 to 1920 and again from 1923 to 1929. In 1919 he went to England as a delegate of the Liberal Party. He also attended the Round Table Conference in London. Chintamani was a pious Hindu and a social reformer. He believed in constitutional reforms and saw in Gandhiji's Non-cooperation movement and the repressive measures adopted by the Government an obstacle to political advance.

CHOWDHARANI, SARLADEVI (1872-1954): Daughter of Janaki Nath Ghosal, one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, and niece of Rabindranath Tagore. She took her B.A. (Hon.) degree in English from Bethune College in 1890. She also studied French and Persian and prepared for M.A. in Sanskrit though she did not sit for the examination. For some time she taught music at the Maharani School, Mysore. She married Rambhuj Dutt, a Punjabi Brahmin living in Lahore, around 1905. Rambhuj Dutt was an Arya Samaj leader and edited a Urdu paper *Hindusthan*. When Rambhuj Dutt was arrested Sarladevi took over the editorship of the paper. She was keenly interested in women's education and inspired the founding of the Bharat Stri Mahamandal and later in 1930 opened the Bharat Stri Shiksha Sadan in Calcutta. From 1920 she enthusiastically carried on Gandhiji's constructive programme for some years. She also edited a journal *Bharati* in collaboration with her sister.

DAS, C. R. (1870-1925): Son of Bhuban Mohan Das, a member of Brahmo Samaj and a reputed solicitor, at the Calcutta High Court, Chitta Ranjan graduated from the Presidency College in 1890. He then joined the Inner Temple in London and was called to the bar in 1894. In the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908 he was brilliant as defence lawyer and as a result Aurobindo Ghosh was acquitted. He also appeared for the defence in the Dacca Conspiracy Case in 1910-11. He was dedicated to the cause of the country from his student days and had been



associated with the revolutionary body called the Anusilan Samity. He actively participated in the Swadeshi movement following the partition of Bengal. He contributed articles to *New India* and *Bande Mataram*. He came to the forefront in the national movement in 1917 when he presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference at Bhowanipur. In the Bombay Special Session of the Congress in 1918 and the Annual Session in Delhi C. R. Das opposed the Montford Reforms. In 1920, he opposed Gandhiji's programme of Non-cooperation at the Calcutta Special Session of the Congress. Das accepted it at the Nagpur session later and threw himself heart and soul into the movement. When the Government declared the Congress volunteer organizations illegal in 1921 on the visit of the Prince of Wales, Das was arrested and sentenced along with many other important leaders of the Congress. After his release in 1922 he was elected president of the Congress for its session at Gaya. Gandhiji having been imprisoned and the Non-cooperation movement suspended, Das came out with his programme of Council-entry. But the majority in the Congress was against him. So he set up the Swaraj Party to carry on the Council-entry programme. Other leaders who joined him were Motilal Nehru, the Ali Brothers, Hakim Ajmal Khan and V. J. Patel. At the general election in 1923 Swarajists under Das's leadership swept Bengal. In 1924 the Swarajists captured the Calcutta Corporation and Das was elected Mayor. He founded *Forward*, the official organ of the Swaraj Party in 1923 and in the following year started another paper, the *Municipal Gazette*. He was also a poet and published many volumes of lyrics. Gandhiji accepted the Swarajists after his release and signed a pact with Das.

DUTT, RAMBHUI (CHOWDHARY) (1866-1923): Born in a rich zamindar family of Gurdaspur district in the Punjab, Dutt graduated from Foreman Christian College in 1888 and then passed LL.B. He practised as a vakil at Taran Taran, Amritsar and



finally Lahore. He was an Arya Samajist and had progressive views on social reform. He was also a firm believer in Hindu-Muslim unity. From 1888 onwards he was closely connected with Congress work in the Punjab and attended all the Congress meetings. He was a most effective orator. He was one of the leaders of the agrarian movement that agitated the Punjab in 1907. Along with Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh he set the countryside aflame. During the martial law in 1919 he became the uncrowned king of Lahore. His fiery oratory moved the masses and imbued them with patriotism. He was arrested and deported to Dera Baba Ghazi Khan. Later tried by a Martial Law Commission he was sentenced to transportation for life and forfeiture of property. He was released under general amnesty granted by the Royal Proclamation in 1919. He married three times, his last wife being Sarla Devi Chowdharani. He was a poet and writer and edited two papers: *Hindusthan* (weekly) and *Deepak* (daily).

DESAI, DARBAR GOPALDAS KASHIBHAI (1887-1951): Born at Vaso in the Nadiad Taluka, Gopaldas was by caste a Patidar. His maternal grandfather, who was a talukadar, having no children, adopted Gopaldas and on his death Gopaldas became the ruler of a small principality including Dhasa, Rayasankali and Vaso. He joined the Baroda College in 1907 but left his studies in 1911. Gopaldas was influenced in politics by Vallabhbhai and Vithalbhai, but Gandhiji transformed him from a prince into a nationalist leader. His work in the national movement spanned thirty-one years – from 1920 to 1951. As a talukadar he refused to contribute to the War Fund, which he was required to do. During the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation his principality observed a complete hartal. His participation in national activities led to loss of his state in 1922. He then became a full-time political worker. He took part in the Borsad Satyagraha in 1923, and in the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. He took part in the Dandi March in 1938. At the Haripura



session of the Congress he was Chairman of the Reception Committee. He participated in the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement and in the Quit India movement. Before independence he was an active organizer of the States' people's movement in Baroda and in the States of Kathiawar. He generously patronized educational institutions and libraries. The Vithal Kanya Vidyalaya at Nadiad and the Vithal Kanya Vidyalaya at Rajkot owed their existence to Gopaldas. He was an ardent devotee of Gandhiji.

DESAI, HARILAL (1881-1927): Educationist and social worker, he left his job in 1920 to join the Non-cooperation Movement and dedicated his life to khadi and village uplift work.

DESAI, MAHADEV HARIBHAI (1892-1942): Born in a village in Olpad Taluka of Surat district in Gujarat, of Anavil Brahmin parents, Mahadev graduated from the Elphinstone College, Bombay in 1910 and then got his LL.B. in 1913. While he tried to find a livelihood Mahadev translated into Gujarati Lord Morely's 'On Compromise', which fetched him a prize of a thousand rupees. His practice of law was desultory and soon he took up a job in a bank, which he did not particularly like. He continued his pursuit of literature – Gujarati, English, Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi and Marathi. In August 1917 he gave up the job at the bank and joined Gandhiji as secretary, which position he maintained till his death. He became more than a son to Gandhiji and was called his alter ego.

He actively participated in all the satyagraha campaigns led by Gandhiji and wrote voluminously for *Navajivan*. He accompanied Gandhiji to the Round Table Conference in 1931. His innumerable articles in *Young India* and *Harijan* show the wide sweep of his interests and his scholarship, clarity of mind, lucid style and chaste language. His diary, written in Gujarati, meticulous in detail, published after his death, runs into several volumes. His other works are: *With Gandhi in*



Ceylon, The Story of Bardoli, Swadeshi – True and False. Unworthy of Wardha, Eclipse of Faith, The Nation's Voice, The Epic of Travancore, Gandhi Seva Sangh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khetini Jamin, The Gita According to Gandhi, Veer Vallabhbhai, Be Khudai Khidmatgar, Ek Dharmayuddha, and Saint Francis Xaviernu Jeevancharitra. He also translated numerous books into Gujarati. Verrier Elwin called him Bapu's Boswell.

DESAI, VALJI GOVINDJI (1892-1982): A close co-worker of Gandhiji. Valji's father Govindji Desai had been in the service of the Jetpur Durbar in Saurashtra and Valji had his early education in Jetpur. Later he studied at Gujarat College, Ahmedabad and Elphinstone College, Bombay. Valji was a brilliant student, especially in English and Sanskrit. After graduation in 1913 he taught at Gujarat College for two years. He resigned when College authorities refused him permission to attend the Congress session in Bombay. Valji had been filled with patriotic zeal from his student days. In high school he had been rusticated for one year for joining a students' strike in protest against the hanging of Khudiram Bose. He declined the offer of financial assistance for further studies in England by Sir Valentine Chirol.

Valji was an active participant in all Gandhiji's satyagraha movements and courted imprisonment many times: for 1 ½ years in 1922 for his articles in *Young India*, for three months in 1930 for his part in the Salt Satyagraha – he had been one of the 78 satyagrahis who marched to Dandi with Gandhiji. During his term in Jail, Desai showed disinclination to perform the prison chores assigned to him, preferring to utilize the time for study. This lapse on his part did not please Gandhiji, who gave this as one of the reasons for suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement in April 1934.



Valji Desai enthusiastically pursued the constructive work programme of Gandhiji. He was appointed secretary of the Cow Protection Association formed in 1925. But his forte was literary work. Apart from his work for *Young India*, he translated Gandhiji's Gujarati writings into English, including *History of Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhiji's weekly letters from the Yeravda Prison on Ashram observances, published in Gujarati under the title *Mangal Prabhat*, *Discourses on the Gita* and weekly letters on the *Gita* Gandhiji wrote from Yeravda Prison, published in Gujarati under the title *Gitabodh*. He also did original writing in Gujarati. Some of his works are *Ishucharita*, *Draupadina Chir* and *Rajkatha*. He was also one of the trustees for the publication of Jain literature for Gujarat Vidyapith.

DESHPANDE, GANGADHAR BALKRISHNA (1871-1960): Born in Kolhapur State in a Brahmin family, Deshpande graduated from the Deccan College, Poona in 1893 and took his law degree from the Bombay University in 1897. Poona was then under the sway of Ranade, Gokhale and Tilak and Gangadharrao was drawn into the circle. Along with law practice in Belgaum he continued his political activity under Tilak's guidance from 1905 to 1920. He was associated with national papers such as *Dhurina*. (1899), *Rashtramata* (1907) and *Lokmanya* (1920). From 1914 to 1920 he was Tilak's right-hand man in all his plans: the Home Rule League, the Lucknow Pact and the Congress Democratic Party. He along with Kaka Kalelkar fell under Gandhiji's spell and after Tilak's death accepted Gandhiji's Non-cooperation programme. He worked for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, national schools, boycott of foreign cloth and Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1929 he donated his private estate to the Gandhi Seva Sangh. He was Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Belgaum Congress in 1924 and for a number of years was president of the Karnataka P.C. C. He courted imprisonment in 1921, 1930 and



1942. After independence he worked with Vinoba and Jayaprakash and was in jail during the emergency.

DEVADHAR, GOPAL KRISHNA (1871-1935): Founder, with G. K. Gokhale, of the Servants of India Society. After graduating from Fergusson College in 1897 he became a teacher in the Aryan Education Society on a humble salary. He passed the M.A. examination in 1903 and got in touch with Gokhale in 1904. In 1905 the Servants of India Society came into being. When plague broke out in Poona in 1906 Devadhar worked untiringly on relief operations. He started, in association with Ramabai Ranade, the Seva Sadan at Poona, for educating and training women to become self-reliant. In 1921 when the Moplah rebellion broke out Devadhar worked for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims. Devadhar was the editor of the Servants of India Society organ *Dhyanprakash* (a daily) and also of the magazine *Sheti and Shetkari*. He was provincial president of the Anti-Untouchability League started by Gandhiji.

DEV, SHANKARRAO DATTATREYA (1894-1974): Studied for some time at the Baroda College, where Vinoba Bhave, N. V. Gadgil and Chhaganlal Joshi were among his class-mates. Passed his B.A. examination from St. Xavier's College, Bombay in 1918. He worked for some time in Champaran, touring the villages with Rajendra Prasad. He was one of the leaders of the Mulshi Peta satyagraha. He was Arrested and imprisoned for one month in 1922 in this connection. He was again arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. For refusing work on Ashadh Ekadshi day he was given the punishment of thirty stripes. He shouted "Mahatma Gandhiki Jai" with each stripe, till he fainted. He organized the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee and was its virtual leader and in 1930 its president. He actively assisted Sardar Patel in organizing the Bardoli Satyagraha. Following his denunciation of British rule in articles published in the



Marathi weekly *Swaraj* he was prosecuted under Section 121-A and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in 1927. He was a competent writer in Marathi and worked on the editorial staff of *Lokasangraha*. He also edited *Swaraj* and started a daily *Lokashakti* in 1938, a weekly *Satyagralti* in 1940 and the magazine *Navabharat* in 1950. His published works include *Asahakar-Yoga*, *Mahatma Gandhi Yancha Karagaranubhava*, (both Marathi translations of Gandhiji's writings) *Swarajya Sopan*, *Sarvodayacha Itihas*, etc. He was jailed twice during the Salt Satyagraha. In the Individual Civil Disobedience movement in 1940 he was jailed for eighteen months. He was again jailed during the Quit India movement. He was general secretary of the Congress from 1946 to 1950. He was associated with the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, but when the movement became violent he went on a 30-day fast. He also founded an Ashram at Saswad in Poona district, which became his headquarters.

DUNI CHAND, LALA (of Ambala) (1873-1965): After graduating from the Foreman Christian College, Lahore, Duni Chand set up legal practice in Ambala. Right from his student days Duni Chand had been active in Arya Samaj and in 1906 he became manager of the Anglo-Sanskrit High School, Ambala. He participated in the agrarian agitation of 1907. In 1920 when Gandhiji gave the call for Non-cooperation Duni Chand gave up his legal practice and took active part in the movement. He was arrested in 1922 and was sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment. In 1923 he joined the Swaraj Party. In the same year he was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. In 1927 he attended a conference at Cologne under the auspices of the League Against Imperialism. In 1929 he served on the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee. He supported the Purna Swaraj resolution at the Lahore Congress in 1929 and joined the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930. He was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment. In 1937 he was elected to



the Punjab Legislative Assembly. In 1942 he participated in the Quit India movement. After independence Duni Chand retired from active politics.

DUNI CHAND, LALA (of Lahore) (1870-1945): Duni Chand graduated from the Government College, Lahore. In 1893 he proceeded to England to study engineering but instead studied law and returning to India set up legal practice at Lahore. He took a keen interest in the municipal affairs and remained associated with the local municipal committee for about 35 years. He participated in the agrarian movement of 1907 and formed an Indian Association. He presided over the Punjab Provincial Congress held in Amritsar in 1918. In the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation he took a prominent part, having signed the satyagraha pledge. In the demonstrations in Lahore on the 6th April and again on 9th, 10th and 11th April he played a leading role. He was arrested on 14 April and sentenced to transportation for life. On his release in the general amnesty under the Royal Proclamation he attended the Amritsar Congress. He also took part in the Quit India movement and was arrested and imprisoned. He was released when he suffered a paralytic stroke.

GANDHI, DEVADAS (1900-1957): Youngest of the four sons of Gandhiji, Devadas was born on 22nd May 1900 in Durban. Devadas did not have a university degree. He was sent to Madras for propagation of Hindi and came close to Rajaji. He married his daughter Lakshmi in 1933. In 1931 he accompanied Gandhiji to the Round Table Conference in London and later travelled as a journalist in various countries. He met George Bernard Shaw and Romain Rolland. He took part in the Non-cooperation movement in 1920 and was jailed. In 1932 he was again jailed after he returned from Europe. In 1933 soon after his marriage with Lakshmi he was again jailed for having defied a prohibitory order. In 1942 he was arrested for publishing the banned statements of Gandhiji. He was opposed to violence



and disapproved of the underground movement of 1942. In 1920-21 he joined the staff of the *Independent*, brought out from Allahabad by Motilal Nehru. Later in 1923-24 he assisted in the editing of *Young India* and *Navajivan*. In 1933 he joined the *Hindustan Times*, and was its managing editor till his death in 1957. Under him the *Hindustan Times* became one of the leading daily newspapers of India. Devadas held many positions of responsibility. He was president of A.I.N.E.C. in 1948-49; chairman of I.E.N.S. and P.T.I. and a director of Reuter, 1949-53; trustee of the Kasturba Memorial Trust and Vice-chairman of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 1957. He was chairman of the Gandhi Films Committee.

GANDHI, HARILAL (1888-1948) : Eldest son of Gandhiji, married Gulabbehn (Chanchal) Vohra in 1906. Participated in S.A. satyagraha in 1907 and was imprisoned six times for a total period of over 19 months. Harilal Gandhi resented the fact that Gandhiji had neglected the education of his children and gradually became alienated from his father. He took up employment with a business firm in Calcutta and later set up independent business of his own. Both times he was guilty of financial irregularities. He lost his wife in the influenza epidemic in 1918, took more and more to drinking and dissipation and was a source of much sorrow to his parents. He left a son and two daughters who were brought up by Kasturba.

GOKHALE, AVANTIKABAI (1882-1942): Married at the age of nine to Bahan Gokhale, Avantikabai had received no education in her childhood; her parents had been against the education of girls. Her husband put her on the path of education and in 1901 she obtained a first-class diploma in midwifery. She also studied Hindu scriptures and read Marathi and English literature. In 1913 she joined the Social Service League and worked in labour areas. In the same year she went to England, where she met Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Sarojini Naidu and prominent social workers of London. In 1916 at the Lucknow Congress Bahan and



Avantikabai first met Gandhiji and decided to follow him. In 1917 she went to Champaran at the call of Gandhiji and worked in the villages, conducting literacy and moral and hygiene classes. In 1918 she started the Hind Mahila Samaj in Bombay and remained its president for 38 years. She also became member of the Bombay Corporation in 1926 and did much for the municipal workers and their chawls. She participated in all the activities of the Congress and was jailed many times. She presented to Gandhiji on his birthday a pair of dhotis prepared from her yarn every year from 1920 to 1946. She was one of the founders of the Deshsevika Dal in Bombay in 1930. She did much to draw women into political and social work in Bombay and Maharashtra.

GOKHALE; GOPAL KRISHNA (1866-1915): Statesman and educationist; associated with the Deccan Education Society's Fergusson College as professor of mathematics, English and political economy; entered politics in 1890; appeared before the Welby Commission on Indian Finance in 1896; elected to Bombay Legislative Council in 1899; founded the Servants of India Society and presided at session of Indian National Congress at Benares, 1905; member of Imperial Legislative Council, 1902-15; took keen interest in education and was responsible for Elementary Education Bill; served on the Royal Commission on Public Services; championed the cause of Indentured Indians in South Africa and on Gandhiji's invitation visited South Africa in 1912. Gandhiji said Gokhale's mission in life was to spiritualize politics. He called Gokhale his Guru in politics.

GUPTA, SHIVAPRASAD (1883-1944): A big zamindar of Benares, who came first under the influence of Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lajpat Rai and then Gandhiji. His donation of ten lakh rupees made possible the founding of Kashi Vidyapith in 1921. He also contributed liberally to the Benares Hindu University. He travelled widely from 1914 to 1916 and as a result developed sympathy for the



revolutionary groups everywhere. He participated in the Non-cooperation movement but he could not accept non-violence as a creed. He opposed Gandhiji at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 and supported the independence call. He again opposed Gandhiji's stand on the execution of Bhagat Singh at the Karachi Congress in 1931. He was the founder of the Hindi daily *Aaj*. In 1930 he was active in the Salt Satyagraha and was imprisoned.

HARKISHEN LAL, LALA (1864-1937): Nationalist politician and entrepreneur. He did his graduation from Trinity College, Cambridge and for some time taught at the Government College Lahore. During the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation he took an active part in the demonstrations that rocked the Punjab, for which he was sentenced to transportation for life and forfeiture of property. He was however released after a few months. He was a bitter critic of Governor O'Dwyer's administration in the Punjab. In 1896 he floated the Bharat Insurance Company and promoted and organized the Punjab Cotton Press Company, the People's Bank of India, the Amritsar Bank, the Cawnpore Flour Mills, the Century Flour Mills and various other factories. When elections were held under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1920 he was elected from a traders' constituency and was made a minister. In 1923 he resigned from the ministry and appeared as witness in the case of O'Dwyer v. Nair, on behalf of Shankaran Nair.

HASAN IMAM, SYED (1871-1933): Younger brother of Sir Ali Imam, he went to England in 1889 to study for the Bar. During the general elections in 1891 he campaigned actively for Dadabhoy Naoroji. In 1892 he was called to the Bar and set up practice in the Calcutta High Court. From 1912 to 1916 he was a judge of the Calcutta High Court. In 1921 he was nominated member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council and was its first elected Deputy President. He had always been active in Congress politics. In 1909 he was elected President of the



Bihar Provincial Congress Committee. He participated in the Home Rule movement and in 1917 was in the forefront of the agitation to get Annie Besant released. He presided at the Special Session of the Congress held in Bombay in 1918 to consider the Montford Reforms. He was actively involved in the Khilafat movement but had been opposed to Non-cooperation. However in 1930 he participated in the Salt Satyagraha and was elected secretary of the Swadeshi League formed at Patna. He was also connected with newspapers. He was a trustee of the *Beharee* and one of the founders of *Searchlight*.

HASRAT MOHANI (1878-1951): Pen name of Saiyed Fazal Hasan; he was associated with the Congress since his student days. In 1907 he joined the faction led by Tilak and separated himself from the Congress. In 1908 he was arrested under the Press Act and sentenced to two years' R.I. with a fine of Rs. 500. During his political career he was imprisoned five more times. He was the first among the Muslims to work for popularization of the Swadeshi movement and his wife was one of the first Muslim women to discard the purdah. After the failure of the All-Parties Conference in Calcutta in 1928 he left the Congress along with many other Muslim leaders. When the League passed its resolution demanding Pakistan Hasrat Mohani opposed it tooth and nail and told Jinnah that he was surrounded by "political adventurers". He was a member of the Constituent Assembly but refused to sign the constitution in protest against the partition of the country and India's membership of the Commonwealth. A devout Muslim he visited Mecca many times. He also visited Mathura on Krishna's birthday on many occasions. He also made a distinctive contribution to Urdu poetry.

HORNIMAN, B. G. (1873-1948): An English journalist who identified himself completely with the cause of India's freedom. Horniman worked for *Southern*



Daily Mail, Morning Leader, Daily Express, Manchester Guardian and other papers, in 1906 he joined *The Statesman* of Calcutta as news editor and covered the Delhi Durbar in 1911. He wrote in the *Statesman* criticizing the partition of Bengal and identified himself with the position of Indian nationalists. In 1913 Sir Pherozeshah Mehta started *The Bombay Chronicle* as a daily and Horniman joined it as editor. He continued to work for the Congress cause. He became the Vice-President of the Bombay branch of Annie Besant's Home Rule League. He was also elected to the Bombay Corporation. In 1919 in the wake of the repression let loose following the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation he was deported to England. Returning to India in 1926 he again joined *The Bombay Chronicle*, but resigned soon after. He then founded *Indian National Herald* and edited it till 1929. Next he founded the *Weekly Herald* and *Daily Herald* and in 1933 he founded the *Bombay Sentinel*. He wrote several tracts on the Punjab atrocities: *Agony of Amritsar, Amritsar and Our Duty to India*, and so on.

INDRA VIDYAVACHASPATI (1889-1960): Younger son of Swami Shraddhanand, born at Nawanshahr in Jullundur district of the Punjab and educated in a gurukul. He later became a teacher at Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar. He joined the Congress early in life and in 1920-21, was a leading figure in the Delhi Congress. He had very close relations with Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Deshbandhu Gupta and others. He participated in the Salt Satyagraha and suffered imprisonment. Later he drifted away from the Congress and identified himself more and more with the Hindu Mahasabha. He was above all a journalist and was associated with *Vijaya, Saddharma Pracharak* of the Arya Samaj, *Vir Arjun, Satyavadi*, and *Jansatta*.

ISHWAR SARAN, MUNSHI (1874-1947): Born at Gorakhpur in a Kayastha family, Ishwar Saran graduated from the Allahabad University and started legal practice



there. Very early he came in contact with Annie Besant and was influenced by theosophy. Influence of Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru and T. B. Saprú led him to the Congress. In 1918 he became president of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee. In 1921 he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly as an independent, as he did not approve of the Non-cooperation movement. In opposing repressive laws of the Government he always sided with the Congress in the Assembly.

IYENGAR, S. KASTURI RANGA (1859-1923): Born of Vaishnava parents in Tanjore, Kasturi Ranga took a degree from the Presidency College, Madras, in 1879, then taking a law degree, he enrolled as a vakíl in Coimbatore in 1885. After nine years he shifted to Madras, where he became involved in journalism and politics. In 1905 he took over *The Hindu* and made it his major preoccupation, so that it became the most influential newspaper in South India. When the Congress split in 1907, Kasturi Ranga sided with Tilak and withdrew from Congress activity. He returned to the Congress in 1916 along with Tilak and played a part in formulating the Congress-League scheme. When Gandhiji presented the Non-cooperation programme to the Congress, Kasturi Ranga first opposed it but later became its staunch supporter. In 1922 after Gandhiji's arrest, he was a member of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee set up by the Congress. Kasturi Ranga was in favour of the constructive programme and against Council entry.

AIYAR, C. P. RAMASWAMI (1879-1966): Sir C. P. was born at Wandiwash in North Arcot district of Madras. He took his B.A. degree from the Presidency College, Madras, and then graduated in Law from the Madras Law College. He then practised law at the Madras High Court. He was elected to the Madras Corporation Council in 1912. When Annie Besant started her Home Rule League he joined it and led the Home Rule League deputation to the Joint Parliamentary



Committee in London. In 1919 he was elected to the Madras Legislative Council and shortly afterwards taken as an Executive Councillor by Lord Willingdon. In 1931 he was appointed Law Member by the Viceroy. Later he was Dewan of Travancore (1936-47). As Dewan he carried on a relentless fight against the Congress and the Communists. On 10 November 1936 he had a Temple Entry Proclamation issued that threw open the temples in the state to Harijans. In the talks with the British Government that preceded the transfer of power to India in 1947 he said Travancore would remain independent, joining neither India nor Pakistan. It was not acceptable. He was also an educationist and served as Vice-Chancellor of Travancore, Annamalai and Benares Universities.

JAIRAMDAS DOULATRAM (1891-1979): Born in Karachi, Jairamdas graduated from Ephinstone College, Bombay in 1912 and took his law degree in 1915. In 1916 he joined Annie Besant's Home Rule League. In 1918 he presided over the All Sind Students' Conference at Sukkur. In 1919 he attended the Amritsar session of the Congress. In 1921 he joined the Non-cooperation movement and took up the editorship of the Sindhi daily *Hindu* (later *Hindustan*). He was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. When Gandhiji fasted for communal unity in 1924 Jairamdas played an important role in the negotiations between various groups. He later accompanied Gandhiji on his Frontier tour. In 1925 Jairamdas accepted the editorship of the *Hindustan Times*. In 1929 he successfully sought election to the Bombay Legislative Council. Shortly afterwards at the call of Gandhiji he gave up his membership of the Council and became secretary of the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee. He was appointed a member of the Congress Working Committee, a position he retained till 1940. He took a leading part in the Salt Satyagraha and was injured in police firing and was imprisoned. He was again in jail in 1932 for two years. On his release in 1933 he



took to constructive programme. During the Quit India movement (1942) he was arrested and detained for about three years. He played a significant role in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. After independence he served as Minister for Food and Agriculture and as Governor of Bihar and Assam.

JAYAKAR, M. R. (1873-1959): Born in Bombay, Jayakar was educated in the Elphinstone High School and St. Xavier's College, Bombay, graduating in 1895. He took his M.A. in 1897 and LL.B. in 1902. In 1903 he went to England and was called to the Bar in 1905. He was for some time (1907-12) professor at the Bombay Law School. In 1918 his address at the Poona District Conference was much appreciated by Tilak. He was a member of the Congress Sub-committee which enquired into the Punjab atrocities. He was one of the leaders of the Swaraj Party in Bombay and when in 1925 there was a schism in the Party he was one of the leaders of the Responsive Cooperationists. He was leader of the Swarajists in the Bombay Legislative Council from 1923 to 1926 and in 1926 was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly where he was Deputy leader of the Nationalists from 1926 to 1930. In 1937 he was appointed a judge of the Federal Court. He was a Sanskritist and his contribution to the study of Hindu law was widely acclaimed. He was also a keen educationist. In 1924-25 he was on the Bombay University Reforms Committee. He delivered convocation addresses at many universities. Along with Sapru and Srinivasa Sastri he frequently interceded between Gandhiji and the Government.

JOSEPH, GEORGE (1887-1938): A Syrian Christian from Central Travancore, he accepted Roman Catholicism in 1931. After matriculating he went to England in 1905 and returned a Middle Temple barrister in 1909. He was soon drawn into national politics. In 1916 he joined the Home Rule League of Annie Besant. In 1918 he was on the three-man deputation sent by Annie Besant to England to



present the case for Indian Home Rule to the British Government. In the Non-cooperation movement of 1920 George withdrew his children from Government schools, gave up his legal practice and plunged into Congress work. Motilal Nehru made him the editor of his paper *Independent* but he was soon imprisoned. On his release he took up the editing of *Young India*. In 1924 he participated in the Vykom Satyagraha and was jailed. At the Gaya Congress in 1922 he stoutly opposed the Swarajists and sided with the No-changers. From 1925 to 1934 he was less actively involved with politics and more with religious affairs. In 1937 he was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly on the Congress ticket. He was an ardent champion of national education, cottage industries and emancipation of women.

KALELKAR, DATTATREYA BALKRISHNA (1885-1981): Kaka Kalelkar was born in Satara, Maharashtra in a Saraswat Brahmin family. He graduated from the Fergusson College, Poona, in 1907. In 1909 he took up a teaching job at Ganesh Vidyalaya at Belgaum. In 1910 he shifted to Baroda as Headmaster of the Ganganath Bharatiya Sarva Vidyalaya. This institution had to be closed down in 1911 under Government pressure. Kalelkar then spent some time in the Himalayas, and taught the Sanatani Rishikul at Hardwar and the Sindhu Brahmcharya Ashram at Hyderabad (Sind). In 1914 he joined the teaching staff of Santiniketan, where the following year he met Gandhiji. He remained with Gandhiji till the latter's death. He was a teacher at the school at Sabarmati and later when Gujarat Vidyapith came into being Kaka Saheb was first a professor and later Vice-Chancellor for eight years, 1928-35. When Gandhiji went to Wardha Kaka Saheb went with him and was entrusted with the work of popularizing Hindustani. He served five long terms of imprisonment between 1922 and 1946. A scholar, he wrote many books in Marathi and Gujarati. Kaka



Saheb was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1952 to 1964. He was closely associated with the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti. He submitted the report of the Backward Classes Commission to Government in early fifties and remarked that there were three backward classes : Harijan, Girijan (Tribes) and Strijan (Women). He was President of the Gujarati Sahitya Sammelan in 1959 and a member of the Sahitya Akademy.

KALLENBACH, HERMANN (-1945): German Jewish architect settled in Johannesburg. He first came in contact with Gandhiji in 1909 and was drawn to him because of his life of severe simplicity and spirituality. He actively participated in the Indian Satyagraha in South Africa and provided substantial financial help to the cause. In 1910 he acquired a farm near Lawley which Gandhiji used for accommodating families of passive resisters and named Tolstoy Farm. He accompanied Gandhiji when the latter left for India in 1914, but was interned in London by the British. He resumed his contacts with Gandhiji later and visited him in India more than once. He was called uncle Hanuman by the Ashramites.

KARVE, DHONDO KESHAV (1858-1962): After matriculating at the age of 23 Karve did his B.A. from the Elphinstone College, Bombay, in 1884. Taught at various schools in Bombay and at Fergusson College, Poona. Elected life member of the Deccan Education Society, 1892. In 1893 he founded a society for the promotion of widow remarriage. In 1898 he started a Mahila Ashram in Poona. In 1907 he started a Mahila Vidyalaya. In 1916 he founded the Indian Women's University, and in 1917 a Training College for teachers. In 1936 he started the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society. In 1929 he toured in Europe and America attending various conferences and giving lectures. He also visited Japan and then in 1930 a number of African countries such as Mombasa, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Portuguese, East Africa and South Africa. Various academic



honours came his way and in 1958 he was awarded the highest national honour of India – Bharat Ratna. He has been called Maharshi Karve.

KELAPPAN, K. (1890-1971): Born at Payyoli in Kerala, Kelappan did his B.A. from Madras University in 1912. In 1920 he was doing law from the Law College, Bombay when the call of Non-cooperation came and he gave up his study and joined the movement. In 1921 he was arrested and jailed for a short while. When the Moplah rebellion broke out in Malabar, Kelappan worked hard to bring about peace. He fought against all social evils. He took active part in the Vykombathur Satyagraha for opening temple roads to Harijans in 1924. In 1930 he assumed the leadership of the Salt Satyagraha in Kerala. He was sent to prison for nine months. In 1931 he launched the Guruvayur temple entry satyagraha and in 1932 went on a fast unto death to achieve the object of temple entry for Harijans. He broke the fast at the behest of Gandhiji. He edited *Mathrubhumi*, a nationalist Malayalam daily of Calicut, from 1935 to 1936 when he was elected president of the Malabar District Board. In the Individual Civil Disobedience movement of 1940 Kelappan was the first satyagrahi nominated by Gandhiji from Kerala. During the Quit India movement he was arrested and jailed for three years. Later, in the fifties he left the Congress and joined the Praja Socialist Party. He worked actively for the cause of prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs till the end of his life.

KELKAR, NARASIMHA CHINTAMAN (1872-1947): After passing his B.A. from Deccan College, Poona in 1891 and LL.B. in 1894 he started practice of law at Satara. In 1896 he joined Tilak to assist him in editing his papers *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. He worked on these papers for 41 years. Kelkar worked with Tilak in the Swadeshi movement in 1906. In 1908 when Tilak was tried and sentenced to imprisonment for 6 years Kelkar wrote a book criticizing the judgment. The book



was proscribed and he was sent to prison for contempt of court. He drafted "The Case for Home Rule" to be presented to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Home Rule League of Tilak in 1917. Kelkar was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1923 on the Swaraj Party ticket. He was an active participant in the *shuddhi* and *sangathan* activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. He was a gifted writer and published essays, dramas, short stories and a novel in Marathi.

KHAPARDE, GANESH SHRIKRISHNA (1854-1938): Born in Ingoli, Berar, Khaparde did his B.A. from the Elphinstone College, Bombay in 1877. Having put in a spell of Government service he set up as a lawyer at Amarawati in 1890. It was as a lawyer that he was first associated with Tilak in connection with a civil suit. He soon developed active interest in national politics and worked for the Nationalist Party of Tilak. He was in England from 1908 to 1910 to plead the case of Tilak at the Privy Council. He again visited England with Tilak in connection with the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1919-20. In 1920 he left the Congress for he did not approve of the Non-Cooperation programme. He was a member of the Central Assembly from 1920 to 1925.

KITCHLEW, SAIFUDDIN (1888-1963): Born at Faridkote, Kitchlew did his B.A. from Cambridge in 1915, then Bar-at-Law from London and Ph.D. from Germany. On his return home he set up legal practice in Amritsar. He also took up national activities and soon became an important leader of the Punjab. In 1919 he played a pivotal role, along with Satyapal, in the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation in Amritsar. He also participated in the Khilafat movement of 1920-21. In 1924 he was appointed General Secretary of the Congress. He was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Lahore Congress session of 1929. In mid-twenties he reacted strongly against Shradhanand's *shuddhi* movement and started *tablighi* and *tanzim* to counter it. He however remained a staunch votary of



Hindu-Muslim unity. He opposed the partition of the country as a surrender to communalism. He later drifted away from the Congress and associated more and more with the Communist Party of India.

KRIPALANI, J. B. (1888-1982): Born in Hyderabad, Sind, in a Kshatriya Amil family. Two of his brothers became Muslims and died for Islamic causes. Another brother became a sannyasi. Having been rusticated from D. J. Sind College, Karachi, for participating in a strike, Kripalani graduated from the Fergusson College, Poona, in 1908. He later did M.A. in history and economics. From 1912 to 1917 he taught at Government College, Muzaffarpur, in Bihar where he joined Gandhiji in the Champaran Satyagraha. In 1919-20 he also taught at Benares Hindu University. For some years he served as the Principal of the Gujarat Vidyapith founded by Gandhiji. From 1927 onwards he devoted himself wholly to Congress and constructive work. He married Sucheta in 1936 when she was teaching at the Women's College in Benares. From 1934 to 1946 he served as the General Secretary of the Congress. He took part in the Non-cooperation movement in 1920-21, in the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 and in the Quit India movement in 1942 and was imprisoned each time. In 1946 he was elected President of the Congress. He developed differences with some of the Congress leaders and resigned. In 1951 he left the Congress altogether and started a weekly, *Vigil*. He also started the Krishak Mazdur Praja Party, which later merged with the Socialist Party to form the Praja Socialist Party. Kripalani resigned from the P.S.P. in 1954. He was a member of the Lok Sabha for several terms.

KUNZRU, HIRDAY NATH, (1887-1978): Son of Pandit Ajudhia Nath, a top-ranking lawyer and leader of the Congress in its early days, Hirday Nath was born at Agra, where the family had been settled for several generations. Kunzru took a B.Sc. degree from the Agra University, a B.Sc. of the London School of Economics and



LL.B. from Agra University. Quite early in his career he joined the Servants of India Society under Gokhale's inspiration, of which he became life president in 1936. In politics Kunzru was a liberal and stood for self-government within the Commonwealth to be achieved by constitutional means. He was in the Congress till 1920 when he left the organization along with other Moderates and formed the National Liberal Federation. He was a member of the U.P. Legislative Council (1921-1923) and of the Indian Legislative Assembly (1927-1930). He was again elected to the Central Assembly in 1937. As a parliamentarian he took up the issues of Indianization of the Civil Service and of the Armed forces and the condition of Indians settled in the Colonies. He was a great champion of the rights of women, Harijans and other under-privileged sections of society. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha after independence for many years and was a highly respected parliamentarian.

LAJPAT RAI, LALA (1865-1928): Born in a village in Ludhiana district, Punjab, Lajpat Rai took his law degree in 1886 and set up legal practice first at Hissar and then at Lahore. His political activity started in 1888 when he attended the Congress session at Allahabad. He supported Tilak's agitation and had no patience with the pious resolutions passed by the Congress every year. He took part in the Swadeshi and boycott movement following the Bengal partition. In 1905 he went with Gokhale to England to educate British public opinion on the Indian situation and won the support of Labour and Liberal politicians. In 1907 he led the great agrarian movement in the Punjab, for which he was deported to Burma. Lajpat Rai went to England again in 1908 on a lecture programme. In 1913 he went to Japan, England and America on a lecture tour, returning to India in 1920. While in the U.S.A. he set up the Indian Home Rule League on 15 October 1916. He presided at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1920. In 1921 he was arrested



during the Non-cooperation movement. He again visited Europe in 1924, 1926 and 1927 and attended the International Labour Conference at Geneva in 1926 as delegate of the Indian Labour. Lajpat Rai was at first opposed to Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience programmes, but accepted the same at the Nagpur Congress. When the Congress split at the Gaya session Lajpat Rai joined the Swaraj Party. On 30 October 1928 Lajpat Rai was beaten up by the police in an anti-Simon Commission procession he was leading and died on 17 November 1928. There was a strong belief that the death resulted from the injury sustained during the police attack. Lajpat Rai was a prolific writer, a competent journalist and a forceful speaker. He founded the Urdu daily *Bande Mataram* and an English weekly *People*. The tracts he wrote include: *Young India*, *England's Debt to India*, *Evolution of Japan*, *Great Thoughts*, *Ideals of Non-Cooperation*, *India's Will to Freedom*, *Message of the Bhagavad Gita*, etc. He was closely associated with the Arya Samaj and founded the D.A.V. College, Lahore, and many other educational institutions.

MADHAVAN, T. K. (1886-1930): Born at Mavelikkara in Central Travancore of agriculturist parents, Madhavan was unable to pursue his studies beyond Matriculation. He was nominated to the Travancore Assembly in 1917, 1919 and 1920 to represent the Ezhava community. His leadership qualities came out in 1924 during the Vykam Satyagraha for opening the approach roads to the Vykam temple to untouchables. Along with K. P. Kesava Menon, Madhavan was the very first to be arrested. He was released after five months. When Gandhiji visited Vykam in 1925 he camped with Madhavan. He was for a long time member of the Working Committee of the Congress and at the Belgaum Congress in 1924 he was elected to the Subjects Committee. He was also a journalist and from 1917 was the chief editor of the nationalist daily *Desabhimani*.



MALAVIYA, MADAN MOHAN (1861-1946): Born of a poor Gaur Brahmin family in Allahabad, Malaviya started his career as a teacher shortly after doing his graduation. He attended the Congress session at Calcutta in 1886 and delivered a speech that was highly appreciated. Even A. O. Hume was struck by it. After his return from Calcutta he took up as editor of *Hindustan*, a Hindi weekly. He also edited the *Indian Union*, a weekly from 1885 to 1890. With a few exceptions Malaviya regularly attended all the Congress sessions from 1886 to 1936. He was elected President of the Congress in 1909, 1918, 1932 and 1933 though he was not able to preside at the last two sessions because of the Government ban. In 1906 he founded the Hindu Mahasabha. He started *Abhyudaya*, a Hindi weekly, in 1907 and made it a daily in 1915. He also started *Maryada*, a monthly, in 1910 and then *Kisan*, a Hindi monthly, in 1921. He started the English daily *The Leader* in 1909. These papers did great service to the cause of India's freedom. In 1902 he was elected to the Provincial Legislative Council and in 1909 to the Imperial Legislative Council, of which he became one of the most important members. He took up many issues of national importance in the Council and fought strenuously for banning the emigration of indentured labour to the Colonies. He achieved this in 1917. He fought against all anti-national laws. He was again member of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1924 to 1930. He resigned his seat on the eve of the Salt Satyagraha and took part in it. The establishment of the Benares Hindu University was Malaviya's crowning achievement. He secured the help of Annie Besant and of many maharajas in this undertaking. The foundation-stone of the University was laid by the Viceroy in 1916 and the buildings were declared open by the Prince of Wales in 1921. He was the Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1919 to 1938. In social matters Malaviya was a conservative and believed in *varnashrama* dharma, but he was in full sympathy with the anti-untouchability movement.



MEHTA, JIVARAJ , DR. (1887-1978): Born in Amreli in Saurashtra of Kapor Bania community, he passed his L .M. & S. examination with distinction from the Grant Medical College, Bombay. In 1909 he proceeded to England for further studies and in 1914 passed his M.D. examination, topping the list. In the following year he cleared the M.C.P.S. examination of the college of Physicians. He also passed the M.R.C.P. examination. During his sojourn in England he took a keen interest in the Indian students' activities and formed the London Indian Association. During Gandhiji's stay in England Dr. Jivaraj Mehta met him and gave him medical advice. He became one of the few doctors who could call themselves personal physicians of Gandhiji. Returning to India in 1915 he set up private practice in Bombay. In 1924 he was appointed Chief Medical Officer in Baroda. He took part in the Salt Satyagraha and the Quit India movement and served prison terms both times. He was Dean of G. S. Medical College of the Bombay Corporation and took that Medical College to great heights. After India became free he served as secretary of the Ministry of Health Services and Director General of Medical Services. In 1948 he was posted as Dewan of Baroda. He later served as Minister of Finance in Bombay. From 1960 to 1963 he served as the Chief Minister of Gujarat following the bifurcation of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat. From 1963 to 1966 he served as India's High Commissioner in London. He was appointed Chairman of the Advisory Medical Board of Kasturba Gandhi National Hospital Trust and helped Sushila Nayar, a young medical graduate, in developing the Kasturba Hospital at Sevagram and starting A .N.M. (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) Training. He was later an active member of the Kasturba Health Society and first Chairman of the Selection Committee of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences which was started in 1969, Gandhi Centenary Year. He received Dr. B. C. Roy Award as eminent medical man-cum-statesman.



MEHTA, PHEROZESHAH (1845-1915): Pherozeshah did his graduation from Elphinstone College, Bombay in 1864 and then entered the Lincoln's Inn in London. He was called to the bar in 1868. In England he came in close contact with Dadabhoy Naoroji, which greatly influenced his political outlook. He was against violent methods and did not like the politics of Tilak and Pal. He laid great emphasis on education as the basis on which India could advance and was highly critical of the slow pace of education and the niggardly sums spent on it. He is remembered as the maker of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The Municipal Act of 1888 owed much to Pherozeshah's endeavours. He was also the founder of *The Bombay Chronicle*. In the proceedings of the Congress Pherozeshah had a notable record. His efforts were directed largely towards keeping the extremists out of the Congress. He presided at the Congress session held in Calcutta in 1890 and was twice president of the Reception Committee. He was Chairman of the Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1884, 1885 and 1905. He represented Bombay in the reformed Imperial Legislative Council from 1894 to 1897. His attack on the Police Act of 1861 created a sensation in the Council. He was made C.I.E. in 1894 and in 1904 had knighthood conferred on him.

MEHTA, DR. PRANJIVAN (1864-1932): M.D., Bar-at-Law; brother of Revashankar Jhaveri; practised medicine in London and Rangoon; he was one of the first contacts of Gandhiji when he went to London to study for the bar and taught Gandhiji speaking English and Western etiquette. He was life-long friend of Gandhiji and generously helped him financially till his death. He helped Jam Saheb in setting up the Institute of Ayurveda at Jamnagar and translated Ayurvedic texts such as *Sushruta*, etc. in English.

MOHAMMED ALI (1878-1931): Born at Rampur, Mohammed Ali did his B.A. from Allahabad University, standing first in the whole province. He then did his



B.A.(Hon.) in history from Oxford and returning to India he served first in Rampur and then at Baroda, where he stayed for seven years, he started writing for the papers. One of his long articles "Thoughts on the Present Discontent" was serialized in *The Times of India* in 1907. In January 1911 he started his weekly *Comrade* from Calcutta. The journal became very popular. In 1912 *Comrade* was shifted to Delhi and there it soon became the mouthpiece of the pan-Islamic section of Muslims – supporting Turkey and denouncing the British. The paper was banned in 1914 under the Press Act but was revived again in 1924. In Delhi Mohammed Ali also started a Urdu Weekly *Hamdard*. In 1915 Mohammed Ali was arrested for his anti-British writings and speeches and not released till 1919. He had by then become a national leader. During the Non-cooperation/Khilafat movement Mohammed Ali, along with his brother Shaukat Ali, played a very prominent part. He came very close to Gandhiji. He was instrumental in setting up the Jamia Millia Islamia, a national educational institution. He presided at the Congress session of 1923. He journeyed to England to attend the First Round Table Conference as a representative of the Muslims of India. Broken in health he died there on 4 January 1931. He was buried at Jerusalem.

NAIDU, SAROJINI (1879-1949): Eldest daughter of the scientist and philosopher Aghornath Chatterjee, Sarojini was born in Hyderabad. She passed her Matriculation at the age of 12, standing first in the Madras presidency. From 1895 onwards she studied in England, where at the age of 15 she met her future husband, Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu. In London she came in touch with various literary figures and wrote poetry. She brought out selections in 1905, 1912 and 1917. She met Gandhiji in 1914 at Gokhale's behest in London, while she met Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. In the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation she was a key figure, having signed the Satyagraha Pledge. She



addressed meetings on the Punjab atrocities, vehemently denouncing the acts of the officials and returned the Kaiser-e-Hind Gold Medal she had been awarded earlier for her work during the outbreak of plague. In 1920 Sarojini Naidu settled down in Bombay. She was elected president of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. In 1922 after Gandhiji's trial Sarojini Naidu gave up her silks and took to a khadi attire. During the years 1922-26 Sarojini worked for the cause of the Indians in South Africa. In 1928 she toured America as a representative of Gandhiji, giving lectures. In 1929 she presided at the East Africa Indian Congress at Mombasa. She took a leading part in the Salt Satyagraha and attended the Round Table Conference in 1931 with Gandhiji. During the Quit India movement in 1942 she was imprisoned along with the other leaders of the Congress and placed with Gandhiji in the Aga Khan's Palace, Poona. In 1947 she presided at the Asian Relations Conference. After independence Mrs. Naidu served as Governor of U.P.

NAIR, CHETTUR SANKARAN (1857-1934): Started legal practice in the Madras High Court in 1880. In 1899 he was appointed Government pleader. He was Advocate General till 1908, when he became permanent judge in the High Court. In 1902 he was appointed secretary of the Raleigh University Commission by the Viceroy. In 1904 he was awarded C.I.E. In 1912 he was knighted. He became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1915 and held charge of the Education Department. Following the martial law atrocities in the Punjab in 1919 he resigned as Executive Councillor in protest. Notwithstanding this anti-Government stance, the same year he was made a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India in England and held that post till 1921. He was a patriot and keenly participated in nationalist activities. In 1897 he presided at the first Provincial Conference at Madras and the same year he was also elected to



preside at the session of the Indian National Congress held at Amraoti. In 1900 he was a member of the Madras Legislative Council. In 1928 he was president of the Indian Central Committee set up in furtherance of the work of the Simon Commission. He was also a journalist and author. He was forthright in severely criticising many aspects of British rule – such as excessive defence expenditure, heavy taxation, unfair land revenue. From very early in his career he kept advocating the need for India to have Dominion status.

NARAYANA GURU (1854-1928): Born at Champazhanthi in Trivandrum district in Travancore in a lower middle-class Ezhava family, Narayana Guru pursued his early education while discharging other duties, such as rearing cattle. He received instruction in Sanskrit and soon mastered Kavya, Nataka and Alankara. After having mastered the Vedanta philosophy, Narayana Guru took to a wandering life. He set up his own temples as he went around. In 1903 Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was founded. In 1904 he settled down at Sivagiri, Varakala. In 1906 a temple was set up at Trichur and then in 1908 at Cannanore and Tellicherry. Similar temples were set up at Calicut and Mangalore in 1912. In 1917 he asked his community not to build any more temples, but to treat schools as temples. He was a social and religious reformer who devoted his life to the uplift of his community, which was then considered untouchable.

NATARAJAN, KAMAKSHI (1866-1948): A pioneer social reformer and close associate of Ranade and Gandhiji, was born in Tanjore. He graduated from the Government College, Kumbakonam when he was eighteen and started life as a post office clerk and then taught for some time. When he was about twenty he joined *The Hindu* but found it too orthodox in its approach to social reform. When *Indian Social Reformer* was launched in 1889 Natarajan joined it. The *Reformer* championed the cause of education of women, widow remarriage and inter-caste



marriage. The *Reformer* brought Natarajan in contact with Ranade, Vithalbhai Patel, Akbar Hydari and others. Around the turn of the century he joined the Bombay *Indian Spectator*, but then *Indian Social Reformer* shifted to Bombay and he rejoined it. For a brief period of six years (1922 -28) he was the editor of *Indian Daily Mail*. Though for a time he was the President of the Bombay Swaraj Party he preferred to remain a non-party man, identifying himself with such Moderates as C. Y. Chintamani and V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. He disagreed with Gandhiji's economic thought and stood for industrialization. But he stood for prohibition and for temple-entry to Harijans.

NATESAN, G. A. (1873-1949): At a very early stage Natesan gave Gandhiji much help in widening and consolidating his hold in Madras. Natesan graduated from the Presidency College, Madras in 1897. He started helping Gandhiji during the satyagraha in South Africa by collecting funds and also by helping Indians deported to India by the Government of South Africa. In collaboration with his brother he established a monthly journal *Indian Politics*. He also brought out a stream of pamphlets and biographies of eminent Indians. In 1900 he started the *Indian Review*. He did not agree with Gandhiji on Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience. He was the first General Secretary of the Indian Liberal Federation and a nominated member of the Council of State for many years. He was liberal in outlook and could be friends alike with British bureaucrats and ardent nationalists. Gandhiji, Srinivasa Sastri, Vivekanand, T. B. Saprú were among his friends. He remained editor of the *Indian Review* for almost fifty years.

NEHRU, MOTILAL (1861-1931): Born at Agra of Kashmiri Brahmin parents and educated at the Muir Central College, Allahabad, Motilal was fond of sports. He could not complete his degree course, but instead passed the Vakil's examination in 1883 and set up practice at Kanpur, shifting to Allahabad three years later. His



success was phenomenal. At the beginning of the century he was one of the leading lawyers of Allahabad. Though Motilal had been attending Congress sessions since 1888 he did not become actively involved in politics until 1907 when he presided over the Provincial Conference of the Moderates at Allahabad. In 1909 he was elected member of the U.P. Legislative Council. He attended the Delhi Durbar of 1911. Soon he was elected member of the A.I.C.C. and president of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee. In 1917, following the internment of Annie Besant, he joined the Home Rule League and became president of its Allahabad branch. In 1918 he attended the Bombay Congress, which asked for drastic changes in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. In 1919 he launched a daily newspaper *The Independent*. In the Anti-Rowlatt Act agitation Motilal kept away because he was not favourably disposed towards any extra-constitutional activities. This brought him into conflict with his son Jawaharlal who was all set to plunge into the agitation. Motilal sought Gandhiji's help to persuade his son to be patient. Following the martial law atrocities in the Punjab he played an important part as a member of the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Congress which enquired into the atrocities. In 1919 he was elected to preside at the Amritsar session of the Congress. He was the only front-rank leader to support Gandhiji on Non-cooperation at the Special Session at Calcutta in September, 1920. After the Calcutta Congress Motilal resigned from the U.P. Council, gave up his practice at the Bar, sent away most of his servants, cast away his expensive foreign clothes and changed to khadi dress. In 1921 he was arrested, as was his son, Jawaharlal and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In 1922, following the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement and imprisonment of Gandhiji Motilal, along with C. R. Das, advocated Council entry, resulting in the Congress splitting into Pro-changers and No-changers. Motilal found himself in the Swaraj Party as a Pro-changer. The Swaraj Party won the elections hands down. From 1925 onwards it



was the political wing of the Congress. Motilal Nehru was the leader of the opposition in the Central Assembly. He was a very effective parliamentarian and frequently managed to get the Muslim legislators and the Liberals on his side. In 1927 an All Parties Conference appointed a committee to determine the principles of a constitution and Motilal Nehru was made the head of this Committee. The Nehru report did not find favour either with the Muslim League or with the radical section of the Congress. Motilal again presided at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928. The Calcutta Congress gave the Government notice that if by the end of 1929 Dominion status was not granted to India the Congress would opt for complete independence and resort to mass civil disobedience. This formula of Gandhiji prevented a split between father and son. Jawaharlal took over from his father as Congress President the following year and the goal of complete independence was declared on 31 December 1929. When the Salt Satyagraha was started in 1930, Motilal, against the advice of his doctors, was in the thick of the movement. He was arrested and imprisoned and then released on health grounds. On 6 February 1931 he passed away.

PAL, BEPIN CHANDRA (1858-1932): Born in Sylhet of well-to-do Kayasth parents, Pal had his early schooling in Sylhet and then in 1875 joined the Presidency College, Calcutta. Having twice failed the First Arts examination, he gave up his studies in 1877-78. Pal was unorthodox in his religious views and embraced Brahmoism. He also married a widow. He taught in a series of high schools and in 1880 started a Bengali weekly *Paridarsak* from Sylhet. In 1887 he joined the *Tribune* of Lahore as an Assistant Editor. In 1898 he proceeded to England on a scholarship to study theology but once in England he devoted his energies to the work of political propaganda for India's emancipation. In 1900 he returned to India imbued with great patriotic fervour. He started another weekly, the *New*



India and preached through it the ideal of Swaraj. Following the political turmoil that came in the wake of the partition of Bengal, Pal started in 1906 a daily newspaper, *Bande Mataram*, the editor of which was Aurobindo Ghosh. Pal toured in Bengal, Assam, U.P., Madras, preaching passive resistance, boycott of British goods, swadeshi and national education. On refusing to give evidence in the Bande Mataram Sedition Case against Aurobindo, he was imprisoned for six months. Upon his release in 1908 he proceeded to England, returning in 1911. In 1913 he started the *Hindu Review*. In 1916 he re-joined the Congress. After the end of the War he went to England as a member of a deputation headed by Tilak to present the case for Home Rule for India. In 1919 he returned to India. He kept aloof from the Non-cooperation movement, primarily because it centred round Khilafat and Pan-Islamism. He also made statements critical of C. R. Das. His popularity declined and he all but retired from politics, though he continued to give expression to his views till his death. He was a social reformer and raised his voice against Indian girls being supplied to the army and sent abroad for immoral purposes.

PARANJPE, SIDVARAM MAHADEV (1864-1929): Scholar, tutor, journalist and political thinker, Paranjpe was born at Mahal in Maharashtra state in a Chitpawan Brahmin family. After doing his M.A. in 1895 he taught Sanskrit for some time at the Maharashtra College, Poona, but had to leave the job on account of some of his speeches which were considered seditious. In 1898 he started his Marathi weekly *Kal*. During the Swadeshi movement that followed the Bengal Partition he presided at a bonfire of foreign cloth in 1905. He was prosecuted for sedition and sentenced to nineteen months' imprisonment, while the weekly was required to furnish a security of Rs. 10,000. In 1921 on the question of Council-entry he sided with the No-changers. In 1920 he started the weekly *Swarajya*. He was one of the



satyagrahis in the Mulshi Peta struggle against compulsory acquisition of land by the Tata company and served six months in prison.

PARIKH, NARHARI (1891-1957): Born and educated in Ahmedabad, Narhari graduated from the Gujarat College in 1911 and took his LL.B. in 1913. He met Gandhiji when the latter returned from South Africa in 1915 and in 1917 joined his Ashram. He, along with his wife Manibehn, immediately was called upon to work in Champaran, where Gandhiji had been carrying on his satyagraha against the atrocities of the indigo planters. In 1928 he was one of the activists in the Bardoli satyagraha led by Sardar Patel. Two year later he took part in the Salt Satyagraha and was among those who were assaulted by the police at Dharasana. He received a severe head injury and was sentenced to three years in prison. After his release he devoted himself to educational work. He was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith in 1928. From 1935 to 1948 he looked after the educational work of the Harijan Ashram at Sabarmati. In 1937 on the formation of the Congress ministry he was appointed Chairman of the Basic Education Board. After Gandhiji's release in 1944 Narhari also worked as his secretary for some time. In his will Gandhiji appointed Mahadev Desai and Narhari as his two trustees. He was a writer and editor of repute. His biographies of Kishorelal Mashruwala, Mahadev Desai and Sardar Patel are highly thought of. He also worked for the welfare of backward classes.

PATEL, VITHALBHAI (1873-1933): Born and educated at Karamsad, Vithalbai passed his District Pleaders' Examination in 1895 and, along with his younger brother Vallabhbhai, moved to Borsad and started legal practice. In 1903 Vithalbai proceeded to England to study for the bar in the seat allotted to his brother Vallabhbhai. During his three years' stay in England he came in touch with Dadabhoy Naoroji. In the elections held under the Minto-Morley reforms



Vithalbhai entered the Bombay Legislative Council in 1912, and was instrumental in the Council passing an enabling Primary Education Bill to make primary education free and compulsory. Shortly afterwards he was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council, where he brought forward a bill to validate inter-caste Hindu marriages. Malaviya and other orthodox members opposed the bill. Owing to the dissolution of the Council the bill lapsed. When the Rowlatt legislation was brought forward by the Government Vithalbhai opposed it tooth and nail and did his best to stop its passage in the Council, moving over 250 amendments to delay the proceedings. When the Montford report was published in 1918, the Bombay Special Congress, at which Vithalbhai played a key role, characterized the proposed reforms as unsatisfactory and disappointing. In 1921 Vithalbhai resigned from the Central Assembly to join the Non-cooperation movement. In 1922 he entered the Bombay Corporation and as a member of the School Committee did valuable work to further free and compulsory primary education. Swadeshi was introduced in all departments of the Corporation. In 1923 he was elected President of the Corporation. With him as President the Corporation presented a civic address to Gandhiji against vehement opposition by Homi Modi and some others, and refused to receive Lord Reading when he took over as Viceroy. Vithalbhai entered the Central Assembly on the Swaraj Party ticket in January 1924, and was elected deputy leader of the Party. In August 1925 he was elected President of the Assembly. When the Assembly was dissolved and fresh elections were held in 1926 Vithalbhai was re-elected and again unanimously elected President. When the Government brought forward a Public Safety Bill Vithalbhai declared it out of order. In 1929 the Lahore Congress passed the independence resolution and following it Vithalbhai tendered his resignation from the Assembly and plunged into the movement. He was imprisoned but released early on account of his failing health. Shortly afterwards he left for



Europe. He died in Switzerland, leaving behind a will by which he bequeathed a sum of Rs. 1,20,000 to Subhas Bose to be spent for the cause of India's freedom. The will was, however, ruled invalid by the Bombay High Court.

PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA, B. DR. (1880-1959): Remembered chiefly as the historian of the Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya was born in a Brahmin family in a village in West Godavari district of Andhra. Having got his M.B. and C.M. degree from the Madras Medical College in 1901, Dr. Pattabhi set up practice at Masulipattam in 1906. In 1910 Pattabhi and a few other leading citizens of Masulipattam founded the Andhra Jatiya Kalasala. When Annie Besant started her Home Rule League Pattabhi enrolled himself as a member of it. In 1919 he started a weekly English magazine *Janmabhoomi* to propagate the ideas of Satyagraha, non-violence, boycott of foreign cloth, etc. The weekly continued till 1930. He also started an *Andhra Sahkar Patrika* to help the cooperative movement. He also started various banks and insurance companies in Masulipattam. He stood for a separate Andhra province and worked for it. In 1916 he became a member of the A.I.C.C. and gave up his medical practice. From 1929 to 1948 he was many times taken in the Congress Working Committee. In 1920 he took part in the Non-cooperation movement. When the Congress split into Swarajists and No-changers, Pattabhi was among the No-changers, determined to carry on the constructive programme of Gandhiji. In 1932 Pattabhi was arrested for defying a prohibitory order at Masulipattam and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. In 1933 he was arrested and sentenced for six months for picketing a foreign cloth shop. In 1936, 1939 and 1946-48 he was elected President of the All-India States' People's Conference. He was arrested during the Individual Civil Disobedience movement in 1941 and again during the Quit India



movement along with other leaders. In 1948 he was elected President of the Congress. Later, from 1952-57 he served as Governor of Madhya Pradesh.

PEARSON, WILLIAM WINSTANLAY (1881-1923): With a Quaker mother and Huguenot missionary father who offered passive resistance against Balfour's Education Law and suffered for it, parental influence on William Pearson was considerable. Non-violence and love were watchwords in his life. After securing a degree in botany Pearson joined the London Mission Society. He met Tagore in London in 1912 and decided to work in India. He came to Calcutta to teach at the Society's college in Calcutta. While in Calcutta he read the works of Tagore, Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita. He also read Mazzini and translated his *The Duties of Man*. Along with C. F. Andrews he joined Santiniketan. The South African Indians' Satyagraha led by Gandhiji was then at its peak and on the advice of Gokhale Pearson decided to go to South Africa. In 1913 he set sail for South Africa. After spending some time there with Gandhiji he returned to India. The exploitation of Indian indentured labourers in the sugar plantations in Fiji drew his attention next and he sailed for Fiji. Pearson was disappointed by Santiniketan. He found a great gulf between the life there as pictured to him by Tagore and as it actually was. When Tagore left for Japan in 1916 Pearson accompanied him. He did not return to India with Tagore but stayed behind in Japan. He wrote a pamphlet expressing his hope that India would gain freedom and asking the Japanese to help the Indian struggle. The British arrested him in Peking and sent him back to England to be interned in his house at Manchester. In 1920 when Tagore went to England Pearson acted as his secretary and went with him to various countries in the Continent. He again went to Santiniketan but had to go back soon broken in health. He died in a railway accident while



travelling in Italy. Pearson was a person of high idealism and filled with the spirit of service. Gandhiji held him in high esteem.

PRASAD, BRAJKISHORE (1877-1946): Born at Srinagar, in Saran district in Bihar, Brajkishore Prasad had his early schooling in Gaya and then went to Calcutta for higher education, passing his M.A. in philosophy and later LL.B. in 1898. He started his legal practice in Chapra in 1901, shifting to Darbhanga in 1906. In the course of his legal practice he became acquainted with the exploitation of the peasants by the indigo planters in Champaran and fought legal battles on their behalf. In 1916 at the Lucknow Congress he raised the matter and pressed for the appointment of an enquiry committee. When Gandhiji started his satyagraha in Champaran Brajkishore Prasad and Rajendra Prasad were his chief lieutenants. In 1922 he was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Gaya Congress. The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 again brought him to the forefront in Bihar. He assumed full charge of the struggle. He was arrested and imprisoned and his health suffered. In 1934 when an earthquake devastated Bihar he went all out to organize relief for the victims. Brajkishore Prasad also fought against the custom of *purdah* and worked for the education of women. He also advocated widow remarriage. His daughter Prabhavati married Jaiprakash Narayan and was like a daughter to Gandhiji and Kasturba.

PRASAD, GORAKH (1869-1962): Born in Saran district of Bihar in a Kayastha family, Gorakh Prasad passed his pleadership examination and took up the practice of law at Chapra, later shifting to Motihari. Throughout his life he remained a staunch nationalist, being for a time under the influence of the Home Rule movement. He took up the cause of the Champaran peasants and helped them fight their cases. Later he was drawn to Gandhiji and helped him in the Champaran Satyagraha. During the Champaran Satyagraha he also helped



Gandhiji set up schools in the villages. He took part in the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation and in the Non-cooperation movement. Though he was not for the Council-entry programme he supported the Swarajists in the 1923 elections. In 1930 he participated in the Salt Satyagraha and was imprisoned for six months. Later he participated in the Individual Civil Disobedience movement in 1941 and was jailed. In the Quit India movement he went underground.

PRASAD, DHARNIDHAR (1879-1947): Graduated from the B.N. College, Patna in 1900 and then joined the University of Calcutta for his M.A. and LL.B. In 1907 he started legal practice at Laherisarai and was remarkably successful. In 1917 at the time of the Champaran Satyagraha he came in contact with Gandhiji and devoted himself solely to the cause of the Satyagraha. He suspended his lucrative legal practice. In 1921 he actively participated in the Non-cooperation movement. After the suspension of the Non-cooperation movement Dharnidhar Babu devoted himself to the constructive programme of Gandhiji. He showed great interest in the uplift of Harijans and in national education. In fact when Gandhiji founded a Vidyapith at Madhubani in Champaran in 1918 he volunteered his services as a teacher on a salary of fifty rupees. He participated in the Civil Disobedience movement in the thirties but later concentrated on constructive work and social reform.

PRASAD, JANAKDHARI (1888-1966): Born in a middle class Kayastha family in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, Janakdhari Babu graduated from the Presidency College, Calcutta in 1909 and after passing the B.L. examination in 1911 set up legal practice in Muzaffarpur. During the Swadeshi movement of 1906-07 he was drawn into politics and later joined the Home Rule League. During the Champaran Satyagraha he gave much help to Gandhiji. He participated in the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation and later in the Non-cooperation movement and was imprisoned.



In the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 he played a prominent part and was imprisoned. He was also in the forefront during the Quit India movement. After his release from jail he retired from public life.

PRASAD, RAJENDRA (1884-1963): The great Gandhian and first President of free India, Rajendra Prasad was born in an obscure village in Saran district, North Bihar. He had his schooling at the Chapra Zilla School. He then joined the Presidency College, Calcutta, where he had a remarkably brilliant academic career, getting a first in M.A. and first in Master of Law. In 1908 he formed the Bihari Students Conference in Calcutta and participated in the Swadeshi movement. In 1911 he set up legal practice in Calcutta. He also joined the Congress and was elected to the A.I.C.C. Gokhale wanted him to join the Servants of India Society, but his family affairs made this impossible. In 1916 he moved to Patna after the establishment of a High Court there. In the Champaran struggle his help to Gandhiji was of inestimable value. In the anti-Rowlatt Act Agitation of 1919 and then the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 he remained totally committed to Gandhiji's programme. He withdrew his sons from the Benares Hindu University and other institutions. He wrote articles in the *Searchlight* and the *Desh* and toured extensively. He was the life breath of the Constructive Programme in Bihar. During the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha he also came in close touch with Vallabhbhai Patel. He suffered several terms of imprisonment. In 1934 when a devastating earthquake rocked Bihar, he was in jail. He was released two days later and immediately plunged into the work of relief. He collected a sum of 38 lakh rupees, which was nearly three times as large as the amount the Viceregal committee was able to collect. Following his great work for the earthquake relief in Bihar he was elected to preside at the Congress session in Bombay. In 1937 when elections were held under the Government of India Act, 1935, Rajendra



Prasad was made a member of the Parliamentary Board of the Congress of which the other members were Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad. In 1939 when Subhas Bose was made to resign as President Rajendra Prasad was called upon to fill his place. Similarly later when Kripalani resigned as president Rajendra Prasad was asked to take over. His stewardship of the Constituent Assembly was exemplary. In 1952 he was elected President of the Republic and continued in that office till 1962. There were occasions when as President he differed with the Prime Minister, but the differences were smoothed over in the end. Though many wanted him to stand for a third term as President Rajendra Prasad had made up his mind to retire. Jaya Prakash Narayan welcomed his retirement hoping that his services would be available to guide the Sarvodaya Movement, but Rajendra Prasad's health deteriorated rapidly after his retirement and on 28 February 1963 he passed away.

PRASAD, RAMNAVAMI (1891-) : Born in Rahimpore in Muzaffarpur District of Bihar, Ramnavami Prasad passed his B.A. from Patna College and having got his B.L. degree started practice in Muzaffarpur in 1915. He had been actively associated with the students' movement and he attended the Congress session in Lucknow held in 1916. It was at this session that, along with Rajkumar Shukla, he met Gandhiji on behalf of the peasants of Champaran and requested him to take up their cause. In Champaran he accompanied Gandhiji everywhere as his interpreter and worked day and night to take down statements of the ryots. Ramnavami Babu also took part in the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation and in the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-21. He gave up his legal practice and after the suspension of Civil Disobedience in 1922 actively engaged himself in the Constructive Programme.



RAY, PRAFULLA CHANDRA (1861-1944): Born in a Kayastha zamindar family of Khulna, East Bengal, Prafulla Chandra was brought to Calcutta by his father in 1870 and after preliminary schooling in various elitist schools of the city joined the Presidency College to study chemistry. In 1882 he proceeded to England as a Gilchrist scholar and took the B.Sc. degree from Edinburgh University in 1885 and D.Sc. in 1887. Returning to India, he joined the Presidency College, Calcutta as a lecturer in chemistry. In his spare time he pursued the study of Ayurveda. In 1892 he founded the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, which later grew into a large corporation under the name of Bengal Chemicals. In 1916 he joined the College of Science of the Calcutta University as professor of chemistry. In 1919 he was knighted and in 1920 elected president of the Indian Science Congress. Active politics did not interest him but he devoted his energies to the uplift of the masses. In 1922 he did much work for famine relief in Khulna. He then came under Gandhiji's influence. Between 1921 and 1926 he toured extensively in the country popularizing national schools and khadi and cottage industries. He himself always wore coarse khadi. He stood for widow remarriage and eradication of untouchability.

RAJAGOPALACHARI, C. (1879-1972): Born in Thorapolli, Hosur Taluka in Salem district of Vaishnavite Brahmin parents, Rajagopalachari had his education at Central Hindu College, Bangalore, and later at the Presidency College, Madras from where he graduated at the age of 18. He read extensively both classical and modern English and Indian literature and was profoundly influenced by the *Mahabharat* and the *Gita*. Contact at an early age with Annie Besant, Vijayaraghavachari and Sarojini Naidu, strengthened his patriotic predisposition and Dadabhoi's address at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906 and the revolutionary activities in Bengal filled him with inspiration. He set up law practice



at Salem and became Chairman of the Salem Municipality. He shifted to Madras for better prospects and for the education of his children in 1919. Within a few days Gandhiji was his guest in Madras, which changed his life. He gave up practice of law and plunged into the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation. From then on he became a thorough Gandhian in outlook and while writing to Gandhiji addressed him as "My Dear Master". He was at the forefront of the movement for the eradication of untouchability and prohibition even before he met Gandhiji. When he became the Prime Minister of Madras in 1937 one of his first steps was to have an act passed enabling Harijans to enter temples. He declared total Prohibition and introduced Sales Tax to make up for the loss of Excise Revenue in Madras. He stood for inter-caste marriages. He was a crusader for Hindi as the lingua franca of India in the thirties, but later advocated retention of English, especially in legislative matters.

During the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements he was the unchallenged leader of South India. In 1925-29 he established an ashram at Tiruchengode which became an important centre of training and production of khadi. During the Salt Satyagraha he led the march to Vedaranyam which galvanized the whole Tamil land.

He later differed with Gandhiji and the Congress on political questions. He was critical of the Quit India movement. He stood for the right of self-determination for Muslim areas. The C.R. formula, as it came to be called, was rejected by Jinnah out of hand. In 1946-47 he was a member of the Nehru Ministry. In 1947 he served as Governor of Bengal. From 1948 to 1950 he served as the Governor-General of India. After India became a Republic in 1950 he served as a Minister for a short while till he was called upon again to take over the Chief Ministership of Madras, which office he held from 1952 to 1954.



Gradually he drifted away from the Congress and after some time founded the Swatantra Party. He was a powerful writer and forceful speaker. His *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, written in Tamil, were widely translated and became very popular. He was awarded Bharat Ratna in 1954.

ROY, KALINATH (1878-1945): Born in Jessore, East Bengal, Roy had his education at the Presidency College, Calcutta, but did not complete his graduation course. He became involved in the Swadeshi movement and then took to journalism. In 1900 he joined the *Bengalee* then edited by Surendranath Banerjea. In 1911 he left the paper and went to Lahore, to take up as the editor of *Punjabee*, a nationalist paper founded in 1905 by Lajpat Rai. In 1917 he resigned from the *Punjabee* and became editor of another Lahore newspaper, the *Tribune*. In May 1919 Roy was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for protesting against the Government atrocities in the Punjab during the martial law. Gandhiji voiced a vehement protest and the sentence was reduced to one of three months. Roy continued to edit the *Tribune* till 1943 when he resigned on account of failing health .

SAPRU, TEJ BAHADUR (1875-1949): Born in Aligarh in U.P. of Kashmiri Brahmin parents; Sapru took his M.A. in English literature from the Agra College, securing the first place. He then read for the Bar and started practice first at the District Court, Moradabad and then the High Court in Allahabad. In 1907 Sapru entered active politics and joined the Moderate wing of the Congress. In 1917 he joined Annie Besant's Home Rule League. As a member of the U.P. Legislative Council he was signatory to the "Memorandum of the Nineteen Members" which became the basis of the Congress-League Pact of 1916. After the Government of India Act, 1919, came into force in 1921 he was appointed Law Member of the Viceroy's Council. In 1921 when the Congress decided to boycott the visit of the



Prince of Wales Saprú thought it an unwise move and tried to have a compromise effected between the Viceroy and Gandhiji. Nothing came of the move. As a member of the Executive he also tried to remove restrictions imposed on the press under the Press Act of 1910. Following Montagu's removal from India Office in 1922 and Gandhiji's imprisonment, Saprú also resigned from the Viceregal Council and returned to his law practice. In 1923 he was elected President of the National Convention, which prepared the Commonwealth of India Bill, later introduced in the House of Commons by a Labour member. Saprú represented India at the Imperial Conference in London in 1923. He also made important contribution to discussions at the All Parties Conference in 1928 and at the Round Table Conference in London. In 1934 he was elevated to the membership of the Privy Council. He also took part in the parleys that ensued over the Cripps proposals in 1942 and was sorry the mission failed. After the imprisonment of the leaders following the Quit India resolution, which Saprú considered a tactical blunder, he tried hard to bring about rapprochement between Gandhiji and the Government in order to break the deadlock. He was the first President of the Indian Council of World Affairs when it was set up in 1943. He was one of India's greatest constructive statesmen during the freedom movement.

SASTRI, V. S. SRINIVASA (1869-1946): Born of poor Brahmin parents in Valangaiman, near Kumbakonam in Madras province; Sastri had his education at the Government College, Kumbakonam. He was a brilliant student, standing first in nearly all examinations. He became headmaster of the Hindu High School, Triplicane, Madras, but gave up the job when he joined the Servants of India Society in 1907. He took an active part in formulating the Congress -League Pact of 1916. He developed differences with the Congress on the attitude to be adopted towards the Montford Reforms, and in 1918 founded the National



Liberal Federation to support the Reforms. In 1913 Sastri was nominated to the Madras Legislative Council and in 1915 was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council. In 1918 he founded the *Servant of India* and was for some time its editor. In 1921 Sastri was a member of the Indian delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva. He was a great orator.

In 1921 he was elected to the Council of State. The same year he represented the Government of India at the Imperial Conference in London, where he secured the passage of a resolution favouring granting of political franchise to Indians settled in the Colonies. He represented India at the Round Table Conference between India and South Africa in 1926 and 1932. He was also the Agent of Government of India in South Africa. In 1923 he campaigned for equal status to the Kenya Indians. In 1929 he was deputed to British East Africa to help Indians there to present their case to the British Government. In 1936 he was deputed to Malaya to enquire into conditions of Indian labour there.

Sastri became President of the Servants of India Society after G. K. Gokhale's death in 1916. In spite of some differences, there was a deep bond of friendship and brotherly feelings between him and Gandhiji.

SATYA PAL, DR. (1884-1954): Satya Pal was born of Khatri parents in Wazirabad (now in Pakistan) and after graduation from the Foreman Christian College passed his M.B.B.S. in 1908 from the Medical College, Lahore. Satyapal had patriotic leanings from his very early years. He was affected by the agrarian ferment in the Punjab in 1907. In 1919 he was, along with Kitchlew, in the forefront of the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation in Amritsar. In fact the disturbances in Amritsar started as a protest against the externment of Satyapal. Except during the War years 1939-45, when he served in the Army as a doctor, he remained associated with the Congress right up to 1947. He was a powerful speaker and a



great organizer. For some time he also edited a Urdu newspaper entitled *Congress*. He co-authored *Sixty Years of Congress* with Prabodh Chandra.

SETHNA, PHIROZE CURSETJEE (1866-1938): Sethna matriculated from Calcutta and graduated from the Bombay University in 1887. He was a businessman associated with insurance. In 1907 he entered the Bombay Municipality and in 1915 became the President of the Corporation. He was also president of the National Liberal Federation. He was nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1916 and from 1921 onwards was continuously elected member of the Council of State. In the Council of State he fought for Indianization of the Port Trust of India.

SHARMA, HARIHAR (1888-1971): Popularly called Anna; taught at Ganganath Vidyalaya, Baroda and also for some time at Santiniketan, where Gandhiji met him in February 1915. He then joined Gandhiji and worked at the Ashram and was sent for propagation of Hindi to Madras for some time.

SHRADDHANAND, SWAMI (1856-1926): Born at Talwandi in Jullundur district of the Punjab in a Khatri family, Shraddhanand had been named Munshi Ram. He passed his matriculation in 1877. In 1882, when he was at Bareilly, Swami Dayanand paid a visit there and Munshi Ram attended one of the meetings addressed by the founder of the Arya Samaj. He then read *Satyarth Prakash* and joined the Arya Samaj while he was a student at the Law College, Lahore. In 1885 he set up law practice at Jullundur and was reasonably successful. In 1889 he became president of the Punjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. In 1893 there was a split in the Arya Samaj into the College Section and the Gurukul Section. Munshi Ram was with the Gurukul Section. He founded the Kanya Mahavidyalaya at Jullundur, where girls were brought up in an intensely Aryan atmosphere. Munshi Ram was all for Sanskrit education and along with the D.A.V. College he wanted a Sanskrit



Academy to be set up. He set up the Gurukul Kangri at Hardwar where teaching was imparted according to the ancient Vedic methods. During the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, Shraddhanand emerged as the supreme leader of Delhi and was looked up to by both Hindus and Muslims. Several times he addressed Muslim congregations at Friday prayers. Later, when he took up the work of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan*, he lost most of the Muslim goodwill. He was assassinated by a Muslim fanatic.

SINHA, ANUGRAHA NARAYAN (1887-1957): He was born in a rich zamindar family in Poianwar village in Gaya district of Bihar. He passed M.A. in history from Calcutta University in 1914 and B.L. in 1915. For about a year he taught at Bhagalpur and then started law practice at the Patna High Court. He was an enthusiastic participant in the freedom movement. He acted as a volunteer at the Patna session of the Congress in 1912. In 1917 he joined Gandhiji in the Champaran Satyagraha and painstakingly recorded statements of the ryots in the course of the enquiry taken up by Gandhiji. In 1921 and again in 1935 he was elected Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee. In 1928-29 he was the President of the B.P.C.C. At the Gaya session of the Congress in 1922 he was the General Secretary. In 1925 he was a member of the Council of State and in 1934 he was elected a member of the Central Legislative Assembly. In 1937 when the Congress ministry took office in Bihar, he was made a Minister. In 1946 when the Congress again took office, he again became a Minister, holding charge of Finance, Supply, Food and Labour. He retained the Finance portfolio till his death in 1957. He was first imprisoned in 1933 for fifteen months. Then he was arrested in August 1942 during the Quit India movement after the end of the war.

SUNDER LAL, PANDIT (1886-1981): Sunder Lal was born in a middle-class Kayastha family in Khatauli in district Muzaffarnagar, U.P. He graduated from the D.A.V.



College, Lahore, where he came in close contact with Lala Lajpat Rai. During the period 1905-07 he was a revolutionist in outlook, collecting money and buying revolvers for revolutionary activities in Bengal. He was an accomplice in the plot to kill Lord Hardinge. When Gandhiji returned from South Africa Sunder Lal met him and came under his spell. He participated in the Non-cooperation movement in 1921-22. During the Civil Disobedience movement of 1931-33 he was in charge of activities in Nagpur, Jabalpur, Katni, Bombay and Kanpur. He was well acquainted with this area since he had earlier in 1923 played a key role in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha. He was an ardent believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and ever endeavoured to bring the two communities together. He set up a Hindustani Cultural Society at Allahabad. Sunder Lal was an author and journalist too. In 1909 he started a Hindi journal *Karmayogi* from Allahabad. He also founded the *Vishwavani*, a Hindi monthly and edited and published *Naya Hind* from Allahabad. His voluminous critique of British rule in India published under the title *Bharat Men Angrezi Raj* became immensely popular and was proscribed by the U.P. Government.

TAGORE, RABINDRANATH (1861 -1941): Youngest of the fourteen children of Debendranath Tagore; was born in Calcutta on 7 May 1861. His schooling was brief. Having failed an examination he was withdrawn from school when he was only thirteen. He however had immense curiosity and was devoted to poetry and music. The family discovered his gift for poetry early, as his first poem appeared in print when he was only twelve. In 1878 he accompanied his brother Satyendranath to England where he studied English literature for some time at the University College, London. In 1880 he returned to India and in 1881 he wrote his first musical play *Valmiki Pratibha*. In 1883 he was married to Mrinalini. In the period 1887-90 Rabindranath's many-sided genius entered a new phase, when



he published *Manasi*, a selection of poems, *Mayar Khel*, a musical play and *Raja O Rani*, a drama. Rabindranath spent the decade 1890-1900 in the countryside. In 1891 he founded the monthly *Sadhana*, which became the vehicle of his self-expression. He continued to produce poems and plays in profusion. About this time Rabindranath became more and more engrossed in national problems. He felt that the various problems the country faced were tied up with the problem of education - that the first task should be to refashion education. He conceived schools in the form of *tapovans*, where pupils and teachers would be *shishyas* and *gurus* as in the Upanishadic times. The first decade of the century was a period of disasters for Rabindranath, with many deaths in the family, including that of his wife Mrinalini. In 1901 he founded the school at Santiniketan near Bolpur. In 1911 his fiftieth birthday was celebrated by the students at Santiniketan. A collection of his poems under the title *Gitanjali* and a play *Dakghar* were published in the same year. In May 1912 he sailed for England, where the translation of his work *Gitanjali* created a sensation. The poet met W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Bertrand Russell and C. F. Andrews among others. C. F. Andrews became his lifelong friend and follower. From London he proceeded to the U.S.A., where his fame had already been carried by his *Gitanjali*, which was being sold there in a limited edition. He lectured at various American universities and then returned to England. In 1913 *Gitanjali* secured for him the Nobel Prize for Literature. In 1915 he was knighted by the king-Emperor.

Rabindranath had close associations with the Congress. He took part in the agitation for the release of Annie Besant. In 1918 the foundation of the Visva Bharati University was laid at Santiniketan. In 1919 he wrote to relinquish the knighthood in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh atrocities. In 1920-21 he toured extensively in Europe and then went to the U.S.A. to gather support for



Visva Bharati. Over the next decade his energies were devoted to the cause of Visva Bharati. In 1930 he delivered the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford - his subject being "Religion of Man". In the thirties he experimented with new forms in poetry. He wrote blank verse as in *Punashcha* and devised a new *genre* of play combining music, miming and dance. In 1937 he delivered the convocation address at the Calcutta University in Bengali.

He condemned the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany and similarly decried Japanese aggression in China. Gandhiji was a great admirer of Tagore whom he met for the first time in 1915. The two great men however did not see eye to eye on all matters. Tagore could not see any advantage in the boycott of schools and colleges which was advocated during the Non-cooperation days, nor could he see those virtues in khadi and spinning activity with which Gandhiji clothed it. In 1934 following the Bihar earthquake when Gandhiji said it was the punishment for the sin of untouchability the poet severely criticized Gandhiji. In spite of the differences, active bond of friendship and understanding between the two men remained strong. Tagore died in Calcutta on 7 August 1941 after a surgical operation.

TANDON, PURUSHOTTAMDAS (1882-1961): Born in Allahabad of middle-class Khatri parents, Tandon graduated from the Muir Central College, Allahabad in 1904. Later he also took a law degree and a Master's degree in history. He took up practice at the Allahabad High Court in 1908 as a junior of T. B. Sapru. He was law minister of Nabha State from 1914 to 1917. From then on he devoted his energies to the propagation and development of Hindi. In 1921 he gave up his law practice. From 1923 to 1929 he worked in a bank in Lahore. He had been associated with the Congress since 1899. In 1919 he worked on the Congress Sub-committee which enquired into the Punjab Martial Law atrocities. In 1921 he was



imprisoned during the Non-cooperation movement. In 1930 he took a lead in organizing the No-Tax campaign in U.P. He was arrested again during the Salt Satyagraha. He became member of the Congress Working Committee in 1931 at the Karachi session of the Congress. He was the organizer of the Kisan movement in U.P. and was imprisoned several times in the course of this work. He became speaker of the U.P. Legislative Assembly in 1937-39. In 1942 he was imprisoned during the Quit India movement and on his release took up the work of organization of the Congress. He was elected to the Constituent Assembly (1946) and to the Lok Sabha (1952). In 1950 he was elected President of the All-India Congress Committee but developed differences with Nehru and resigned. Tandon was intimately associated with Lajpat Rai's Servants of the People Society, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti. He also edited for a number of years the *Abhyudaya*, the journal started by Malaviya. He was devoted to Gandhiji.

THAKKAR, AMRITLAL (1869-1951) also known as Thakkar Bapa: Born at Bhavnagar in Saurashtra, Amritlal passed his matriculation from the Alfred High School in Bhavnagar and then took his L.C.E. degree in civil engineering from the Engineering College, Poona, in 1887. From 1890 to 1900 Amritlal served in various capacities as an engineer in the various States of Kathiawar. In 1900 he went to East Africa for three years. On his return he became the Chief Engineer in Sangli State where he came in contact with Gokhale and Karve. After a year he took up employment in Bombay. Here he came in close touch with untouchable workers. With encouragement from G. K. Devadhar he worked for the debt relief of the sweepers. In 1914, having earlier resigned from his post, he joined the Servants of India Society and worked for famine relief in U.P. In 1915 he was introduced to Gandhiji by Gokhale. In 1917, with Devdhar and Joshi he conducted



the enquiry into crop failure in Kheda. Afterwards he toured in Gujarat and Kathiawar in connection with the Compulsory Education Bill introduced in the Bombay Council. In 1918-19 he worked among the Bhils of Panchmahals and came to know first-hand the miserable conditions in which they lived. In 1920 he did famine relief work in Orissa. In 1923 he founded the Bhil Seva Mandal. During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 he was arrested while picketing liquor shops and imprisoned for six months. During Gandhiji's fast in 1932 against the Communal Award of the British Government he played a significant role in the parleys that resulted in the Poona Pact. Gandhiji persuaded him to take up the general secretaryship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. During 1933-34 he undertook a Harijan tour with Gandhiji, covering 12,504 miles in nine months. During 1943-44 he organized famine relief work in Orissa, Bengal and other parts of India. In 1944 he was appointed Secretary of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund and in 1945 of the K.G.N.M. Trust. In 1944 he also founded the Banvasi Seva Mandal. In 1946-47 he accompanied Gandhiji on his tour of Noakhali. After independence he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and headed various Sub-committees concerned with the status of backward classes. He was also a trustee of the National Gandhi Memorial Trust. He was appointed chairman of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust after Sardar Patel's death on 15 December 1950 but he was in poor health and could not preside over any meeting. He resigned but his resignation was not accepted. Till the day of his death Thakkar Bapa remained active in the cause of the under-privileged and neglected sections of society.

TILAK, BAL GANGADHAR (1856-1920): Popularly called Lokmanya and described as "The father of Indian unrest", Tilak was born in a Chitpavan Brahmin family at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. He received most of his education in Poona. He was a



brilliant student and passed his B.A. in first class with mathematics and Sanskrit. He got his law degree in 1879. Though conservative in his ideas he was quite familiar with Western thought. With Agarkar, Chiplunkar and Namjoshi he founded the Deccan Education Society and the Fergusson College in 1885. In 1890 he dissociated himself from the Deccan Education Society but retained control of the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta*, started by the Society in 1881. Tilak was a radical in politics but very orthodox in social matters, so much so that he opposed the Age of Consent Bill. In 1918 he attended the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held in Baroda, but refused to sign a manifesto declaring that the signatories would not observe untouchability in their day-to-day life.

The famine of 1896 and subsequent outbreak of plague brought Tilak into conflict with the Government. He bitterly criticized the plague measures of the Government in so far as they were intended to harass the public. He was arrested and tried for sedition 1897 and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. Tilak's ideology soon caught the imagination of the people. His thesis of national education, swadeshi and boycott leading to swaraj infused a new spirit in the people. In 1907 when the Congress met at Surat there was an open split between the Moderates, who were dominant in the Congress and the extremists. In 1908 Tilak was again tried for sedition for some articles he had written in the *Kesari* and sentenced to six years' imprisonment in Mandalay where he wrote *Gita Rahasya*. After his release in 1914 he started the Home Rule movement, setting up a Home Rule League in 1916. He was brought back in Congress and attended the Congress at Lucknow along with his followers in 1916. At the Bombay Special Session and then at the Amritsar session in 1919 Tilak opposed the Montford Reforms. In April 1920 he set up the Congress Democratic Party to carry on agitation for Swarajya. Tilak was a great scholar. In Mandalay Prison he pursued



Vedic studies besides writing on the *Gita*. In his book *Orion* he put the antiquity of the Vedas back to 5,000 B.C. Another important work he wrote was *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. The emergence of Tilak on the political horizon of the country represents a watershed in the life of India. With him was introduced into politics a new kind of leadership which was highly intellectual, had a clear vision, an intense patriotism and which was rooted in the soil of the country. He gave the slogan "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it". The Tilak era represents a significant landmark in India's freedom struggle.

TYABJI, ABBAS (1854-1936): Born in Baroda in a family with wide business connections, Abbas Tyabji was sent to England when only eleven. There he did his matriculation (1872) and then qualified for the Bar (1875). Returning to India he joined the Baroda state service (1879) and retired as Chief Justice in 1913. He was for many years president of the Anjuman-i-Islam, Baroda. He was a member of the Congress since its inception. He served on the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Congress which investigated into the Martial Law atrocities in 1919. This completely changed his attitude towards the British and he became a rebel. In 1920 he presided at the Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad, which accepted Gandhiji's Non-cooperation programme even before the Congress did so. In 1928 he participated in the Bardoli Satyagraha. During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 he assumed the leadership of the movement after Gandhiji was jailed. He was arrested and imprisoned and suffered prison hardships when he was an old man of seventy-eight. In 1932 he was again jailed. In 1933 he became the president of the Baroda Praja Mandal.

VARADACHARI, N. S. (1897-1987): Born near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, Varadachari had his education in Bezwada and Madras. He took Honours in history from the Presidency College, Madras and then his B. L. degree in 1918. He



became a Congressman quite early in his career. In 1919 without waiting for the official Congress sanction he joined the Non-cooperation movement. He was for several years secretary of the Madras District Congress Committee. In 1937 when the first Congress ministry was formed in Madras he was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary. He was again elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1950. He took a prominent part in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha in 1923. He also participated in the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 and led groups of volunteers to picket toddy shops. He was imprisoned thrice during the movement. Varadachari later joined Rajaji's Swatantra Party.

VENKATAPPAYYA, KONDA (1866-1949): Born of poor Brahmin parents in Guntur, he graduated from Madras Christian College in 1888 and got his B.L. degree in 1891. He was deeply interested in the eradication of untouchability, in the education of women and widow remarriage and other such social causes. He was one of the founders of *Krishna Patrika* and was its editor from 1903 to 1905. He was one of the organizers of the Andhra Mahasabha which aimed at establishing a separate Andhra province. In 1918 he was President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. In 1920 he was chosen as a member of the A.I.C.C., which position he held till 1923. During the Non-cooperation movement in 1920 he toured extensively in Andhra calling upon people to boycott the elections. In 1921 he organized a No-tax campaign in Guntur district for which he was jailed for a year. In 1929 he presided at the A.I.C.C. Meeting held at Visakhapatnam. He was the unquestioned leader of the Congress in Andhra and was named dictator in 1930. During the Salt Satyagraha he was again jailed for a year. In 1932 he was again jailed for six months for attempting to hold a session of the Congress, which had been banned. After 1934 Venkatappayya devoted his energies to the implementation of the constructive programme.



VIJIARAGHAVACHARIAR, C. (1852-1944): One of the twelve children of a Vaishnava Brahmin family of Vilaindha Kalathur in Chingleput district in Tamil Nadu, Vijiaraghavachariar had had a traditional upbringing. He graduated from the Madras Presidency College in 1875 and was appointed a lecturer in the same institution. Then having privately got a law degree he set up practice at Salem in 1881. When the Congress was founded in 1885 Vijiaraghavachariar was one of the special invitees. In 1887 he attended the Bombay session of the Congress. In 1889 he was made a member of the Propaganda Committee of the Congress. In 1920 he presided at the Nagpur session of the Congress which inaugurated the Non-cooperation movement. He fought relentlessly against the Council-entry programme of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. In 1929 he was in the vanguard of the agitation to boycott the Simon Commission. From 1895 to 1901 he was a member of the Madras Legislative Council. In 1913 he was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council and was a member of that body till 1916 working in close cooperation with Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjea and Madan Mohan Malaviya.

VYAS, RAVISHANKAR (1884-1984): Born at Radhu, a village in Kheda district of Gujarat, Ravishankar had had only rudimentary schooling in his own village. Under the influence of Mohanlal Pandya he came in touch with various leading personalities of the national movement and in 1921 he came in close contact with Vallabhbhai Patel. He took to a life of ascetic simplicity, leaving his family, and dedicated himself to public service. In 1922 he started the Rashtriya Shala at Mehmedabad. In 1923 he led a batch of volunteers from Gujarat to take part in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha. Afterwards he took a prominent part in the Borsad Satyagraha against the punitive levy imposed by the Government. Thereafter he spent considerable time in reforming the criminal tribes. In 1928 he played a prominent part in the Bardoli Satyagraha. He was jailed during the Salt Salyagraha



and again in 1938. After the death of Gandhiji he joined Vinoba Bhave , devoting himself to the Bhoodan Movement.

WACHA, DINSHAW EDULJI (1844-1936): Born in a middle-class Parsi family of Bombay, Dinshaw did not complete his college education for his father's business in Bombay and Aden needed him. Soon politics claimed him and along with Dadabhoy and Pherozeshah Mehta he took up work for peaceful political evolution of the country. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and was elected its president in 1901. From 1885 to 1916 he was also the Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Association and its President from 1915 to 1918. He had a thorough grasp of public finance and testified before the Welby Commission in London. He held public positions, big and small, too numerous to enumerate. He was Governor of the Imperial Bank of India; member of Bombay Legislative Council (1915-16) and Imperial Legislative Council (1916-20). He was a prolific writer and contributed articles to numerous journals.

YAJNIK, INDULAL (1892-1972): Born at Nadiad of Nagar Brahmin parentage, Indulal graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay and in 1912 took his LL.B. As a student he was associated with the Gurjar Sabha and was a gifted journalist, writing articles for *Bombay Samachar* and *Hindustan*. In 1915 he started the *Navajivan Ane Satya*, a Gujarati monthly and was its editor till it was entrusted to Gandhiji in 1919. With Shankerlal Banker he also started *Young India*, an English weekly. He also joined the Servants of India Society. In 1919 he organized the Gujarat Education Conference. In 1920 he was active in the Non-cooperation movement and along with Kishorelal Mashruwala evolved a plan for the Gujarat Vidyapith. In 1921 as one of the secretaries of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee he organized the Gujarat Rajkiya Parishad at Broach. In 1922 he, with Thakkar Bapa, organized famine relief in Panchmahals. In 1922 he started the



Gujarati monthly *Yugadharm*. In 1923 he became secretary of the Antyaja Seva Mandal. In 1923 he was arrested and imprisoned for one year. Much of this term he spent with Gandhiji in the Yeravda Jail. After his release he developed differences with Gandhiji and drifted towards communism. He took up as editor of the Gujarati daily *Hindustan* and the English daily *Advocate of India*. In 1939 he organized the first Gujarat Kisan Parishad. In 1940-41 he was imprisoned for anti-war propaganda. In July-August 1942 he started a daily, *Nutan Gujarati*. From 1944 to 1956 he stayed and worked at his Nenpur Ashram in Kheda district. In 1956 he took the lead in the Maha Gujarat movement, and founded the Maha Gujarat Janata Parishad. From 1957 to 1972 he represented the Ahmedabad constituency in the Lok Sabha.



GLOSSARY

<i>Abhaya</i>	Fearlessness.
<i>Abwab</i>	Extra-legal levies imposed on peasants by Indigo planters in Bihar.
<i>Akrodha</i>	Absence of anger.
<i>Aparigraha</i>	Non-hoarding.
<i>Assamiwar</i>	In Bihar, cultivation of indigo through tenants rather than by the planter himself.
<i>Asteya</i>	Non-stealing.
<i>Atman</i>	The Self.
<i>Bhakti</i>	Devotion to God.
<i>Bhangi</i>	Sweeper or Scavenger (Lowest community among the untouchables).
<i>Brahmacharya</i>	Celibacy.
<i>Dasturi</i>	Illegal payment in cash or kind by peasant to landlord dictated solely by custom.
<i>Daya</i>	Compassion.
<i>Dhed</i>	Community of weavers, classed as untouchables.
<i>Grihashthashrama</i>	Householder's state.
<i>Hunda</i>	In Bihar, payment of paddy or its price in rupees by a cultivator to a planter in lieu of indigo cultivation on land not fit for it.
<i>Jnana</i>	Knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge.
<i>Kabuliyat</i>	Acceptance agreement signed by a peasant with a planter.
<i>Karma</i>	Action.
<i>Maund</i>	Measure of weight, approximately equal to 371/2 kilograms.



<i>Rentia</i>	Spinning-wheel.
<i>Ryot</i>	Peasantry.
<i>Sarabeshi</i>	In Bihar, enhancement of rent on land payable by a cultivator to a planter for not growing indigo.
<i>Satta</i>	Contract or agreement.
<i>Sattoo</i>	Roasted barley ground into meal and taken with water. It is a staple of the poor in Bihar.
<i>Tawan</i>	In Bihar, lump sum payable by a cultivator to a planter for not growing indigo.
<i>Terai</i>	Himalayan foothills.
<i>Thekedar</i>	Contractor.
<i>Tinkathia</i>	In Bihar, arrangement under which a peasant was required to cultivate indigo for a planter on three parts out of twenty of all his land. The ratio varied, sometimes being as much as five parts out of twenty.
<i>Vastu</i>	Religious ceremony performed in a house before going to live in it.
<i>Yamas</i>	Disciplines or moral rules to be observed by a seeker.
<i>Zeerut</i>	In Bihar, cultivation of indigo by a planter under his direct supervision.

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