



Day-to-Day with Gandhi

[SECRETARY'S DIARY]

Volume V

[From 12th November, 1924 to 16th February, 1925]

By

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Acknowledgement

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—*Narayan M. Desai*

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— *Publishers*



Publishers' Note

It is a matter of privilege for Sarva Seva Sangh to have the opportunity of publishing Mahadev Desai's Diary in Hindi as well as in English.

The relation between Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai is well known to all. Both names are immortal in the history of our national freedom movement. Mahadev Desai joined Gandhiji in 1917 and remained with him till 1942 when Mahadevbhai breathed his last in the lap of Gandhiji in Agakhan palace while in detention. It is amazing to note that Mahadevbhai regularly wrote his day-to-day diary despite his busiest routine with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai had such an inseparable relation that they were like two bodies with one soul. Hence Mahadev Desai's Diary means Diary of Gandhiji's activities.

While reading this Diary one feels like actually witnessing the various incidents with Gandhiji. There are authentic records of important interviews of Gandhiji with national and international leaders. Side by side with excerpts from Gandhiji's most important historical as well as epic speeches, we also find here Gandhiji's typical crackling of jokes with small children.

There is no other Diary in history of this kind except that of Bosswell, the learned English writer, who has noted the events of Dr. Johnson's life in his diary. But the difference between these two diaries lies in the difference of the life of Gandhiji and that of Dr. Johnson.

Mahadev Desai had a knack of snatching some time out of his overcrowded daily routine for some extra reading. He had enriched his diary by jotting down some references out of that study. Mahadevbhai was a voracious reader and a deep thinker. As we find in his diary glimpses of a critical study of his reading, there are sprinkling of a lucid description of some new places he had visited or a running life-sketch of some new personalities he had met. In all these writings Mahadevbhai's supreme literary genius is amply revealed.

The period between 1917 and 1942 was a glorious chapter of India's non-violent struggle for Independence. We get a peep into Gandhiji's innermost thoughts through Mahadevbhai's diary. This period was packed with Gandhiji's most important



interviews, correspondence and whirlwind tours all over the country. A vivid picture of the social, political and spiritual atmosphere of our country in those days is graphically drawn by Mahadevbhai in this diary.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that such a publication is definitely an enriching addition to the world's literature. It is an irony of fate that Mahadevbhai could not live long to edit his diary himself. True to his devotion he died in harness. Late Sri Naraharibhai Parikh, Mahadevbhai's dearest and nearest friend, shouldered the responsibility of editing this diary as a labour of love for a departed friend. Naraharibhai himself was suffering from a serious disease. But he persevered relentlessly and completed the editing of about 3000 pages when he succumbed to the disease. It was a tremendous task to edit the voluminous matter which would run into about 20 volumes of about 400 pages each. The remaining volumes are being edited by Shri Chandulal Bhagubhai Dalal.

The original diaries are in Gujarati. First three volumes in Hindi, covering the period of 1932-33, were published by Navajivan Trust. The publication work of these diaries was interrupted due to some dispute over the right of publication. Finally, Shri Narayan Desai, son of Mahadev Desai, got the right of publication and he generously entrusted the publication of Hindi and English editions of the Gujarati Diary to Sarva Seva Sangh without claiming any royalty. Sarva Seva Sangh is deeply grateful to Shri Narayan Desai for this generous offer.

Sarva Seva Sangh has already brought out 8 volumes of Hindi edition chronologically right from 1917.

The English translation of Mahadev Desai's Diary is being done by Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanth. We have published uptill now 4 volumes of English edition.

This fifth volume is a bit late to our previous schedule. We propose to bring out the sixth volume near about 15th August 1970.

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Preface

The period this volume covers confers on Gandhiji the highest honour a subject country could, viz., the Presidentship of its only really representative body, the Indian National Congress. But he had no illusions either about the stupendous tasks that faced him or about the circumstances that brought about his choice for the position.

He was, on the contrary, perhaps more unhappy in 1925 than ever before in his life. This may appear a too sweeping statement, but a hurried glance on his career will justify it. He did go through dark periods in South Africa ; he was stoned by Europeans, he was beaten black and blue by Pathans. and he had to pass through a seemingly hopeless and interminable struggle. But he knew where he was and his colleagues backed him, on the whole, through thick and thin.

Then after his return to India, with the one exception of a serious but very temporary check after the Punjab and Ahmedabad riots, he met with one victory after another—Champaran, labour strike in Ahmedabad, Kaira Satyagrah, *unanimous* acceptance by the Nagpur Congress of his scheme in every detail and the glorious year 1921. And before he could feel the impact of his halt at Bardoli in 1922, the Government providentially intervened to give him a much needed rest and total ignorance of conditions in India. It whisked him into Jail at the right moment.

It was only after he came out in 1924 and started to gather the lost threads that he began to realize the gravity of the situation in India. But even then he had hopes of a revival. His eyes really opened only in June 1924 at Ahmedabad, when he saw how far dearest and most stalwart colleagues had moved away from him.

But he possessed a sixth sense that told him what to do and when. He scrapped his beloved non-co-operation programme and wooed the Swarajists by issuing the Joint Statement with Das and Nehru. This might be a soothing balm, but there was a new aggravation—the dissatisfaction of his No-changer friends—of Rajagopalachariar, his staunchest colleague, specially.

The fourth volume ends there. The prelude was necessary to show the background of the picture—but not his troubles. At the very beginning of this volume, in a letter to Lala Lajpat Rai, he complains, "The situation is as complex as it possibly can be. And the worst of it is that though everybody looks to me to find a solution. I seem to fit in nowhere. My plan seems to so many of my educated countrymen to be



hopelessly impracticable, whereas to me it seems to be the only practical plan before the country.” (p. 19).

And yet he persists, because he sees harmony as the one need of the perilous hour. The All Parties' Conference held at Bombay was his next step. It was an attempt to bring *all* the political parties of India back to the Congress-fold for a common programme acceptable to all.

And what is the outcome? The sponsor's dearest lieutenant would naturally take the rosiest view and yet even he, Mahadevbhai, admits: "The immediate object ... to raise a (Common) public protest (against the Bengal Ordinance which had clapped so many Swarajists in jail) had been gained. The far-reaching and comprehensive object has not been achieved", though he hopes that the success of the limited object will lead to the greater.

That was the situation when he became the President. His feelings are given in an undertone remark to Mahadevbhai: "My state is that of an *arja* (a Jain nun). Before she is initiated, she is taken out in a gala procession and adorned with the costliest attire and jewels—but because she is to leave the world as a recluse. My Presidentship also seems to be a step to turn me out of political life." (p. 264)

Why then, with this full knowledge, did he accept the post at all? Because, perhaps, like Pitt the Elder, he thought he alone could save the country and nobody else could. And if he himself did not feel so, his friends, including Swarajists, did. "I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever (not merely the British) ... Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition by all of a capacity to resist authority when it is abused," he says to Louis Fischer who adds "(Gandhi admitted) fundamental, differences with the mind of educated India', nevertheless he was persuaded to accept the Presidency as his friends argued that his aloofness would split the Congress" (*Mahatma Gandhi* by Louis Fischer).

That settled the matter and 1925 sees a Congress President more hard-working than any that preceded or followed him. His acceptance of the Presidentship of the Gujarat States' People's Conference was an additional burden, but only a corollary, a very part of his work as Congress President.

To implement his three point programme of Hindu-Muslim unity, spread of Khadi and the spinning wheel, and removal of untouchability by Hindus, he tours ceaselessly from one end of India to another, right through the year. It is difficult, for



these who were not eye-witnesses, to assess today the value of his Herculean labour in those distressing times. He sees national schools and colleges thinning and then disappearing (letter to Sarojini Naidu, dt. 2.3.1925, Vol. VI) and that in his own province, Gujarat also. His personal popularity among the masses seems to have waned at places. "As if to let the witnesses of a situation more depressing than at Bardoli, we went to Bhuvasan." says Mahadevbhai (p. 226). His attempts at pushing his triple programme meets with varying, even dubious success, though he says, "I often wish I had better continued to remain in jail." (p. 271) He had the titanic courage, to hope till hope creates, from its own wreck the thing it contemplates."

Here are some details to show what a crown of the thorns he was wearing in 1925. On 31.12.1924 before even Congress week ended, he receives a bombshell—M. Mohammed Ali's resolution on Kohat "Nothing could be a greater eye-opener." (p. 111) He writes a very friendly letter to him, stating that M. Zafarali Khan's resolution was far superior to his (Mohammad Ali's) and far less offensive. (p. 112)

But earlier still, it was a shock to find, during his inquiry of the Kohat riot, that abduction of Hindu women including married women—was a common affair there and that even M. Shaukat Ali refused to condemn it if Muslim divines claimed that their religious book—*Hadis*—permitted it.

Though he says, "I am now in the position of a man who is shocked to find a snake under his quilt (p. 264)", the shocks did not change his attitude. "Have no fear of treachery. Those who play false will be hoist with their own petard. The duped are never destroyed." (p. 53) He, therefore, asks Hindus to give other communities blank cheques regarding seats in councils etc. i.e. all mundane matters. He also says, "You must not sin for being sinned against." (p. 55) You may argue, "This advice can only end in our extinction." I shall tell you, 'I only show the ways of total self-sacrifice, of the immolation of one's self at the altar of freedom.' (p. 58)

Though as an immediate result the tension continued, if it did not grow worse, since Hindus did not or could not accept this advice and Muslims keyed up their demands ever higher—the advice should not be dismissed as crazy, as a counsel of perfection. It is the very same advice, that has been given by saints and sages of all times and climes, at least to individuals, and has saved the world from collapse and sustained it.



His spinning franchise too accepted obviously involuntarily meets with little success and he 'surrenders' that point also later on. As stated earlier, the intelligentsia was against him, but he might have thought that a congress resolution was a binding force; and it did give the Khadi programme a fillip. Though Khadi did not become a universal wear, it cannot be called a failure. Even today, twenty years after the policy of industrialization, Khadi remains the largest employer of labour—larger by far than any industry run by machinery including the biggest, the cotton-mill industry. And here are two testimonies by outsiders—one of which comes from a man belonging to a party by no means sympathetic.

"Apart from its economic value, which has not proved decisive, homespun was his (Gandhiji's) peculiar contribution to the education of political India. He made it physically conscious of poor, uneducated, non-political India." (Louis Fischer in 'Mahatma Gandhi')

"Salt, opium, cottage industries were more vital than the careers of ministers. Though the spinning wheel may not have been economic, it supplemented the income of the unemployed and under-employed, and above all, threatened Lancashire ... In that attack he united India." (Speech by Mr. Heath, representative of the Conservative party, at the opening ceremony of Gandhiji's statue in London, *Britain* May 1969)

Removal of untouchability was as tremendous a problem as that of winning Swaraj or providing food for the starving millions or bringing unity between Hindus and Muslims. But he persists with all the doggedness of his nature. And he had here two distinct advantages though even with them he had to stake his very life for the Cause in 1932.

Most of the educated Indians were, if not sympathetic, or least not opposed. But the real advantage lay in a strange paradox found in Hinduism. Even during its most rigidly caste-ridden period, Hinduism has exalted its sages, no matter to what caste they belonged. Even Pariahs have been canonised, admitted into temples, and revered. There is another unique phenomenon, which is but another phase of the above. Hindu masses do not know of Hindu conquerors however mighty. But everyone knows Rama and Krishna. because they were spiritual giants in Hindu eyes, Gods. The Hindu face however distorted and ugly through sins is always directed towards (religion) and the quest of the unseen. And Gandhiji was by all accounts, a saint. No matter how startling, and opposed to the rooted religious beliefs his advice was the advice of a saint and the Hindu ear, grudgingly, unwillingly, at first, could not fail to listen to it. Removal of



untouchability has therefore made striking progress, though, as Gandhiji would say, 'Much remains to be done still!' His tours in his favourite Bardoli county and Kaira District as well as in Kathiawar show at once his troubles and his successes in this matter.

Like the preceding volumes, this one contains interesting letters and dialogues, for instance, with a woman representative of 'Sunday Review', but let me stop and leave it to the reader to go through them.

— Translator



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"Ethics is nothing else than everence for life. Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life; and that to destroy, to harm or to hinder life is evil."¹

* * * *

"All attempts to use me for any programme involving violence are bound to fail. I know not secret methods. I know of no diplomacy other than of truth. I have no weapon save of non-violence."

—Gandhi
(translated)

* * * *

"It is the lack of moral perception—this want of faith in the elemental triumph of truth and non-violence."

— Gandhi

1. Sources not indicated



Delhi

d. 12-11-1924

*My dear Jawaharlal,

It does appear to me to be necessary to have a Flying Column of workers, Hindu and Mohamedan, who would on a moment's notice be ready to go to afflicted parts for investigation. We may not wait always for distinguished men to go. Take for instance the case sent to you yesterday. If the statements made are true, the culprits should be exposed. If they are false, newspaper reporters should be brought to book. The investigation could be prompt and thorough. I am preparing Mahadev for the work and am trying to induce Pyarelal. The latter is unnecessarily diffident. Will Manzar Ali do the work? He may be paid for it. He should have no objection to accepting remuneration. His spinning work need not be disturbed. His activity may be confined to U. P. only, though I would prefer not to have any restrictions unless we get an army of workers in the field. For the case sent to you yesterday, I hope you will send some one at once. What about the case that was sent to you some weeks ago?

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi



12-11-1924

I take it you will be in Bombay with Father on Thursday morning (20-11-1924) if not earlier. I reach there that morning. Mrs. Naidu is leaving here to-morrow morning.

M. K. Gandhi

*Dear Motilalji,

I have your several wires. I preferred your first suggestion and have written personal letters to the people concerned as per copy.

I leave here by the Express for Bomhay on Tuesday night reaching Bombay on Thursday morning. Shall try to take Hakimji and Dr Ansari with me. Mohamed Ali will join us on Friday. We shall hold an informal meeting of the selected few on Thursday. I like your idea. We may there discuss the agenda and text of resolutions to be passed. I think too that

if we have an outsider as Chairman for joint meeting, it may be better, say for instance Sastri or Sapru. I present this thought to you for your consideration. There are difficulties about every project. But if we want some joint action during the period of suspension, a neutral chairman for the joint meeting may be an advantage.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

If you are to be in Bombay on Thursday morning, I take it you will have to leave on Tuesday reaching Bombay Wednesday afternoon. I take it you are asking Das and other friends to be in Bombay on Thursday.

M. K. Gandhi



Delhi,
d. 12-11-1924

C/o: Dr. Ansari,
Daryaganj, Delhi.

*Dear Lalaji,

You will please forgive me for not replying to your letter earlier. As you know I had to run away to Calcutta where I had not a minute to spare for writing. I am yet regaining lost strength.

What shall I do in Rawalpindi? I observe that Hindus have even accepted terms from the Commissioner. I can bring them no comfort. I cannot even get at the truth. I cannot add to their creature comforts. That part is being attended to by various bodies. The one thing I can usefully do, I am rendered powerless to do. If you still think I should go to Rawalpindi, I would go. But this can now be only after the Bombay meeting.

Then there is our meeting. Dr. Satyapal says that the Punjab Provincial Conference is to take place during the 1st week of December. Will you be there till then? Shall we meet at that time or earlier? I must leave here on Tuesday next. Are you going to Bombay? Will your health permit? If you are not going to Bombay and if you want me to meet before December, please wire. I must leave here for Bombay on the 18th inst., i. e., Tuesday. Monday is *dies non*. The only thing possible for me is to leave here on Friday night, pass Saturday with you and leave on Saturday night returning here on Sunday. If that is not done we can meet only in the beginning of December, i.e., if we don't meet in Bombay. You may now command me as you will.

I would like your views on the statement signed by Das, Motilalji and myself. The situation is as complex as it possibly can be. And the worst of it is that though everybody looks to find a solution, I seem to fit in nowhere. My plan seems to so many of my educated countrymen to be hopelessly impracticable, whereas to me it seems to be the only practicable plan before the country.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

P. S. After I had written the foregoing I received your letter of the 11th inst. If after you have read the foregoing you think that I should proceed to Rawalpindi before



going to Bombay, please wire. I will start at once and if you join me at Lahore we can talk on the way. All this will mean in my present state of health a great strain, but it won't be unbearable if I must go through it. Please wire on receipt of this what you would have me to do. Whether you want me to go to Pindi or come to you for a day. If you do send me to Pindi, I can be there only for a day. For, I must leave on Tuesday night for Bombay.

I have no idea, whatsoever, of settling the pact at Bombay. I fully agree with you that it cannot be rushed. There must be a thorough investigation before any conclusion is arrived at. Nor is the Conference going to function about Swaraj. It may be possible to have a small committee to draft a scheme for submission to a similar conference. In the main, however, the Conference will confine itself to the answer to repression and to the question of all parties joining the Congress. The gentleman who came to see me today told me you were better and that at the present moment the Bombay climate might be better for you than

the rigorous climate of the Punjab. But you are the best judge as to whether you can move out just now or not. I would not have you to imperil your health for the sake of the Conference.

M. K. G.



Delhi,

d. 12-11-1924

*My dear Shwaib,

Mrs. Naidu tells me you are in a most dejected mood and have almost become a misanthrope having lost faith in men and things. If it is so, it is unworthy of you whom I have always known and heard of as a man of God. That you are oversensitive I have discovered for myself. But that sensitiveness can be got rid of without much difficulty. Dejection is not so easy. Why have you become so? We have a long and weary battle to fight. But may a soldier grumble if the battle is found to be long and weary? Not surely for him to grumble. If others falter, he who has faith becomes correspondingly stronger. I would like you to be stronger and more determined for all the weakness and confusion around us. So please cheer up. Open out your heart.

Kristodas was telling me you had not yet returned the Gulbarga report duly completed. Do please send it or keep it ready when I come there on the 20th. I hope to leave by the express on the 18th. Probably Hakim Saheb and Dr. Ansari will be with me.

Kristodas stayed behind for a week. His people wanted to meet him badly. He, therefore, went to Chanpur. He returns on or before 18th.

Mrs. Naidu leaves tomorrow to prepare for the Conference.

You may not know that I am now housed at Dr. Ansari's.

With love,

Yours sincerely.

M. K. Gandhi

Dear friend,

You must have received from M. Mahomed Ali an invitation to attend the Conference which is to be held in Bombay between the All India Congress Committee and representatives of other public bodies. I hope you will be able to present yourself at the Conference. The idea is to unite, if possible, all those who hold different views on the policy of repression going on in Bengal. It is my view that the repression is aimed rather at that constitutional activity which has made the Government ill at ease than



at anarchical crimes. The second object in holding the Conference is to see if it is possible to bring together all the different parties on the Congress platform for a United Front and evolve a common constructive programme which may tend to national progress. Of course, every party may retain its individual character. I am certain that if you can attend the Conference, your advice and co-operation will be very valuable in arriving at a settlement satisfactory to all parties.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi ¹

In the visitors' Book of 'The Modern School' of Raghuvirsingh:

I was glad to go round this Modern School. The cleanliness of the School is laudable. I have only one doubt. It will prove very harmful to these young men and young women, if in a rush for modernity, our ancient excellences are allowed to die out. I venture to make this remark, because I see that the object of the institution is sacred and I wish it success.

Mohandas Gandhi²

1. Translated, as the original circular letter could not be traced.
2. Translated from the original in Hindi.



Message

to

The World Tomorrow

396, Broadway, New York, U.S.A.

Delhi,

14-11-1924

*My study and experience of non-violence have proved to me that it is the greatest force in the world. It is the surest method of discovering the truth and it is the quickest because there is no other. It works silently, almost imperceptibly but none the less surely. It is the one constructive process of nature in the midst of incessant destruction going on about us. I hold it to be a superstition to believe that it can work only in private life. There is no department of life, public or private, to which that form cannot be applied. But this non-violence is impossible without complete self-effacement.

M. K. Gandhi

*My dear Rajagopalachari.

Swami wires he is sending me your scathing indictment of the agreement. Let this be as balm to your lacerated heart. 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. I do not regret Bardoli because I had the courage to retrace my steps. I hope I shall have less reason to regret this step. Perhaps my article in *Young India* will soothe you a bit. I wish you had come to Bombay. But I will not press.

You will see Sri Valji Govindji Desai's translation of the History *Of Satyagraha In South Africa* published in *Current Thought*.

Please read and send your criticism of the translation to V.G. Desai, Shahibag, Ahmedabad, or to me. Hope you are well. Cheer Boys, cheer. No more of idle sorrow.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi



Dear Kaka.,

After writing for the Education Special Number I have been feeling a rather intense itch to write about child education. Why may we not begin this experiment with the children of the Ashram?—of course if you agree with the ideas expressed in that article.

The child can point out a jar, but he cannot draw its picture. In the same way let him first read the letters of the alphabet though he cannot write them. Before he can read the name of a new object, he hears of it and speaks of it—pronounce it—as he hears. Why may we not rather teach drawing to Laxmi, Rasik and others than writing? We may impart, most of their education through oral teaching only. For the present, let them use their hands in drawing only. For this the teachers must learn up the elements of drawing. But now I am getting deeper into the question and I must stop. For the present, think over all this. More when we meet.

Bapu's Blessings

*Dear friend,

Though I think we have never met personally, I know you through Pandit Malaviyaji. He spoke to me of you in glowing language and told me how brave, honest, and self-sacrificing you were. He told me also that you counted your health of no cost in serving refugees. This is, however, to tell you, and through you the refugees, how sorry I am that I cannot come to Rawalpindi at the present moment. My objective was Kohat. That having fallen through, for the time being, I was in no hurry to go to Rawalpindi. I knew that Panditji was in close touch with you and I knew also that I could be of little assistance in bringing about reconciliation, unless I could go to Kohat and that too in proper company. But I see that my presence is considered necessary even in Rawalpindi, but it has not been possible. I will, however, come at the first opportunity and not later than the first week of December. I dare not delay my departure for Bombay.

Meanwhile I would like to give you my opinion of the situation as I understand it from this distance. The Kohat situation should be treated as an all-India question. For, the whole of India is interested in what happens to the refugees. The latter should, therefore, inform the Government that they would be guided by the advice that they may receive from Hindu and Mohamedan leaders and that, therefore, the Government should invite them and settle the matter through them. I hope that the



refugees will not be frightened by threats of arrests and the like. I am hoping that Panditji will be with you tomorrow or the day after. You may place this letter before them and if they do not agree with my opinion it should be dismissed from your minds. If Panditji and Lalaji disagree you need not place my letter before the refugees at all.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

Dear Swamiji,

I have your questions.

1. Spiritual strength gained from *tapasya* is lost when it is used for getting money.
2. *Yagna* (sacrifice) is performed in order to gain strength; it is necessary to protect its performance by extraneous means.
3. It does not appear to me from the narration of his deeds that Rama gained victory by physical force.
4. Many of the exploits of Krishna are nothing but parables. Soul force, and not physical force, is evident in the life of Krishna.

Even today we see that the power of intellect surpasses that of the body. Both intellectual and physical powers appear quite negligible before the strength of the spirit.

Yours sincerely,

Mohandas Gandhi



In the course of a long letter d. 17-12-1924:

*My dear Lalaji,

I have your letter and your messages through Bharucha and Lala Amichand. You will, I hope, forgive me for not responding to your call. I have now publicly given the reasons for my inability. There are moments when health has not only to be risked but sacrificed. I did not feel that this was such a moment. I eat well, sleep well, walk a bit, can travel to Bengal, am travelling to Bombay. I know that travelling to Rawalpindi would not have killed me. And death on a battle-field is welcome to a soldier. But was it worthwhile? I know my limitations. I am a surgeon and not a physician. The refugees will not submit to the surgical knife. At least that is my fear and, if they will, I know that a few days only will not matter but probably they will be only then ready for the knife. Meanwhile they need merely watching and nursing and probably a little cleansing and a little tonic.

So much for Rawalpindi.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi



Delhi,
d. 18-11-1924

*Dear Raja Saheb,

I thank you for your letter and your kind wishes. I have read the reply to the note prepared by my secretary from the documents in my possession. The only satisfactory way to deal with the matter is for me or some one on my behalf to go to Raj territory and to make a personal investigation so as to enable one to speak or write with authority on the subject. While I was thinking of writing to you I had the following from Mr. Andrews who, as you may be aware, has been helping me in editing *Young India* ever since the fast. The cutting was sent for publication, but Mr. Andrews would not publish it without reference to me. On reading it, I decided to show it to you before publishing. Meanwhile I observe that other newspapers have published the news already. If you don't mind I would like to send over Mr. Andrews to you so that he can see things for himself. He tells me he knows you very well and has kindly consented to go there. If Mr. Andrews goes he will be able to smooth matters and enable you to deal with such abuse, if any, as may exist and enable me to satisfy those who are constantly complaining to me of the oppression of the *ryot*. Will you please wire your reply at Sabarmati to my proposal to send Mr. Andrews?

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

P. S. Herewith copy of the cutting from *Samaj* of Satyavadi, Orissa. Many things have appeared in several papers in favour of Kanaka-raj also.

M. K. G.



All Parties Conference

d. 21/22.11.1924

(*Navajivan*, d. 30.11.1924)

"Bengal is a limb of India. The sorrows of Bengal are the sorrows of all the parts of India. The calamity that has fallen upon Bengal has fallen upon me. My patriotism and devotion to India are not worth a straw, if I do not stand by the side of Deshbandhu in the hour of this peril." ...

"The farther I penetrate into the terrain of non-violence, the newer are the vistas opened up before me and the greater is the light I gain. How can I then afford to consult all the No-changers at every new step I take? Non-violence is dear to them, they are worshippers of the cult of non-violence, and so I hope that immediately I give them just a hint, they will catch my interpretation of the *dharma* of non-violence and its ever-new implications that suggest themselves to me."

These two statements explain fully both the genesis of the All Parties' Conference and Gandhiji 's present activities. The immediate object of holding the Conference, viz, to make India feel the trouble of Bengal as her own and so to raise a public protest against it, has been gained. The far-reaching and comprehensive object of making all political parties accept a common programme for the amelioration of India's present ills has not been achieved. But in the success of the limited object lies the hope of the attainment of the greater object also.

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There was indeed a proposal to consider first this bigger object in place of the smaller one, but Gandhiji characterised it as putting the cart before the horse. At the end of the Conference everyone agreed that Gandhiji was right, because if the Conference had entered into a discussion of the broader object, perhaps it would not have been over even by now and it might have had to be dispersed without bringing about any result whatsoever. In place of that possible frustration, the limited object—condemnation of the lawless law imposed on Bengal, demand for its withdrawal, and declaration that the only solution for the present situation is the establishment of Swaraj—has been definitely gained. That is why all the parties have dispersed with more or less optimism regarding the possibility of realising the higher aim also. A committee has been appointed by the All Parties' Conference in order to achieve this



greater objective and there is reason to hope that papers belonging to all the parties will help in the work of that Committee. Leaders of the Moderate Party and its papers have expressed their satisfaction at the work of the Conference and are hopeful of results. 'Vidushi' Mrs. Besant also is not only highly pleased, but has promised to attend the coming Congress session. There is a possibility of her joining the Congress with all her followers. The Non-Brahmin Party also is not dissatisfied at the outcome of the Conference .

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Apropos of 'Vidushi' Besant's view, there is one thing which it is a pleasure to point out. While giving out her view, she laid special stress on this feature of the Conference: "Though I was in favour of the Ordinance in Bengal, I was given a very quiet hearing." And this was true of the whole working of the Conference. Even if the Conference had not succeeded in bringing about any tangible result, it could be rightly said to have gained a signal success simply from the establishment of this climate of tolerance. And in view of this fact Englishmen will now realise

that they committed a definite error in keeping themselves aloof from the Conference, specially because a cordial invitation had been sent to several European Associations. And let me state here that the very loving attempt made by Messrs. Jinnah and Mahomed Ali to win over Mrs. Besant to the majority view, when the Committee was being formed to draft a Resolution condemning the unseemly Ordinance, created a very good impression in her mind. Had Englishmen attended the Conference

there is no doubt that all possible attempts of gentle persuasion would have been made to induce them also to join hands with Indians. And the fact that the second part of the resolution—the withdrawal of Regulation III of 1818 and the demand for a public trial of those arrested under it—was accepted by all leaders including Mrs. Besant was due to nothing else than this spirit of tolerance and love.

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Diverse accounts re. Gandhiji's consultations with the Moderate Party are appearing in the Press. There is only a partial truth, or even less than that, in them. There is no truth in the report that Gandhiji had expressed there a desire to water down still further the conditions re. the spinning franchise and the wearing of Khadi by Congressmen. In his article, 'Do we want unity?' Gandhiji has elaborately stated his views on the spinning franchise. When he conferred with the Moderates he said



nothing beyond what was stated in that article. But one thing needs special mention. Let me state, first of all, that there was nothing like 'pourparlers' at the meeting, but only statements of individual views. Sri Shastriar's objections were discussed; Gandhiji expressed his own views to Sri Chintamani and at the end Gandhiji said to him in plain words : "Sri Shastriar—the Moderate Party—is afraid that I have only suspended non-co-operation and may renew it on suitable occasion. Please tell him on my behalf that his fear is quite justified. Non-co-operation I can never give up for good and if I have suspended it for a time, it is only because of the present adverse situation. I may certainly begin it if I get a favourable climate. Let me add at the same time that it is in your (Moderates') hands to stop me from re-starting it. Only you and none others are in a position to create a situation which may make the renewal of non-co-operation superfluous. You alone can successfully persuade the Government and Englishmen to do the needful and thus make it unnecessary. The fact that despite this very plain speaking the Moderate Party was present in large numbers and resolution was proposed and passed under the presidentship of Shastriji to appoint a Committee to attain the bigger object are good auguries.

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At the very outset Gandhiji had proposed several names for inclusion in a Committee to be formed for moulding an agreed programme to enable all parties to rejoin the Congress. The Committee was enlarged by frequent proposals of additional names. Its membership has now come to a hundred or thereabout. This large number is going to slacken the pace of the Committee's work and there is every chance of difficulties repeatedly cropping up in arriving at agreed formulas. But in

order to let his forbearance reach its acme, Gandhiji took no objection at all at this large increase in numbers. All the parties will submit before the 20th of December their respective conditions for uniting with the Congress. Since these conditions will thus be submitted before the Congress holds its session at Belgaum, it is likely to be very convenient for all the parties that will attend the Congress to think over the conditions. Moreover, the new proposal of the spinning franchise is certain to be discussed at the Congress session. That will give a clue to all parties to know the strength of opinion behind the spinning franchise. All these factors provide enough material to the session of the Committee appointed by the All Parties' Conference, that is to be held at Delhi in March. Gandhiji's article in the current issue only repeats what he stated at the Conference, namely, the fact that his faith in the spinning wheel



remains unwavering. If It is proved to his satisfaction that his faith is misplaced, he will give up his point and align himself with all others. But if the faith is not proved baseless, he will entrust the Congress to the majority party and being firm in his view on the spinning wheel he will go it alone in his work for it .

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The most important subject for discussion at the A. I. C. C. was, of course, the Joint Statement.¹ Gandhiji's speech in its exposition was very important, but want of space forbids its publication in this issue. However, the chief points that he made therein have got to be given here. Hardly anywhere else was the working of his mind revealed so well as in that speech. He began with asking everybody to express his own independent opinion and then added a sentence that threw a flood of light on his whole activity at the present time : "It is my unshakable conviction that there is no activity in the world's history whose result has failed to correspond with the means used. So the means and the end are one single inseparable whole. If you accept this view, you will easily understand why I ask you to approve of the Joint Statement. The recession that we experienced in our progress towards the goal is nothing but the echo of our fall from purity of the means which we employed last year." This warning to first purify the means for an early achievement of our goal has thus been given by Gandhiji to both Swarajists and No-changers.

Before speaking on the Joint Statement at the A. I. C. C. Gandhiji had discussed it briefly with only the No-changers. He clarified the meaning of the Statement during that discussion and made it clearer still in his speech at the open session. "A majority of the intelligentsia of the country has taken a different road for gaining Swaraj. As a practical man I ought to confer with that majority. I see no good in ignoring or opposing it. There are various reasons why it is not possible to keep the Congress tied to a single view for a long time. One of them is the fact that we are lacking in tolerance. The Congress ought to include all parties of the country and the first step towards that consummation is this Statement, viz., the agreement between parties within the Congress itself. If the Congress resolves on entering the councils by a majority vote, a few No-changers cannot stop the Swarajists from declaring that they represent the Congress in those councils, because the Congress accepts council-entry through that resolution. There is hardly any difference between that situation and the present. A resolve made with a majority vote and an agreement arrived at by previous



consultation are one and the same thing. And as a result Swarajists and No-changers become equal partners in the Congress.

The spinning franchise also was hotly discussed. It was argued that the concession to allow a Congressman to send his yarn quota by procurement and the suspension of the three boycotts (of councils, courts and schools) would not only strangle non-co-operation, but also give a set-back to the Khadi work. In a private talk Gandhiji said in a heated outburst, "I attach no value to that non-co-operation which requires the prop of an extraneous activity for its existence, which cannot live without the tempo of a fiery programme carried out in all its items and which would die without that artificial stimulant. I want both non-co-operation and Khadi to reach that state by which they can become self-luminous, can stand erect as free and independent entities on their integral strength." In his speech he discussed the subject at a little greater length. He declared that if anybody had any ground of complaint as regards the spinning franchise, it could only be the Swarajists and not the No-changers. In the end, addressing both the Wings he gave vent to these touching sentiments : "Let it not be said of the Swarajists in future that they had accepted this spinning franchise simply in order to destroy the spinning activity. This Agreement has been accepted by both the parties and accepted with a view to the implementation, heart and soul, of all its conditions. It is our slackness, our want of discipline, that is the cause of our failure in the past. Success will fall into our hands like a ripe fruit, I say, if we can canalise the whole country's power in the programme of work that is to be started by the Agreement. But if there is a vain wrangling in future over the interpretation of the agreement, if we have only a halting faith in these conditions, I shall find myself paralysed. If No-changers regard the Agreement as wholly unacceptable, they can insist on its modification by myself, Motilalji and Das The need of the hour is to dive into the depths of our hearts and see ourselves, to take the whole blame upon ourselves for the present *debacle*. I am a down-to-earth practical man. Though I am not the man to yield a jot on principle, for working it out I have bowed down to the Swarajists, am bowing to the Moderates. Tomorrow, if Englishmen are prepared to repent, you will find me bowing down to them also. Non-violence is everything to me. I see no other *dharma* except that of non-violence. It is my faith that non-violence is invincible. If I am forced to confess to myself that non-violence is useless and unavailing, death will be the only resting place for my aching heart.

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Everyone liked the Agreement except one or two. There were indeed some discussions on minor points, but they need be mentioned. Let nobody ask 'What was the good that came out of the Conference?' The good is yet to come and it is in our hands to bring it. During his speech in support of the first resolution, M. Shaukat Ali had raised the question, "We have passed this resolution indeed, but what will you do if nobody cares to listen to you? Have you got the power to get it enforced?" The relevancy of this question will persist for long. Had we had the power, perhaps the holding of the Conference itself would have been unnecessary. In order to gain that power, Gandhiji has begun to evolve order out of the present chaos. It seems the clock of our progress has been set back by ten years. The speeches of Messrs. Chintamani and Deshbandhu were full of wisdom and warmth. Such speeches were made by Sri Shastriji also during the Rowlatt Act agitation, but Gandhiji was at that time able to set the whole country ablaze with the spirit of resistance.

It is because we are not in a position today to rock the whole country that we are placed in the shameful situation of contenting ourselves with a resolution on paper. The release from this sorry plight lies in the programme that is to be submitted before the ensuing Congress and in the unification of all parties for its implementation.

1. Day-to-day with Gandhi, Vol. IV. Appendix V-1.



d. 2.12.1924

On the way to Delhi.

Interesting Talk

Navajivan, 7.12.1924

Neither have the Hindus and Muslims of Delhi united as yet, nor are the cases filed by them in law courts withdrawn by settlement. An attempt to compound them by the method of arbitration was indeed sponsored and kept up and it was for that very purpose that Gandhiji had prolonged his stay in Delhi till the 18th November. But arbitrators would be appointed and some hitch would crop up; new arbitrators would then be appointed and some newer difficulty would arise. During this protracted period all the cases arising from the riots were conducted in law courts and even their judgments delivered. Thus there remained practically no issue which necessitated a settlement by compromise. All the same it could safely be said that the constant contact of Gandhiji with the Delhi people had this result, if no other. At least during the days of Gandhiji's stay there, the easily inflammable mood of the Delhi people could not be fanned into violence. That is how I assess the visible and subtle results of Gandhiji's stay. But it is not of these results that I wish to talk here. What impels me to write in one of the many pleasant reminiscences of Bapu's stay at Delhi. I have often reported in these columns the dialogues held there and I am now reproducing another that had to be dropped in order to make room for the events in Calcutta and Bombay.

The interviewers were both American professors, one of psychology and the other of sociology. The latter is well-known even in India, as the writer of the Introduction to that very popular book, 'Non-violent Coercion.' There is a chapter entitled 'Non-co-operation in India' in that book. It shows a good grasp of the facts about India. The book had impressed me also and I had expected that the professor who wrote its Introduction and his aged friend, the psychologist, would put some searching questions to Gandhiji. But they did not do so. In fact, some of their questions were of just the ordinary type usually put by American tourists. But it is for the answers to them that the dialogue deserves preservation. Both the professors had exclaimed when they were leaving, 'We are amazed at the utter frankness of his answers. We have never come across such perfect plainspeaking.'

They began the talk by stating that they wanted to study the Indian question and that they intended to visit the Jallianwalla Bagh¹ at Amritsar.



Gandhiji: The scene around is just the same. You will see the walls that enclose the courtyard on all sides. But the ground the blood-red ground—you will not see.

Q: What do you think? Was that deed a regular part of British policy or merely an irresponsible act of a headstrong officer?

Gandhiji: It was a part of the general policy of British rule—though it may be said to be its exaggexated edition. Because after 1857 there has never been such a frightful massacre. I cannot recall any horror of that magnitude since then. But this thing—to frighten, to terrorise the subject races and rule over them—is the backbone of their policy. (This talk took place before the latest outburst of terrorism in Egypt).

Q: You co-operated for 25 years. Did you think, even during that period of co-operation, that the policy of the Government was this same one of rule by terror?

Gandhiji: Yes, I think so. But I felt at that time that the British Constitutton was sound. It contained features which, automatically, were capable of responding to a people's genuine needs. That was why I used to praise the British Constitution in season and out and declare my faith in it.

Q: Was it then Punjab alone that opened your eyes?

Gandhiji: It was really the Rowlatt Acts that opened them. The object for which these Acts were proposed, the way in which they were passed in the teeth of a pronounced public opinion against them—these were the things that woke me up from stupor. But my faith in the Government received a fmal knock-out blow by the attitude ofthe Government with regard to the Khilafat and the Punjab questions. The first shock to my faith came in 1917—when my friend, Mr. Andrews, drew my attention to the Secret Treaties. But I do not wish to enter into an explanation of the circumstances under which I refrained from taking any step at that time. That was my first shock. Then the War ended. Everybody had hoped for a bright future. Our country also had cherished hopes, but we were presented with the Rowlatt Acts and, along with them, of the assurance given by the Viceroy to the British Civil Service and British Business that their stranglehold of India would be maintained permanently. That was why I had to strenuously oppose those Acts.



Q.: But that Act was never put in force?

Gandhiji: How was the enforcement possible ? And the Act was annulled also later on. That resistance to the Act stirred the whole country to its depth, roused it from an age-long slumber.

Q.: You say the British rule has emasculated the Indians. How do you explain it?

Gandhiji: In three ways. In body, mind, and soul—in all the Three—they have been emasculated. The life-essence of the country was sucked up, its principal industries destroyed, and today the country is sinking everyday deeper and deeper into misery. And so the enervation of the body has reached its lowest point. Then, the education that the Government provides is imparted through a foreign language. Our physical and mental powers are corroded by that education given in a foreign tongue. There is no progress in our intrinsic culture, we merely ape the West, become slaves to the phrases and idioms current in the English language. And finally, the soul of the country has been killed because it was forcibly disarmed.

The professor of psychology put in: "But can you not turn that situation to your advantage? You are a known pacifist. Can you not infuse spiritual strength in the people?"

Gandhiji: How? When a man is hankering after indulgence in a variety of tastes, because he is prevented from doing so, do you think he will listen to any talk of control of the palate? I have an experience of jail-life and I know the working of the prisoner's mind. As a rule, he does not take any very tasty dishes, when he is out, and does not yearn for varieties in his daily menu. But, in jail, since he is denied the freedom to eat anything else than the food given to him, his mind runs after those same prohibited articles. It is the ban itself which creates the wistfulness. Quite naturally, the prisoner forms the habit of taking an exaggerated view of his disabilities, his difficulties, and his bans. The same thing can be said of the situation in this country. Owing to these very orders, under which he is prohibited from carrying arms, under which his arms have been wrested from him, the Indian craves for their possession all the more greedily. The Englishman has no inhibitions about his blood and iron policy, he wants to enslave the Indian in every possible way. The Indian, in return, is naturally



impelled to find out ways to avenge the treatment and he delights in the taste of the forbidden fruit of the use of arms.

Q.: Are Indians then entirely bereft, at present, of any lofty, religious or spiritual sentiments?

Gandhiji: Imagine India to be a vast prison-house and you will understand what I say. India has really become a vast prison today, because people have been totally disarmed and reduced to utter helplessness. This cannot fail to affect the Indian attitude (towards arms) consciously or unconsciously?'

Q.: People have been deprived of arms at our place also, but there is not that effect on the mind of our people.

Gandhiji: The two situations are different. Here also if people were free like you, nobody would care if he did not possess arms. But the moment a ban is imposed, trouble is sure to arise. I have had the experience of about a dozen jails in India and Africa combined and I can tell you what the prisoner's psychology is.

Q.: Your explanation then is that the mentality prevalent here is that of a subject people. All right. But you give education through a foreign tongue as one of its causes. Cannot English become the national language of India?

Gandhiji: It can't. French is regarded as a common language all over Europe. But will an Englishman ever talk in French with another Englishman? But you will see that pitiable sight in India. Not only between people of different provinces, but even between those of one and the same province, English is the language of communication in writing and speaking!

That old gentleman: You are a recognised leader of the whole of India and you yourself speak in English!

Gandhiji: No. You have not heard me speaking before the people. I speak in Hindi only.

Q.: Excuse me. We did not know that. So you think this question will be solved by Hindustani?

Gandhiji: Why not? Crores of my countrymen speak Hindustani or understand it, while not even a million can speak and write in English.

Q.: Was it to show how deeply pained you were at the quarrels that you fasted?



Gandhiji: No. That was an indirect result.

Q.: How?

Gandhiji: Because my penance became a public affair. It was not possible to keep it a secret and I did not want to keep it either (Here Gandhiji entered into a long exposition of the reasons of the fast, of the perverse effect non-co-operation had produced in the minds of the people etc., all of which I drop in order to avoid repetition—M. D.). One has but to do penance for the sins of omission and commission.

Q.: So it was not for others that you fasted? You did not follow here the Christian concept of penance?

Gandhiji: I am deeply indebted to Christianity, but not for my idea of penance. My penance was for my own sins, not for those of others. It is a different thing if my penance affects some other person or if some other person's action awakens in me the consciousness of my sin. I have imbibed the idea of penance from Hinduism which is replete with thousands of such examples.

Q.: What then is your debt to Christianity?

Gandhiji: You will be surprised to know how my first contact with Christianity and my interest in my own religious books began. I used to believe that to be a Christian was to have the freedom to take flesh and wine! I was told that a Christian convert in Rajkot was taking them and that was my first contact with Christianity. I was under that impression when I went to London. Two Englishmen there asked me to read Bhagwadgita with them. But I knew absolutely nothing even of Bhagwadgita then. I took up Arnold's translation ("Song Celestial" by Edwin Arnold). The book deeply impressed me. I was so charmed with it! I saw that Arnold had grasped the real essence of the Gita and poured all his heart's love in the translation. The *shlokas* (verses) which I repeat in my daily evening prayer became my day and night companions since then. Later on, a friend met me in a vegetarian restaurant and he gave me the Bible. It made me sick to read the chapters of the Old Testament one after another, and I wondered 'Could this be Christianity?' But I had already promised that friend to go through the whole of the Bible from beginning to end. So, with grim resolve, I plodded on and on. It was my determination to keep my promise that



saved me. I came at last to the 'Sermon on the Mount' and I breathed a sigh of relief and joy. That Sermon gave me great peace and consolation.

The American professors were intensely interested. One of them asked:

Do you believe in Christ as the Saviour of humanity through His vicarious suffering?

Gandhiji: I am not much impressed with the concept.

Q.: Are you shocked?

Gandhiji: No, not shocked either. There is something similar in Hinduism also. But I interpret some parts of the Bible differently—some well-known parts of John's Gospel for instance. I do not believe at all that one individual can wash off the sins of some other and grant him redemption. But it is a psychological fact that one individual may feel pained at the sins and sorrows of another and the consciousness that the former is grieved may lead to the moral uplift of the latter. But I cannot accept the idea that one man can die for the sake of the sins of millions and save them.

The answer thronged the mind of the professor of psychology with various questions. He entered into the realms of psychology and philosophy.

Q.: Do you believe in free will?

Gandhiji: I believe I am subject to circumstances—to time and space. All the same God has granted me some freedom and I am preserving it. I think I have the freedom to distinguish between right and wrong and choose from them whatever I like. It has never appeared to me that I have not got any freedom, but it is difficult to decide where the freedom to act converts itself into a call of duty. The dividing line between helplessness and dependence is very thin and subtle.

But this was all delving into the depths of a learned discussion. The other professor did not relish it. His mind was filled with the charge against the British policy. He said something to this effect: You have roundly condemned the British policy, called it as one that has enervated the people. But were not the predecessors—the Moghals—worse than the British? What a scourge Nadirshah was. There is at least peace everywhere in India today.



Gandhiji: You do not get a true picture from the accounts you read in history of the invasions of Nadirshah. The masses, at least, remained unaffected. The tyrants of the past had no machine guns and aeroplanes and other implements of modern civilisation with which they could annihilate the masses or reduce them to utter destitution. The Moghals did possess the power of organisation, the power of a compact force, but they never destroyed the life-spring of the people. That is why the Englishman cannot be compared with all those foreigners.

Q.: But did not the Marathas also sap the vitality of the people?

Gandhiji: Not at all. You do not know of our condition at the time of the 1857 revolt. The persecution of the people at that time has no parallel. You cannot imagine how happy the country was before the days of the modern innovations—the railways, post and telegraph etc. And what number of men could have been harmed by the invasions of Sivaji? His arm could not possibly have reached even a million, whereas the British Government has spread its dragnet around all the seven hundred thousand villages of India.

Q.: But is it not true that there is peace under the aegis of the British?

Gandhiji: Yes, the peace of the graveyard.

Q.: May not the Nawabs and Nizams repeat in future what the Englishmen are doing today?

Gandhiji: Let them. That possibility does not frighten me. I am quite prepared for that eventuality. That calamity is far better than the present one.

Q.: May not an Oriental despotism be more crushing?

Gandhiji: No. That would be easier to bear. It is this Occidental tyranny that is unbearable, because one can get a chance to rise in revolt against an Oriental tyrant and in the fight the chances of the people's victory would be fifty-fifty.

Q.: But even he can now arm himself with machine guns?

Gandhiji: Yes, he can. But he cannot make use of them.

Q.: Why? When you get Swaraj, may not one of the Indian Princes rise up and bring you under his heels?



Gandhiji: Doesn't matter if he does. There may be some disorder in that case, but no such Prince will ever be able to spread his rule over all the seven hundred thousand villages of India. But why do you indulge in such fancies? British power may be destroyed, but the British are not going to run away helter-skelter and leave us in the lurch. And even if that happens and there is chaos due to our own weaknesses. In a few days we shall be able to see our errors and revert to peace. And if we got Swaraj by non-violence alone, there would remain no danger of that outcome. You may not be knowing that it is my cherished ambition to win Swaraj through non-violent ways.

Q.: But may not the people burst into violence? What have you to say about the races of the North Western Frontier Province?

Gandhiji: That is one of the bogies which the British have raised. And the beauty of it is that inspite of a heavy ransom to Afghanistan the Frontier remains a disturbed area.

Q.: And suppose the Afghan descends upon India?

Gandhiji: We will see to that, if he does. One of the aims of our Swaraj is conversion of other nations into friends. Just as other races came and settled in India in the past, we can accommodate the Afghans also if they come.

There seemed to be no end to this talk and the psychologist was bored. He broached a new subject.

Q.: What do you think about the debit and credit account between the East and West?

Gandhiji: Are you speaking with reference to Britain and India?

Q.: Yes.

Gandhiji: I think the British have not come here to give us anything. We have gained nothing from our contact with them. What appears to have been gained, has been done inspite of their contact, not because of it. To my mind, India has to teach the West the truth of non-violence. If India cannot make that contribution to the world, my pride for India as the land of my birth would evaporate. It may be only my dream, but that dream I have been cherishing for years past. That truth (of non-violence) has been sedulously cultivated in this land since hoary



ages, the climate of the country is favourable and it has entered into the blood of the masses in general.

Q.: Since the times of the Buddhists?

Gandhiji: Even earlier than that. The Buddha gave it only pre-eminence since it had been forgotten. India's message to the world can be that and no other, my heart tells me.

The sociologist said: Yes, I am a student of sociology. Hatred, anger and the like are stumbling blocks in the path of peace and non-violence. The West also, I admit, has got to accept non-violence. We shall have to change our policy. There is no other go.

The aged psychologist again put a new question: "Has your non-violence risen from your conscience or experience?"

Gandhiji: From both. I felt that that was the sacred law of life and my study and experience of society confirmed the belief.

Q.: Do you believe in miracles? What do you say to fire-walking and such other things we hear so much of?

Gandhiji: They may be true. But I have never paid any attention, never taken any interest in them. Our scriptures impose a ban on such things. They proclaim that if you fall into its deluding snare, salvation is out of the question for you and you are caught in the noose of births and deaths. But I do not think it impossible to gain such powers.

Q.: But cannot the power of performing miracles be used for the good of the people?

Gandhiji: No. Had it been so, these miracle-workers would have done a lot of good to the world. It is, besides, neither an easily attainable power nor an essential requisite. Were it so, the power would have done havoc, brought about the doom of the world. And where is the fun in upsetting nature's laws? If a man is seized with a craze to run to the desert of Sahara and draw out water from that arid land and even if he succeeds, what then? What's the good of overturning Nature?



Old men are talkative by nature. Had they not been told that our prayer time was up, nobody could say when these talks would have ended. But it was after an interval of many days that Gandhiji entered into such a lengthy conversation on various topics and he sent back these foreign professors eager to know things about India well-satisfied.

1. The scene of the massacre of hundreds of men, women and children by General Dyer. A meeting was held in a courtyard, called Jallianwala Bagh, which is surrounded by walls. The only egress was covered by the army which fired on the crowd after giving a short and hardly audible notice.



Punjab Letter

(Rawalpindi, d. 10.12.1924)

We left Delhi on the 2nd instant and reached Lahore on the 4th. We are proceeding to Rawalpindi today. These four days were packed with work from morning to midnight. After a long talk with Lalaji on the 4th, we went to Amritsar on the 5th morning. The Khilafat Provincial Conference was held there, Maulana Shaukat Ali had joined Gandhiji at the very start, from Delhi. "I shall go wherever the *Sircar* (=Governor, i. e., Gandhiji) takes me or sends me for Hindu Muslim Unity.—"that is the Maulana's favourite expression. Hakim Saheb also came up to Amritsar straight from Rampur, where he had gone. M. Mohamed Ali and Dr. Ansari had reached Lahore on the 6th. So many leaders joined in this invasion on the Punjab in order to thrash out the question with the local Hindu and Muslim leaders, to see them wrangling on the spot and to try to bring about a settlement. Though one cannot claim that this rush of the leaders achieved its prime object, it can be safely said that the tension between the local leaders relaxed. In the private discussions held at Lalaji's residence, both Hindu and Muslim leaders had had their full say, freely and without reserve.

Without an actual visit of the Punjab, it is impossible for an outsider to have an idea of the great extent to which distrust and suspicion have grown here. Not only are the minds of Hindus and Muslims contaminated, but the Sikh also has grown averse to the Hindu and *vice versa*. Sometimes it is the Sikh who gloats over and takes advantage of the quarrels between Hindus and Muslims; sometimes the Mussalman claims fellowship with the Sikh, as both are believers in one God and tries to win him over by flattery. In the Punjab here, in Hindu congregations, or in those where Hindus are in a majority, the *Quami Nara* (national cry) 'Bande Mataram' (I bow to the Mother) is raised. While the *Naraye Takbir* (proclamation of the great power of God), viz. *Allaho Akbar* (God is great) is the only cry that is raised in Muslim gatherings. The Hindu feels that he has been badly let down by Congress leaders, that the latter gave him no help during the Multan and other riots. The Mussulmans seem to have washed their hands of all national gatherings. Is it any wonder that this antipathy affects leaders also as they have their personal quarrels also with other leaders? They also lose their balance and fall a prey to the vicious climate.

Private conferences were held on the 6th and 7th. It was with the sole object that some satisfactory solution might come out of these deliberations that Gandhiji had invited Hakim Saheb, Dr. Ansari and the Maulanas (Ali Brothers) to the Punjab. It



would not be true to say that the object was gained by and large, nor even that a settlement on any issue was arrived at. None of the other causes for friction between Hindus and Muslims was discussed in these meetings. The only point touched, I may say, was the number of seats which should be distributed between Hindus and Mussulmans in public institutions like the Councils, Municipalities and Local Boards. As it was stressed that the root-cause of all communal troubles lay in this question of distribution, that point alone was taken up. Gandhiji himself has stated the result of these talks in *Young India*. There is just a possibility that this question may be settled later on, i. e., at Belgaum, where further discussions will be held.

We reached Amritsar on the 5th, where two or three unexpected things happened. Sardar Mangalsingh took Gandhiji to the Darbar Saheb (the famous Golden Temple) to meet the Akalis. It was a vast gathering. Gandhiji never wanted to deliver a speech there but Mangalsinghji had fixed an elaborate programme. Long speeches were delivered. Sardar Mangalsingh described at length the ordeals through which the Akalis had to pass during the last two years. Thousands of Akalis, he said, had gone to jail, where they had to suffer countless troubles, and a large number had even lost their lives. While he was in the midst of his picturesque tale, Gandhiji happened to rub his eyes owing to the fall of some foreign matter or some other thing and the Sardar Saheb declared that the horrors were so gruesome that even Gandhiji's eyes were shedding tears!

Another Sardar Saheb then got up. This was his harangue: "Lovers of truth like Gandhiji are rare in this world. I request him to closely watch our movement and give to the public his assessment of the degree of truthfulness and non-violence maintained in it. We have no political axe to grind. Our one and only object is religious reform," and so on. Gandhiji hung practically his whole speech on these two points. Space forbids a reproduction of the whole speech, but I must give here a summary of his observations on these two points. With regard to the first he said: "Sardar Saheb told you that my eyes dropped tears at the narration of his story. I must say there were no tears in my eyes. I have seen such mountains of misery that my heart has grown hard as stone. And I feel that we shall have to be witnesses of horrors a thousand times more terrible than those we have seen. Nobody can say for how many years our fight may have to be prolonged. And I should not wonder if, because of our own lapses, we had to undergo more hardships than necessary for our non-violent fight. That is why I have steeled my heart. Tears do not give us the power to bear our sorrows. That power



can be increased only by making the heart as hard as an adamant and by repeated sufferings."

Dealing with the speech of the next Sardar Saheb, Gandhiji declared:

"I have not seen with my own eyes the trials and tribulations you have gone through, but I have heard quite a lot. The object lesson you have provided in patience and suffering has no parallel. But the very fact that you were impelled to ask for my judgment on the truth observed in your movement shows that there have been accusations against you. If charges of mental reservations, ulterior motives, are laid against you from many quarters, you should be all the more careful and cautious. I tried to unite all the parties at the Conference I held at Bombay. I am going to make the same effort at Belgaum. In my Agreement with the Swarajists, I have surrendered to them all that I possibly could—without sacrificing any principle of course—in order to win their love. I appeal to you also to try to unite all the different factions that have grown up in your community. If any of them wants the possession of Gurudwaras (Sikh monasteries and temples) you may hand them over to the party and thus prove to the world that your aim is not ownership or capture of Gurudwaras (Sikh monasteries), but strictly religious reform."

Several citizens approached Gandhiji with an earnest plea to accept an Address. "Who are the sponsors?" inquired Gandhiji. Do all of them—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Sanatanis (orthodox Hindus), Arya Samajists (reformist Hindus), *Tanzimis* (a Muslim organisation), one and all, back your move? If all of them join in the presentation I shall accept the Address." When the movers brought the signatures of the secretaries of all these institutions and Shaukat Ali strongly supported the proposal, it was decided to accept the Address.

It was given in the Jallianwala Bagh. About 8 to 10 thousand men had gathered. They said that during the last 2 or 3 years that was the first occasion in the town when there was such a large attendance at any meeting. The Addresses that were read did not fail to refer to the Hindu-Muslim tension and it was even stated clearly: "In order to provoke internecine strifes, our leaders always move about aggressively, with their sleeves tucked up."

In his reply Gandhiji gave vent to some pathetic expressions:

"I was expecting to hear cries of 'Mahatma Gandhiji-ki-jai' (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) when I started touring in 1921. In Amritsar also I had expected them. The cries



pained me even at that time and I used to speak out: "I am sick of these cries, because you have committed crimes with my name on your lips." And I asked you to forget me and do good deeds instead. All the same I managed to put up with the cry as it was accompanied with another cry, 'Hindu-Mussalman-ki jai' (Victory to Hindu-Muslim unity). I, therefore, took it that it was not my personal 'jai' that was shouted, but it meant, in fact, victory to Hindu-Muslim unity, to Swaraj, to the spinning wheel.' It was truth that was hailed, *ahimsa* that was hailed, through that cry. But today that 'jai' makes my flesh creep with disgust. You may as well take me for a dead man. Life has lost its interest and every moment of existence is a burden. Every minute I pray,

"O God! If you do want to keep me alive, please bring amity between Hindus and Muslims. Drive out of their minds this hatred, this jealousy, this poison of animosity." If these things are not thrown out of our hearts, take it from me that slavery for us is writ indelibly by the finger of destiny. You did cry out 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki jai' here also, as is your wont, but nobody cried today 'Hindu-Mussalman-ki jai.' And even if someone had raised that cry, nobody would have responded. Since you admit in your Addresses that during the last two years you have done shameful deeds all along, I ask you now to cry aloud 'Hindu-Muslim-ki jai' as lustily as you raised that other cry. (The audience responded by repeated shouts 'Hindu-Muslim-ki jai'). This 'jai' means that wrangling is *haram* (an anathema) to us. In Hinduism, in Islam, in any religion for that matter, a quarrel with another religion is *haram*. It casts a slur on our religion if we harm or persecute anybody whoever he be.

Declaring that it is the leaders, not the masses, who are to blame for the quarrels, and advising the people to shun leaders those who talk of vengeance and war Gandhiji went on to explain his object in visiting the Punjab. At least in that Amritsar, he stated, where the blood of Hindus and Muslims had mixed up and flown like a river, where people were made to crawl on their bellies, and at least in that Lahore, where they were flogged in the open street and had to suffer many other insults and humiliations—in these two towns at least—there ought to be not a single communal quarrel. But, unfortunately, these quarrels had started from these same places. It was, therefore, he declared, that he had brought Hakimji with him in order to make an attempt to end these quarrels. Hakimji himself was feeling ashamed and he had come to make the Punjabis feel ashamed like him.

Referring to the charge that he had turned into a pro-Muslim, Gandhiji said: "You say, 'Gandhi has become a Muslims' man, does not say a word to them and



reserves all his castigation for the Aryas (Arya Samajist Hindus). ' Let me tell you I am proud to feel what a good thing it is that even in my unguarded moments I do not condemn Muslims strongly. I am a Hindu and it is just for that reason that it is my *dharma* to rebuke the Hindus more strongly. Why should I, and how can I, say hard word to Muslims? If I do not want to disrespect *Quran-e-Shareef*, I must look up to it with the eye of a Muslim, must do what they do when I am in their midst. When I go to my temple, do I have to look at some Hindu brother's movements for doing what I should? But when I went to the Darbar Saheb, I used to closely watch Sardar Mangalsinghji in order to know how I must bend my head, how I must honour the sanctum. That is how I have been sedulously cultivating respect for all religions. And now I have as much love for Islam, for Sikhism, for Christianity, as I have for Hinduism. That is why, though a strict Sanatani myself, I have the strength to die for any other religion. If somebody told me I did not love my religion or a particular religion, not my own, I would say, 'Could there be any greater ignorance than this doubt cast upon my love?' But what can I do? We have so perverted our hearts that it appears to people that I should never be trusted unless, for every quarrel, I blamed Muslims and Sikhs only. But that is why I say, "If you approve of my work, follow me; if you don't, leave me. Take nothing at all into consideration except my work."

There is not a single thing in my life that is kept back from the public. Everything about me is open for everybody to see and everyone of my acts is done in broad daylight. I affirm I am a slave of Hindus, of Muslims, of Sikhs. If you find me a traitor, don't hesitate, kill me outright. If a man like myself who wants to give lessons in truth and non-violence, if such a man, I say, is leading you astray, give him a short shrift. In my eyes even telling a lie is committing violence. If I do anything out of fear, even then I deserve to be assassinated. It is *haram* for me to be a leader and feel afraid at the same time. If I give up truth, if I give up non-violence and peace, and if I do not give up fear—if I fail in all these three tests—take me for an infidel, take me as one that deserves to be killed."

The time fixed for the Khilafat Conference was 10 a. m. but actually it started at 3 p. m. and the presidential speech began to be read at 6. Gandhiji, therefore, could not keep to his programme of leaving Amritsar at 4 p. m.; and even before the President could finish his speech, it was found necessary to let Gandhiji speak, because, otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to catch even the last train. The President Zafar Ali Khan Saheb laid special stress on several points in order to give



a bit of his mind to Gandhiji. He referred pointedly to the resolutions of the Sanatan Dharma Parishad—resolutions passed in the very presence of Pandit Malaviyaji—and also to articles by another Hindu leader against unity.

Addressing the Conference Gandhiji said, "Today unfortunately we are unable to control and carry with us as many people as we were accustomed to, three years back. We are reduced to the position of having to confer with a few active workers only. I do not hold the common man responsible for these quarrels. It is the leaders who tolerate this state of affairs who deserve the blame. The culprits are not the masses, but we—myself, Hakimji, Kitchlew and Satyapal. You should therefore request your President to postpone this Conference till tomorrow noon and arrange for all the Muslim leaders here to be present at the meeting which is to be held at Lahore tomorrow."

(The President took the sense of the Conference on the suggestion and all said "Amen" agreed). Continuing his speech Gandhiji said, "I listened to the speech of the President quite carefully and was deeply grieved. I thought, 'To what purpose, all these bombshells? If we are sincere about unity, how long shall we continue to accuse one another?' Who am I to give you any advice! But you have made me great—although, in fact, I am but an ordinary man, a *khaksar* (a poor servant of the people) and it is my duty to be at the beck and call of both, you and Hindus. That was my only object in coming over here and saying a few words to you. When, therefore, Zafarali Khansaheb complained against Malaviyaji, I felt as if I was hit with a stone. I do not think Malaviyaji is an enemy of Muslims. If he were, I would not hesitate to declare it publicly. But even granting that he is opposed to the Muslims, no useful purpose will be served by complaining against him. If you think that Hindus and Muslims have got to unite, you cannot put Malaviyaji out of count. You take me to be your friend—though Heaven knows whether I am your friend or foe!—and it is easy for you to hit it off with me, but though you do not regard Malaviyaji as your friend, without him in the picture, fraternity with Hindus is impossible. It is, therefore, no use always finding fault with him. The Hindus say today that I have gone over to the Muslim side. Some Gujarati newspapers even go the length of loudly affirming that I have become a Muslim! But what is the sense in venting their spleen against me like that? To the Hindus also I say the same thing: "Even if you think that Hakimji is bad, the Ali Brothers are bad, the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity can only be served by befriending, not by distrusting them." And in the same strain I repeat before you: "O, the faithful! You, who, hearing



the voice of "Azan" (call from a holy man indicating prayer time), set aside all work at once and start offering your prayers! It does not behove you to dismiss anyone on the plea that he is not reliable. You should follow the footsteps of the Prophet Mohammed Saheb, who snatched the sword of His assailant, but did not kill him. He forgave him. The Prophet thus spread his religion of Islam by forgiveness. In all deference to the worthy President, I beg to tell him also the same thing, 'Don't lose your trust even in Lalaji and Malaviyaji.' Lalaji's heart is clean, but troubled with fear (of the Muslim majority). And yet he does not desire that Muslims who are in a majority in the Punjab should be reduced to a minority. If that were his intention, I should pit myself against him. But even if there be some Hindus who think in that fashion, it is your duty to pray to God that He may purify the hearts of those Hindus. If Hindus felt afraid of Muslims, I should advise them to cast off that fear. But it becomes the duty of the Mussalmans to make Hindus feel safe. I dealt with the matter elaborately so far, but let me sum it up in a word now: 'If you wish to protect Islam, you should settle your differences with Hindus amicably and cherish fellowship with them. In the same way, it is sheer nonsense, if Hindus say they will annihilate Muslims. Muslims have got to be won over by Hindus. The one thing that we must have no doubt about today is this: The third power—the British Government—is not going to protect our religions. In trying to seek its patronage for our protection, we shall put in danger both the religions, Hinduism and Islam, equally. With the help, therefore, of a few Hindu and Muslim friends, I have made it my business, at present, to save both these religions from this danger, to fight all those who imperil them, and thus to be able to say one day in the Almighty's Court: "That was your command and we carried it out."

Till now I referred only to private gatherings held in Lahore. The Convocation of the National University was a grand affair and the speech delivered there deserved notice, but I leave its report to the next issue. Since we have already arrived in Rawalpindi, I shall finish this letter with a reference to the Provincial Conference at Lahore and to the goings-on at Rawalpindi. As Motilalji could not be present, Gandhiji had to take the chair. The Conference was to begin at 8 a. m. in the Bradlaugh Hall. Gandhiji entered the Hall at the appointed time, 8 a. m. sharp, but only a very few were present. Who would care to come at that early hour in Lahore's stinging cold? Even the Chairman of the Reception Committee was not present! But was Gandhiji the man to put up with any delay? He conferred with Lalaji and began to deliver his presidential address forthwith. It was a fairly long speech. When Gandhiji had finished nearly half of it, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Lala Dunichand, presented



himself. But without stopping to greet him. Gandhiji went on with his soulful speech. I can give only a summary here: "We have come here not for this Conference but for talks with the leaders. What help will you give us in these deliberations? I want to repeat before the Sikhs, what I have already said to Hindus and Muslims: "If any one community assures the others, 'You may freely take for yourselves all the material benefits you want, no matter if we starve, this quarrel can end immediately.'" Some body from you may question, 'How can such a small community as the Sikhs make that offer? Would it not mean its extermination?' To him I say, "The Sikhs, at least, can certainly do so. Which other community has offered sacrifices as stupendous as the Sikhs? Neither are Muslims ready for that immensity of sacrifice nor are the Hindus. With the cry 'Sat-Sri-Akal' on their lips, they have bared their breasts to a hail of bullets. I have my doubts if, with the cry of Allah or Rama, Muslims or Hindus can repeat the performance. For the Sikhs, specially, it is therefore not a difficult thing to make that sacrifice. Even for Muslims it is not a really difficult performance. Muslims are not at all a God-forsaken people. They have behind them a history of 1300 years and have received the precious heritage of the stories of glorious sacrifices made by the Prophet Mohammed Saheb and other fakirs."

"But how can I have the face to ask these people to make sacrifices, when I cannot convince Hindus that this sacrifice is worth making? I am a Hindu to the backbone. I wish to die with a *shloka* of Bhagawadgita on my lips and attain *moksha* (deliverance). I do not long for a place in *swarga* (the abode of the Gods where a virtuous soul can live in comfort). Nor do I yearn after a celestial chariot ("viman" =literally an aeroplane) for my ascension. Puffed up as I am, though my feet are still on the earth, how bloated would my ego grow, if I was given a lift like that? I am but a devotee of Ramachandra and Tulsidas and claim to be a Sanatani Hindu through and through. That is why I say to Hindus, "If you, of all people, do not accept my advice, how can I persuade Muslims to follow it? And let me assure you, 'Have no fear of treachery. If Muslims play false, if Sikhs do so, it is the men of bad faith who will be hoist with their own petard; the duped are never destroyed.'" Being a Hindu myself, I appeal to the Hindus, "Give a blank check to Muslims and Sikhs." What did the Pandavas¹ do? They did not demand Hastinapuri (their first capital, situated near about Delhi), nor even Indrapuri (their second capital when they were made to quit Hastinapuri), but asked for only 5 villages. (The Pandavas were 5 brothers). Duryodhan roared, "Not an inch of land you will get – unless you fight and win." That was why the Pandavas had to fight. The things over which you too may fight are not seats in



Municipalities, Local Boards, and Councils. Nor need you fight for the loaves and fishes of office. What you must fight for is your *dharma* and the protection of your women. Your Kshatriya-spirit is *apalayanam* (refusal to flee from a battle-field). The Kshatriya-spirit does not mean the power to kill others, but the power to refuse to turn one's back on the battlefield. If Muslims tell you, "You are not to worship the cow, we won't let you, even if you wish to," if they declare, "Kashi Vishwanath (=the Lord of Benaras and so His temple there) is but a block of stone and we have nothing but disgust for that stone and for you, the idol-worshippers," you may fight with them with all your zest and might. You may answer, "For us the cow is sacred and worthy of adoration; and we see God in an icon of stone. Since times immemorial our community has washed its sins on its altar. We have the same reverence for our idols as you have for Kaba." It is these points on which you must never yield. What I am asking you to give up is this insistent higgles-haggling over 51% or 56% of seats in the Punjab Council and Local Boards. Renunciation like that is the price to buy up the whole world for yourselves. It is only by renouncing worldly rights and privileges, by humility, by stooping before the whole world, that you can conquer it."

"You laugh at me as a 'Gujarati bania' (a community known for its business instincts and cowardice. Gujarat, moreover, is specially commerce-minded). But I laugh at your practical wisdom. I pity you 'brave warriors' and marvel at your quarrels when the whole of India, including yourselves, is under the clutches of a third power. Does the practical common sense of Hinduism lie in acquiring these seats? Are these seats the life and soul of Hinduism? Had I become a Punjabee, I would have roused the whole of the Punjab and told you, "Give your pen to Muslims and Sikhs." And you are afraid of the Afghan. But will these your swords be any use before him, when he pounces upon you? Will your seats in Councils and Municipalities be of any help then?" Gandhiji then re-emphasised what he has said on a thousand platforms, viz., the religion of 'apalayanam' (refusal to flee from the battlefield i. e. non-violent resistance) or, if they could not practice it, that of courting death by killing the aggressors in defence of their temples and women. He said : "You cannot imagine the burning anguish of my heart. Who is there that can quench that fire? Though yet alive, I am trying to give up the ghost.

And why? Will you not see the cause of my grief even now? Will you not unite and put out the fire raging in my heart?"



Referring to one or two incidents of man-handling by Hindus which had come to his notice, he said, "Though the reports appeared in one of the gutter press, I made an inquiry. It showed me that the reports were absurdly exaggerated. But as I found that they were not entirely unfounded, I must say that Hindus also are always in the lookout for a chance to retaliate—not because they are Hindus, but because they are human beings. I gave those instances not as those of Hindu-Muslim tension but as those of the Satan lurking in the heart of man. The only object in giving them is to tell you that you must not sin for being sinned against. Neither the Vedas nor the Mahabharata teaches us that we must demolish a mosque, if a temple has been toppled or that an attack on our sister must be paid back by one on a sister of the opposing party. My *dharma* on the contrary proclaims: "If you die in defence of your religion, you will be ever alive."

In answer to the criticism that spinning is woman's business. Gandhiji asked, "Who works the spinning machines of Lancashire—men or women?" That was how he exhorted the people to spin and earn the right of voting.

Reached Rawalpindi on the 9th morning. Maulana Shaukat Ali Saheb had specifically called here the Muslims of Kohat, i. e., the members of the Khilafat Committee, but they did not turn up. They are hobnobbing with the Government, which, on its part, had made careful preparations to see that Gandhiji and the Maulana could not get any credit for bringing about peace. In order to foil Gandhiji's attempt, it fixed the 8th and 9th as the dates for consultation with Muslim leaders at Kohat, as Gandhiji and the Maulana were due to arrive in Rawalpindi on the 9th, and thus made any persuasion of Kohati Muslims by Gandhiji impossible. Hindu leaders did arrive from Kohat, but Muslims did not, though Gandhiji waited for them till this morning. It is best not to speak of Shaukat Ali's chagrin. He feels so unhappy!

In the meanwhile Gandhiji has carried out a regular meet-the-people campaign and has even cancelled his programme of departure from here for contacting a still larger number. In the evening he met the Hindu men and women who have fled from Kohat to take refuge here. An excellent arrangement has been made for their stay in the big *dharmashalas* (houses with big courtyards for free lodging for tourists) here by the Rawalpindi people. As many as 500 persons sit at a time for their meals and they distribute among themselves whatever clothing they get to protect themselves from this severe cold. After returning from these tragic scenes Gandhiji delivered a speech at a public meeting in Rawalpindi held at night. The meeting had begun with an address



of welcome to him. Referring to it Gandhiji said: "A single address either to me or to Shaukat Ali was quite in order so long as each of us, Shaukat Ali or myself, possessed the power to speak on behalf of the whole of India. But today I have lost the power to speak for Muslims and Shaukat Ali for Hindus. That is our misfortune. So long as this unhappy situation lasts, addresses should be given to both of us."

Referring to the unfortunate happenings in Kohat he said:

"I do not wish to declare today what caused this tragedy and who the greatest culprits were. One of my reasons is the fact that I do not know the full facts. But one thing is certain: two or three thousand Hindus have taken refuge in Rawalpindi. The responsibility for their having to leave Kohat rests on both the communities—Hindu and Muslim—and it is a standing disgrace to both so long as the refugees remain here. In order to wipe out that stain Shaukat Ali, Kitchlew, Zafar Ali and I have come here. Success has not crowned our efforts so far, because a third power is having a finger in the pie. It is the business of that power, if not to create communal dissensions, definitely to foment them and I have yet to know of a single instance when that power has amicably settled a communal dispute. The truth of the matter is that if the Government had done what it was its duty to do, there would have been no Kohat and no Hindu refugees. The local officers either became cowards or acted contrary to what their duty demanded. Frontier marauders plunder everybody and it is difficult to affirm that the whole thing was concocted only to rob the Hindu. But without hesitation I would say that the real robbers and incendiaries were the Frontier officers and not the Frontier people. I wish that the Empire always forgot its duty, as it did at Kohat. It will not grieve me if that Empire is blotted out of existence and then Hindus and Muslims fight and rob each other to their hearts' content. For, they will fight and let rivers of blood flow only so long as there is dirt in the hearts of both the communities, there is imbecility, there is cowardice. In the end, the leaders of both of them are certain to realise that they are doing *adharma* (irreligious and suicidal behaviour) and then they will settle peacefully as brothers. But today, we take the help of an extraneous power in our internal quarrels. Take it for certain that we are fated to remain slaves for ever, if we resort to a third power that way. If you understand the import of Hindu-Muslim unity, you must give up leaning upon a third power. I will only say, "If the Government frowns upon you, makes it its business to help Muslims exclusively, you should die with Ramnam (God's name) on your lips. As matters stand, these Government officers taunt you with the words, "Go to Shaukat Ali," "Go to Gandhi." I am sorry that neither of us



can do anything today, because we do not have the sword with us. I have discarded it and Spaukat Ali has sheathed it. The only advice, therefore; that we can give you is that if you want Swaraj, you must make your hearts free and fearless. No man can annihilate another. The man himself is the real cause of his annihilation.

"You may argue, "This advice can only end in our extinction. How does it help us?" I shall then tell you, "I only show the ways of total self-sacrifice, of the immolation of one's self at the altar of freedom."

"To the Hindus of the Frontier Province I say, "Never run to the Empire officials for protection when you are in the midst of a 95% population of Muslims. If you go back to your homes, you may do so under one condition only, viz., when the Frontier Muslims request you to return and give you an assurance to protect your lives and honour. You have been staying in the Frontier for generations past. How can you stay on in their midst without appeasing them? You have earned money there and set up your shops. How can you live there peacefully without conferring with them and coming to an amicable settlement? The Government can never give an assurance of safety on behalf of any large majority. If there were Swaraj with myself as the Viceroy and Shoukat Ali as the Commander-in-Chief and if somebody asked me to protect one minority against the majority, I would say point-blank, "I cannot protect you against the other community which has a 95% population." I would say the same thing to Muslims, if they were 5% in any area. Fraternity with Muslims is the one and only way for the Hindus to live with honour and amity in the Frontier."

He then digressed again into a talk on Hindu-Muslim relationship and then returned finally to the duties of the citizens of Kohat.

"This is my parting word: If you want to protect yourselves, tell the Government you are not going to leave this place and return to your homes, so long as you have not come to terms with Muslims and they themselves do not invite you. If Kohatis are prepared to listen to this advice from me, I, on my part, make this solemn public declaration with you all as witnesses: "After the Belgaum Congress is over, I shall be embedded in the work for you, Kohaties, and am prepared, if necessary, to roam with you all over India to find a shelter for you." But if, at the bidding of the Government, you go back to your home-places, your action will do great harm to your own selves, better say, to both Hindus and Muslims. Even if the Government gives you the fullest compensation, makes up for all your loss of 3 crores of rupees, your return to your homes under the assurance of safety given by the Government will be definitely



harmful to both Hindus and Muslims. If in the face of this advice from me you go back, my work at the Congress is going to become a really difficult job. May God give you the strength to be united at heart with Muslims!"

Maulana Shaukat Ali endorsed every word of this advice.

As fate would have it, the very next day after this advice was given, the Government resolution on Kohat was published. Gandhiji will give out his reactions to this arrogant resolution² in the coming issue (of *Young India*). I shall only add that Gandhiji's advice to Kohatis (not to return to their homes under the protecting wings of the Government) which was till now merely equitable and proper, has become, after the publication of this Resolution, the only one that could and should be given. This is a really very tragic situation. Among the Kohati refugees there are some who have to undergo heavy sacrifices in keeping away from their homes. But not a single Kohati Hindu is prepared to return to Kohat with this disgrace (heaped upon him by the Government). Let us pray to God for His mercy to Kohatis, so that they may pass through this ordeal successfully.

1. Reference to the epic, "Mahabharata," wherein the Pandavas were unjustly deprived of their kingdom by their cousins, the Kauravas, who would not give even five villages to the former and this refusal started the war.

2. Vide App. II-1



In the Holy Land of Belgaum

(d. 20. 12. 1924 to d. 29. 12. 1924)

One can only think of Belgaum as a holy place of pilgrimage. Its atmosphere is saturated with the devout love of Sri Gangadharrao Deshpande; it is charged with the spirit of adoration of his assistants, the volunteers, who know the value of discipline and obedience; it is permeated with non-violence, which Gandhiji's presence is spreading into it in every action that is taken; and, definitely for the purpose of manifesting this non-violence to perfection, the big congregation has gathered here. If a place like this cannot be called a holy land, I would like to know what other name might be given to it. It is difficult to put down in language the exhilaration and love of Gangadharrao. It seems he is having the superb experience of 'अद्य मे सफलं जन्म' ('Today is my life's aim fulfilled'). That day has, at last, dawned on him which he was dreaming of for many days past. He does not seem to be worried at all as to what may happen at the Belgaum Congress. Full of happiness at the arrival of that auspicious event, when Belgaum's atmosphere is being purified by the exclusive influence of Gandhiji's thought and action for a whole week, he is seen riding here, there and everywhere to supervise everything. This is a sight which cannot fail to inspire the spirit of youth in anybody who sees him. Pages would have to be filled up to describe with full justice the enthusiasm with which he has done his work and the meticulous care he has bestowed on the comfort of his guests. He had thought of putting up Gandhiji in a stately palace, but gave up the idea on the ground that Gandhiji himself might not like it, and has constructed instead a beautiful Khadi-kutir (a cottage made of Khadi). And why should he make any special arrangements for his own friends and colleagues—Vallabhbhai, Rajendraprasad, Shankarlal, Revashanker and such others—who have come to Belgaum to share with him his joys and sorrows? They are put up with him, but Rajagopalachari has a delicate constitution and he must be specially looked after. Arrangement has been made for him in a separate small house. He had thought of putting his own mother in charge of the kitchen there, but an equally self-effacing colleague, Sri Soman, said, "No, my sister will look after the kitchen." Rajagopalachari and his friends are, therefore, entrusted to the care of this aged sister of Sri Soman. For Mrs. Sarojini Naidu a special arrangement has been made as it should have been. Spacious beautiful bungalows have been provided for the distinguished guests, Dr. Annie Besant, Messrs. Das and Pandit Nehru. As for the Maulanas, would the Khilafat Committee let go its claim over them? And there is so much affinity here between



Hindu and Muslim leaders, that a tussle is out of question. Kakasaheb Kalelkar is the head of the conservancy department and he is keeping everything, including latrines, clean for the common man. And it is also he who has arranged for a group of singers under the leadership of a local saint, Purandar Vithal, to sing hymns to the hundreds of men who gather in front of *Gandhi Kutir*.

* * * *

But it is better that I talk of the inner purity of that centre of pilgrimage than of its outer. It is four days since we came here, but hardly a single hour of anybody can be said to have been wasted. And it may be added that no preceding Congress session can claim to have done so much work. Is there any wonder that Gandhiji should start such an auspicious quick march, when he hopes to make the country reach a new high in the output of work and excellence of discipline? On the first day the scheduled time was 3 p. m. but it was because the Maulana (Mohammed Ali, the retiring President) arrived late by 5 minutes, that Gandhiji met him late to that extent. That one exception apart, the Maulana's farewell address as President of the All India Congress Committee and the speeches of those who thanked him took only two minutes each. On the 20th, Gandhiji worked right till the evening and then received interviewers from 8 to 10 p. m. On the next day, the 21st, he was busy from 11 a. m. to about 3 p. m. The third day was his silence day. On the fourth day immediately after the Agreement was submitted before the Subjects Committee and passed, Gandhiji made a novel precedent. He got the Subjects Committee appoint a Sub-Committee to frame resolutions and closed the Subjects Committee session for the day. He then asked the Sub-Committee to begin its work immediately, worked for 4 hours in it and got two chief resolutions drafted for the next day's meeting of the Subjects Committee, which then met on the 24th at 8 a. m. sharp. He allowed a three and a half hours' discussion and then got the resolutions passed. This was a record performance in businesslike promptitude. There is no doubt that a bright future awaits us, if we follow up this performance with a similar swiftness in work all the year through.

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The preceding paragraph gives Gandhiji's diary in brief. To give a day-by-day account would be as pleasant as the narration of one's charming dream. But does anybody remember all the details of his dream and faithfully reproduce all of them? Similarly, I shall have to pick and choose among these sweet recollections. Those who read Gandhiji's presidential address and listened to his tense expressions on the 20th



and the 21st might have marvelled at the contradictions between the two. But as a matter of fact there was no inconsistency. Each was a complement of the other. Severe restraint in expression—perhaps too severe and extraordinary—was the chief feature of the presidential address. There was resplendence but no scalding heat, perfect logic but no emotion. But in his exuberance on the 20th and 21st all these restrained traits of excellence came out like rabbits from a magician's hat. He began with:

"I may have gone to hardly any Congress with greater indifference.

My attitude, at present, is one of complete lack of warmth. What is there that can enliven my spirits today? In 1921 I was a leader acknowledged by everybody. I am no longer in that position. People don't care to listen to me now. It is not because I love leadership and power that I say all this. If I hankered after power, I deserve to be the most detested creature in the world. The fact is, I have lost my old confidence, because I do not know where I stand in relation to my colleagues. None would be happier than myself, if they defeat me, declare that they do not want me, ask me to go my way and stop talking nonsense. But destiny denies that happiness to me." In these expressions lies the explanation of his restraint in language in the presidential address and of the deep emotions seething, but controlled, under that restraint.

* * * *

It was an informal meeting and had no president. Everyone poured out all his anguish without any reserve. The discussion was continued in the evening also. Distrust for Swarajists lay at the back of all the questions put to Gandhiji. They wondered if it was at all possible to align with Swarajists and, if it was, to what extent. They suspected that the Swarajists did not accept the Agreement in all sincerity. Gandhiji had clear and explicit answers: "What do you (Non-changers) lose, even if Swarajists are exploiting my name for their ends? They are only serving the country thereby. And even if Swarajists give you a bad name, why should it hurt you? You say you are afraid that Swarajists may not help you in the constructive programme. I think, your fear betrays your sub-conscious eagerness to cling to them for support. Why not go on with your work forthwith, without looking up for their help? It is quite enough if they do not block your way and allow you to do your work." His answer to the question, "Why should we not non-co-operate with Swarajists?" penetrated into the depth of the principle. "Non-co-operation? With whom? And if you say you can non-co-operate with your dear ones, with your friends and colleagues, do you require



Gandhi's approval or help for it? But you have no right to non-co-operate, so long as you do not fully grasp all the essential implications of *ahimsa*. Not every one can non-co-operate with his wife and brother, as Gandhi did."

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Somebody argued: "In the past you gave up the policy (council entry), now adopted by the Swarajists, on the ground that it was a method of violence. Has it turned non-violent now?" Referring to him, Gandhiji said: "Yes. There are different kinds and degrees of violence. The Swarajist violence is not the one that commits murders. We ourselves are not free from the violence and anger of that type. I am myself subject to fits of anger and I deserve to be shunned altogether at the time. But I have the power to control it – may be a little more than you have. That, however, does not entitle me to brand others as believers in violence and boycott them. I admit, if they are worshippers of the cult of violence, I can, as President of the Congress, ask them to quit. But what I want from you at present is to understand the full meaning and essence of non-violence, to know the length you should go in giving up your point. The Satyagrahi should know the minimum demand that ought to satisfy him; and its grant should please him as much as that of his maximum.

True, from one point of view, it may be right for you to keep at an arm's length from the Swarajists. Sri Hardayal Nag (a Bengali No-changer) wrote to me, "You can remain a saint in the midst of sinners. We can't. We must stay away." You may certainly follow Sri Nag, if you think like him. Immediately a young man queried: "That means you can afford to non-co-operate all alone. But can you do without us? Do you want us to remain apart, keep on the fence?" The answer was poignant with grief: "No, dear friend, no. Not at all. I am always eager for help from the humblest creature. Can I then dispense with yours? All that I want to say is this: Perhaps I may be able to pull on and co-operate with even those

who non-co-operate with me; if you can't do so, you are free to stand aloof. What a happy thing it would be if I were a non-co-operator who could afford to dispense with everybody's help! I would then be perfect in non-violence and have my way by my thought-power alone, because the wings of thought are stronger and faster than those of physical action. As things are, I am but a bigger child among children. Why don't you see this simple thing? I am in need of everyone's support. '



One of his arguments deserves to be treasured: "Have I not offered co-operation even to the Government—if only it did these three things: stop the collection of the excise revenue, slash the army expenditure, and impose a prohibitive duty on foreign cloth? The Swarajists are now prepared to put the spinning wheel in the hands of the people and to declare that it is the outstanding 'programme before the country. May I not then co-operate with the Swarajists since I have their full backing in the boycott of foreign cloth?"

The members were asked on the 21st, "Is the Agreement acceptable to you, provided the creed of both the Swarajists and the Congress remains one and the same?" The second question put to them was: "Do you accept that in the present circumstances what is essential for the uplift of the country is the spinning wheel and not work in the councils?"

When at the end of a very long discussion an overwhelming majority answered the question in the affirmative, Gandhiji's listlessness melted away and warming up he opened his heart: "If you can carry out this programme of the spinning wheel, we shall be able to bring about in a year a position strong enough to give battle to the Government under any odds. We can then create a situation that would force the Government to consult us and our spinning work would continue in the

face of the most adverse circumstances. But take it as certain that for that achievement I am going to demand from you the last drop of your blood. You will find my yoke the hardest to bear. President Krugar had asked his countrymen to go on giving their blood till the world gaped with wonder. I appeal to you for the same amount of sacrifice. I am certain that if I get 10,000 men prepared to die for the cause, the party of violence will be swept away completely from our land.

"Give up picking holes in others and mind your own business. It is very bad to be watchdogs of other peoples' purity. Why is the policeman's profession looked down upon? If you want to be policemen at all, be your own policemen. We are so lenient towards our own weaknesses! How can we be impatient of others' faults, when we move about non-chalantly without any qualms for our own sins?

"Now that you accept this Agreement, please do it with all your heart. It will be like stabbing me if you pay only a liphomage to it. Please have pity for me. And what do I mean by that prayer? Please do not bring about a situation that would compel me to repeat what I did at Delhi (i. e. fasted). That does not mean I am sorry for what I did.



It was a God-sent chance to prepare me to lay down my life for a friend and I did not hesitate to seize the chance, even as I was staying with him. I shall have to render the year's account to Heaven and make you do the same. It is, therefore, that I ask you to accept the Agreement only after giving full consideration to its implications. You may, if you like, scrap the Pact altogether, but don't hoodwink me. No humbug will pass with me. Every month you will have to send me filled-up forms showing the output of your work. 'That is a dictatorial method' you may think, but it is nothing of the kind. It is rather democracy doubly sieved and purified, because it is both you and I who are taking this solemn vow, and because we help each other in keeping our word that way. When you make a rule, you must follow it up at any cost. I have a broad mind and I can put up with weaknesses. But once you put the helm of country's affairs into my hands, I shall not tolerate any light-hearted play or hoax from you. If you

do not take the pledge everything is all right. But if you take it, I am hard-hearted enough to see that you honour it even at the price of your life. When I led the march of 4000 Indians in South Africa, there were women in it. Some of them, poor souls, could not stand the strain and proceed further. I was so relentless that I dropped them half-way, without stopping even for nursing them. I left them to the care of others and marched on, because I had already counted on the possibility of casualties. That shows how cruel I can be when the situation demands. Our programme is likewise a 'do or die' attempt. If it is non-violence to suffer meekly the breach of a solemn oath, I should prefer to be a believer in violence. Rather than let an occasion to break your word arise through slackness, be firm now and make it impossible for you to break it, once it is given. A promise is a promise and it has to be kept, whatever the cost."

The Agreement and the spinning franchise were discussed on the 23rd and 24th. The proceedings of the session will be ingrained in the mind of everyone present. On the 23rd Gandhiji first took an assurance from Motilalji that the creed of the Swarajists was the same as that of the Congress (attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means) and then took votes on the Agreement. In order to get this business finished quickly he may have behaved toughly at times in his rulings as the President, but I do not know of anybody who felt piqued in the least.

The resolutions were submitted on the next day (24th). The first resolution (accepting the Agreement) was proposed by Sri Rangaswami Iyer and the other (spinning franchise) by Sri Rajagopalachari. There was perfect propriety in the choice of the movers. Rajagopalachari was, at first, an out and out opponent of the Agreement, but



on coming here and discussing the Agreement thoroughly, he had accepted Gandhiji's view. All the same that resolution No. 1 was proposed by Rangaswamy

Iyengar, a Swarajist, and the second resolution 'coloured with merits and defects' of the Agreement was put by Rajagopalachari. Both the resolutions were discussed at great length. Messrs. Vithalbhai Patel and Lalaji were outstanding among the speakers. To make spinning a qualification for voting seemed to Vithalbhai not only an improper but a dangerous innovation without precedent in history. Lalaji thought that the resolution betrayed illogical thinking. He said that it would have been all right if the wearing of Khadi at all times and places was insisted upon and the words, 'if there is no inclination' (to spin or wear Khadi) were deleted. But it is doubtful if he would have accepted the franchise even with his modifications because in the very next breath he said: "He (Gandhi) is asking for *sutar* (yarn) today, he may even ask for *sakar* (sugar) tomorrow." Gandhiji had requested Motilalji and Das to allow free voting to the members of their party. They did not comply, since they regarded the matter as a party issue and not as one that involved a question of conscience. But in response to the request of a member, who was neither a No-changer nor a Swarajist, both he and Das clarified their attitudes. Panditji declared: "We have never condemned the spinning wheel, never ridiculed it. Only, we are afraid it may not achieve the expected result. But since we have accepted it, we are going to ply the wheel and try to make it a success. You should trust our word. We are going to march according to our Captain's order and if there is anything wrong in the order, it is the Captain who is to blame, not we!" There is in this last sentence a tinge of Panditji's innate sense of humour. Deshbandhu Das went further. He said, "This kind of franchise is a great thing and we are going to do our best to see that it succeeds."

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Many amendments were submitted. Gandhiji let some of them be put for voting but he summarily disallowed many others, some on the ground that they were untimely and some others as being unconstitutional. What evoked one's admiration was Gandhiji's tact, his quick despatch of work, and his sense of humour that spurted out every now and then. But the most charming feature was his cheerfulness. He was as liberal to his opponents in the time he gave them for their speeches as strict to his supporters. The hardest dig at him left him unmoved. He even enjoyed it. Everybody saw in him the prototype of the man of poise, as described by the Bhagavadgita, i. e., as one who gives no offence to the world and is given no offence by it. During the



coming days of the session we are likely to see still more often this state of perfect serenity in him and it seems Congressmen will carry home with them hallowed associations of a life lived in a high state of peace and non-violence.

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When the first resolution was declared passed by 116 votes against only 19, Gandhiji could not help bursting out with: 'Long live the spinning wheel and Swaraj.' People may have wondered why Gandhiji, who is so restrained even in the expression of his joy, should have given way to this effusion, but it shows his deep love for the wheel. In fact, there is nothing much to wonder at in this outburst, as his heart beats in unison with the starving and ragged millions of India, he has pinned all his faith on the spinning wheel for their amelioration, and he got this quite unexpected support from such a large number of the educated class. And through that paeon Gandhiji revealed one of the Satyagrahic characteristics—the one that he had himself pointed out formerly—viz., to be happy with the smallest concessions. He also showed thereby his accommodating spirit of accepting that minimum which it was easy for others to give.



II

In Belgaum's Holy Land

In the last issue I dealt with only the holy atmosphere of this place. I did not say anything of the first-rate organization there. It was excellent enough to satisfy the most fastidious. Except for the fact that the red earth of the ground dyed everybody's clothes in the ascetic's *bhagwa* (ochre), there was hardly anything else to complain of. Sri Gangadharrao's figure inevitably met the eye as he passed from tent to tent to see that everything was in perfect order. The volunteers were most courteous and disciplined. The rule to keep left was not allowed to be broken even during peak-hours, when thousands had gathered in the premises. In the sanitation department, 80 volunteers under Kakasaheb's leadership helped those scavengers of the municipality who were drafted there. It is specially noteworthy that a large majority of these volunteer sweepers and scavengers have come from the Brahmin castes. There was a Spinning Pandal where spinning wheels were provided for those who wanted to spin. Is it necessary to say after all this that Khadi was visible everywhere and always? The sanitation department worked with excellent efficiency right upto almost the last day. It would have been much better if the Khilafat Committee had not made it a point to engage Muslim volunteers only. What a good effect it would have created, if Hindu volunteers were seen serving Muslim delegates! Gangadharrao had spared no pains in giving the place a most charming look. The *gopur* (the front gate with one or more storeys and niches for lights) standing with its array of lights in front of the big Congress pandal and the soothing fountain erected inside the *gopur* did not fail to catch Gandhiji's eye. Gandhiji thinks that beauty is beauty only to the extent that it serves the interests of the masses and helps in national progress. He, therefore, admonished Gangadharrao for erecting the *Khadi kutir* where he was put up. "I am a bania all over and would see that not a pie is wasted. They say I am provided with a cottage entirely made of Khadi. But it must have cost not less than Rs. 2000/-. But the delegates, poor men, have to stay under common roofs. They are not free from the sun's unpleasant attention and, I am sure, they must be shivering with cold at night. And what a big amount they have to pay for even those few comforts? Am I then wrong when I say, it is at their cost that I am provided with this lordly palace?" Despite this comment, I think that if Gandhiji had visited the common dining hall, he would have excused the rather high charge for the meals there. Everything about it was clean and tidy. Green leaves of banana, washed and rubbed clean, served as plates, while its dried leaves



were stitched up into cups. There was nothing wanting in the neatness of the place whereon low seats the diners squatted and beautiful designs around their seats added a charm all its own. (Some women used to walk daily a mile or two to draw similar designs in front of Gandhiji's *Khadi kutir*). Within these designs the exhortation, 'Banniri banniri rati tirgi sari, badtan hogi sari.' (Spin, brothers, spin, that the country's poverty may take flight), was written in beautiful Kannadi characters. Besides a large number of cooks, there were 300 servers—and everyone of them was a volunteer! In South India people volunteer their services for such work and all of them belong to respectable families.

My account came up to the 24th in the last issue. It is not wrong to state that the National Week started in right earnest only after that date. It is difficult to give a bird's-eye-view of that week's activities. One has to make a hard choice in their selection. Visitors also felt bewildered whether they should attend the Congress all through its session or any or some of the numerous Conferences which are held always in conjunction with it, like creepers that wind themselves round a stately tree. As many as sixteen Conferences, to state the least number, were held during this one week! Hardly anybody may be knowing when the Social Reform Conference began and ended. Sardar Vallabhbhai was going to preside over the Hindi Conference, but there was no vacant tent for it! There was, of course, a Students' Conference, but there had to be even a Teachers' Conference! If elders hold a conference, may students and then teachers lag behind? Then there were a 'Library Conference,' a 'Railway Passengers' Conference', an 'Ayurvedic Parishad' (of the Indian system of medicine), and a 'Naturopaths' Conference'. If only the names of these Conferences were read out to a man, he would be bored. Naturopaths approached Gandhiji one fine morning and told him: "We want to discuss naturopathy. Will you not kindly preside over our Conference?" Gandhiji spoke mildly for a while, but had to give them a talking to at last. "So you believe in making the patient follow the laws of nature? Please let me then observe the laws of nature myself. I have come here for the Congress, not for your Conference. It is breach of Nature's law for me to discuss naturopathy. I would not have allowed you even to enter the room, would have dismissed you off-hand without seeing you, since any dabbling into such matters was a breach of my code of conduct. But what could I do? A curt 'no' would have been another breach—that of good manners. I had, therefore, to be a little less strict about my former principle. If you want to talk with me, you may come over to the Ashram." Somebody approached Gandhiji with a request to attend some other Conference. After he had gone, Gandhiji



burst out with a little annoyance: "These Conferences! I am fed up with them. How happy Devdas and Ba are that they have not come! These people don't mean business. There is no sincerity. This is not work, but mockery. Everybody wants to advance his pet cause and there is a race of these causes! No conference that does not directly support the Congress work should be held here. But he attended the Anti-untouchability and the Cow-protection Conferences because these two advanced the Congress programme. He even presided over the latter. The speeches he delivered at both of them were very significant and it is best to give them separately. As regards the Khadi Exhibition and the Spinning Competition, Maganlalbhai is the right person to give their account. I confine myself to showing in brief how the Congress proceedings began, how the questions of the day were solved and what moods swayed the Congress at different times.

I have referred in the last issue to the purity of the atmosphere here. The reader will excuse me if I say something more, as it reveals the excellence of Gandhiji's technique. I have shown the working of Gandhiji's mind on the 24th, when the spinning franchise was accepted. The Subjects Committee met again on the 25th and many resolutions were proposed. When all of them were disposed off and Gandhiji was about to disperse the Committee—some members had already left after inquiring the time when the next day's full session was to start—he began to announce the next day's programme: "The Congress will begin at 3 p. m. sharp. There will be some beautiful music. Gangadharrao will finish his speech (as President of the Reception Committee) in 5 minutes and then I shall take 30 more for mine. The resolution will then be submitted. Maulana Hasrat Mohani is going to speak against it." When after this announcement he was on the point of closing the Committee meeting, it struck him that he should brief the members as to what they should do the next day. He added: "Like Hasrat Saheb, you too may oppose the resolution if you like. Let it be understood that even those who have voted today in favour of it are free to oppose it tomorrow.

"You are delegates of delegates. All the ordinary delegates will be present tomorrow. You had better vote against the resolution, if you intend to vote for it and then leave to me all the burden of working it out. My shoulders are not strong enough to bear the heavy load. I shall be able to achieve something, only if you are prepared to carry out the resolution in letter and spirit. Our objective is boycott of foreign cloth. That can be gained only if everyone of us—even the poorest—applies his shoulder to



the wheel. The nation is making an honest and righteous effort. Today we possess only as much strength as to enable us to carry out this boycott. If we succeed, we shall be able to achieve a thousand other aims—but only after we succeed, not before."

After these preliminary remarks he spoke of the attitude required to make the boycott successful. "It will do us no good if the resolutions are interpreted according to our own sweet will or in order to find out loopholes to escape from working them out." When he gave this warning he referred particularly to Sri Bhopatkar's amendment to a resolution:

"His amendment hurt me. The original resolution defined a national educational institution. The words were: "Its students must spin and wear Khadi." Sri Bhopatkar's objection was: "Why should children wear Khadi always and everywhere, when we ourselves are not going to do so ?" He, therefore, submitted the amendment to exonerate the students from wearing Khadi except on national public functions! This is definitely not the meaning of the spinning-franchise resolution. Bhopatkar's amendment, therefore, pained me. That resolution shows what our duty is. We are bound to do it and on it rests our right to vote.

If we don't do even that much, we lose our sacred right of franchise. But does it ever mean that the moment you finish your Congress work and go home, you will discard Khadi and start wearing foreign clothes? If you interpret the spinning-franchise resolution that way, take it as certain that the boycott of foreign doth becomes an impossibility. I request you to read the resolutions and the Agreement carefully and grasp their true meaning. Khadi dress on national occasions and contribution of 24000 yards of yarn per year constitute the minimum that a Congress member must do. But what does the Congress hope from the people at large? The Congress hopes that not only we but even our children should wear Khadi always and everywhere. Khadi has to be made as universal as a current coin. If that is not done, any talk of boycott of foreign clothes is moonshine. Don't misinterpret the resolution. It has been framed to accommodate those who are unwilling to spin, but it does not afford a loophole even to those that spin. If you put that wrong interpretation, better throw out the resolution tomorrow. Only, I shall feel sorry that it will make the boycott of foreign cloth impossible. But the fact is, the phrase "those unwilling to spin" is meant to excuse only those from spinning who have a natural dislike for it or are physically incapacitated. Children cannot be included among these people. You must implement the Agreement in such a vigorous way that everybody may feel at the end of the year that the boycott



of foreign cloth is no fancy but a reality in the offing. If immediately on his return home everyone of the delegates begins to spin in right earnest, organizes spinning in villages, and induces villagers to spin, we shall find that that work is big enough to absorb all his energy. But that can happen only when you have faith in this resolution. So, when you meet tomorrow, please vote with a full sense of responsibility, with the clearest consciousness of the true meaning of the resolution and of the effect of your vote." With these words he was on the point of closing his speech and he even sat down after the declaration that the Congress must finish its work on the 27th, when Sri Kelkar got up and queried: "What you said just now was all aimed at Swarajists. But there is also another part of our Agreement. It declares that the Swaraj Party will represent the Congress in the Councils and that you will help it as best you can in its work there. I wish you made an appeal to the No-changers in this matter." Gandhiji flared up by that remark like gun-powder by a spark.

"Definitely. What Sri Kelkar says is true. I have already written in *Young India* in that strain. And now before we prepare ourselves for tomorrow's sacred work (of voting), I do want to give a word of warning to No-changers also. It is not true that all that I said till now was aimed at Swarajists only. There are many even among No-changers who do not believe in the spinning franchise. So I tell them also that they should interpret the Agreement in the way I do, that is, in the way it should be done. I want to give to the Swarajists the utmost help I can, to go with them as far as possible in order to back them in their work. When I say "their" work, I mean only their method. That apart, their work is Congress work, is the country's work. I do not agree with their method and tactics. But what use is my view here? If I tell them, "Your councils are a mirage," can they not fling back to my face, "And what is your spinning-wheel, if not a trash?" But the Swarajists regard their work as a very powerful weapon to fight the bureaucracy. I must, therefore, help them, though I have my own doubts.

"That was the reason why I met the Swarajists and racked my brain to find out how I could help them. It struck me at last that this Agreement was the right way. That Agreement does not lay the Swarajists under a debt of obligation to me. It is their right to have it and I must not obstruct their programme even mentally. I must rather persuade my mind to see nothing but good in what they do. I appeal to you also (No-changers) to hold a similar attitude towards them. It was on this basis that I went out of my way to meet the Swarajists repeatedly. I listened to all their arguments and kept my mind open enough to understand their case. I can help them only that way. But I



must make it clear that it is a mistake to think that the offer of 'my help' means I must deliver lectures about the laws they may propose in the councils or hold meetings in support of their work there. That I cannot do, because my heart is not in that work. I do not understand the Agreement to mean that I am expected to give that help also . Not that I am not prepared, but how is it possible to do so, when my mind remains unconvinced? If I am converted to the Swarajist view, it will not take me long to declare myself an out-and-out Swarajist. And in that case you (Swarajists) may freely requisition all the twentyfour hours of my day for that work. But today, my heart is not with you and I cannot help you with all my heart and soul. All the same I am going to give you as much help as I can. For instance, if the Government oppresses you, tries to stain your name, you will find me standing by your side. Your afflictions will be my afflictions and I will do my best to help you. Even if you feel a constraint in taking my help I shall then tell you, "For God's sake, allow me to help you." But if, in addition to all this, you want me to say privately that I approve of your policy, I must say clearly that that is impossible. And yet from you I expect that you will not say you have no faith in the spinning wheel, when people question you. "Why do you ask us to spin when you yourself have no faith in it ?" If you have no faith and yet if you accept the Agreement, you will commit a breach of faith."

Sri Kelkar again got up at this stage : "But our lukewarm attitude is bound to affect our work. The Swarajists' faith in spinning is certainly not as great as yours. Deep down in their minds there is undoubtedly, want of faith to some extent at least." Gandhiji: "True, but if that want of faith goes to the extent of believing that the spinning wheel harms the country, you must throw out the spinning-franchise resolution as well as the Agreement."

Sri Kelkar : "No, it does not go to that extent."

Gandhiji proceeded: "The co-operation I want from you (Swarajists) with regard to the spinning wheel can never be merely of the same kind as what you expect from me. And that is clear in the Agreement itself. I do not expect the impossible from you. All I want is that, consistently with your faith and capacity, you will give me all the support you can with perfect honesty. I wish everybody looked at this Agreement from that angle. If you do not have that attitude for the Agreement, it is certain that our movement will fail..... All that I want to say is that you (Swarajists and No-changers) should harbor no ill-will against each other. I wish that there remains no complex in your mind and it should not. While accepting this Agreement, the No-changers should



not entertain even a trace of the feeling that the Swarajists are the enemies of the country. I want to warn No-changers that if they do not believe in the spinning wheel, they will find in the end that there is no alternative left to them except a violent activity. Why does Mr. Stokes

find himself helpless? He is an excellent man and has made many sacrifices; but he is a foreigner and the people did not listen to his advice to ply the spinning wheel. He, therefore, finds no other way now and says that the councils have got to be accepted. He came to that attitude because people are certain to have petty complaints and at least these can be redressed through the councils, and not through non-co operation. That is why I ventured to advise Sri Shankarlal and Srimati Anasuyabehn (labour leaders of Ahmedabad) that they should allow mill-workers to resort to law-courts if they wanted, as they cannot take the road of non-co-operation. I am, therefore, telling you also that if the spinning wheel is not enough to satisfy your zeal for national service, councils will be your only next resort. For, if you can't do there anything more, you can at least kick up a row and get some prisoners released. Let me repeat here, what I have already said a thousand times, that if there is no faith in the wheel, the only way out is to go to the councils. There is no doubt you will be able to achieve at least something there. Those who are going to the councils are representatives of the intelligentsia. They are weather-beaten veterans also. For instance, can you find anybody more selfless than Malaviyaji? He has done much for the people. Even such a man has full faith in the councils and he is no fool. Whenever I see him, my head bends down in reverence. And what are Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru? Why are they here in this simple dress? Once upon a time Motilal Nehru used to live like a prince. When he went to the Amritsar Congress he took his car and a host of servants with him. But his garden which was once full of roses and *mogras* (white fragrant flowers), is a waste land today filled with weeds and wild grass. Is that man a traitor? I have the highest respect for him. Whenever I see him, I feel there must be some defect in me because otherwise I would not differ from him in some matters. And who is Kelkar? He is the representative of that great man whose name will be written in letters of gold in history and who will be worshipped in future as a God in this land which believes in 33 crores of Gods under one Supreme Power. I appeal to you to cleanse your hearts, learn to love and make your minds as broad as an ocean—for that is what both the Quran and the Bhagwadgita preach. Never judge others. If you judge, you will be judged by countless others. God alone is the one judge. There are a thousand enemies within you, a thousand others surround you, and yet He protects



you from all of them and gives peace to your heart with a ray of His mercy. Why should we dub the Swarajists as men of crooked ways, as men of bad faith ? God save us from that censure of human nature!

"Differences of views are bound to exist, so long as the world lasts. The No-changers will only then have performed their greatest feat when they succeed in converting their so-called opponents into friends and infecting them with their own faith in the spinning wheel. The Swarajists do not accept the wheel because they do not see its usefulness. It is for you (No-changers) to prove its utility. I am mad after the wheel as that to me is the only way to raise the country. Faith is a fundamental tenet in both Hinduism and Islam. When I was in jail, I was given a book by Hazrat Saheb. I read in it that a disciple performed with deep faith the humble work of filling, not once or twice but a great many times, the Guru's bubble-bubble with tobacco; and he benefited thereby. I appeal to both Hindus and Muslims to do the same sort of selfless service without cherishing any hope of reward. The work must be done with this kind of faith: 'I need not worry over the question whether the wheel is good for others or not. It does good to me at least.' The stately image of Kashi Vishwanath may be for Maulana Hasrat Mohani nothing more than a block of stone, but for me it is an icon of God. My heart melts with a surge of devotion when I have its *darshan* (sight of a holy object). That is all a matter of faith. When I happen to look at a cow, it does not strike me that I am looking at an edible substance. It appears to me as a poem of pity. I am going to worship it, no matter if I have to fight with the whole world for doing so. God is only one, but it is He who gives me the faith to worship a stone. It is He Who gives me the power to see Him everywhere—in a stone, in these objects that meet my eye, in Englishmen, in even traitors. I for one can say that I do not hate even the traitor. Therefore, I shall say to every non-co-operator, 'If you have faith in your *dharma* of non-violence, you will embrace the Swarajists and tell them, 'Please forgive us if we have erred in any way?' You have no right to cherish hatred, to pour forth abuses against anybody whatsoever. I wish you to use that infallible remedy (of love). I cannot give you a more potent medicine for our ills. May God give you the strength to use that medicine regularly and you will find that everything is all right by the end of the year."

I could not help giving this speech verbatim. Hardly does Gandhiji ever deliver a premeditated speech. It is mostly the occasion that draws him out and this speech is an excellent example. It is impossible to give in cold print a vivid picture of the



situation, nor is it possible to reproduce in language the tenseness, the vitality, of that speech. Everyone was profoundly affected. The eyes of even a man like Pandit Motilalji were seen to be wet. He remarked at the end of the speech, "Why should Gandhiji have written out his Presidential Address? Had he gone on this way, he could have kept the Congress spell-bound for an hour." And Satyamurti remarked to Rajagopalachari, 'Who can deny that Gandhiji has raised Indian politics to a lofty height?'

That was how Gandhiji's mind was working on the 25th. Before going to the Congress on the 26th, he started spinning at 2 p. m. At 2.30 he called others to his presence for a special midday prayer. The hymns—‘जाके प्रिय न राम वैदेही’—'Ja ke priya na Rama-Vaidehi' (Who does not love Rama and Sita must be shunned as our greatest enemy though he be our dearest friend) and ‘वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिए’—'Vaishnava jana to tene Kahie'¹ were sung. Though the rule of holding prayers at 4 a.m. in the morning and 7.30 p.m. in the evening was kept up without fail, the shlokas ‘स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा’—'Sthitaprajnasya ka bhasha' (re. the characteristics of a well-poised man) which are sung in the evening prayers were also sung in the afternoon that day. Miss Peterson who was coming from Portonovo was sitting near Gandhiji. He asked her to sing, 'Lead Kindly Light. ' Just when that song ended, Motilalji and Deshbandhu Das arrived. Gangadharrao started the proceedings of the Congress right at the stroke of 3 p. m. and finished his speech in 7 minutes. Gandhiji completed both his Hindi and English speeches in exactly 30 minutes. The keynote of both his speeches was one and the same : "Please do whatever you do, with God as your witness. I shall be content if you don't pledge your word and throw the resolution out; but it will be like giving me a cup of poison, if you break your promise once made. I can suffer patiently those who abuse me, thrash me, spit upon me. But what passes my capacity of endurance is violation of faith." Other speeches followed and at the very time of voting he again asked them to take care to vote according to their own judgment. If the voting that took place after this clear caution is not free voting, I should like to know what is.

All these things indicate Gandhiji's innate characteristics. Some examples of his behaviour as President also deserve to be noted. He did not allow any discussion at all on the Agreement and, after it was passed, ruled out any resolution that would mean a change in it in any way. Some people resented this attitude, some saw in it even high-handedness. But those who observed his over-all attitude throughout the sessions of



the Subjects Committee as well as of the Congress will not accuse him of overbearing manners. Even though the Agreement was already passed, he allowed Maulana Hasrat Mohani on the next day to put his resolution for scrapping the spinning franchise. His object in doing so was to allow the opponents of the franchise full opportunity to air their views and not to take advantage of law to suppress them. When a note was handed to him requesting him to let Rajagopalachari speak in favour, he remarked, "I want to let only opponents have their say. I don't want you to be carried away by Rajagopalachari's speech in favour of the resolution, as that may affect your thinking. What I want is your independent, uninfluenced vote. Earlier, after a long discussion on the spinning franchise in the Subjects Committee, Gandhiji was about to close it and give a call for voting. Just then Yakub Hussein requested him to let him speak. "Are you going to speak for it or against?" inquired Gandhiji: "Certainly not for it" Yakub Hussein replied. "Then, of course, I shall let you speak." In the resolution honouring the departed patriots, Mr. Bhurgri's name was left out by mistake. On the next day Gandhiji stood up to express his deepest regret and made the whole assembly also stand up. He had promised an 'untouchable' gentleman, that he would allow him to speak on the untouchability resolution. But as he forgot to do so in due course, he begged his pardon and allowed him to speak later on. The Congress delegates stand up only when a resolution is passed to express their bereavement for a deceased leader. Gandhiji went further. He requested members to stand up even to honour some one. Though he took particular care to observe all the rules of good manners in this way, he closed the Congress session on the next day at the stroke of 5 p. m.

May I give here a few examples of his tactful humour? For, without it perhaps the session would have been prolonged and the business could not have been finished so easily and successfully. At the concluding session of the Subjects Committee Dr. Paranjpye, who regards Gandhiji as one of the 56 lakh *bawas* (recluses) of India and who called him a fossil in a speech at Belgaum, got up to speak. For a few minutes nobody could understand his harangue. Somebody then got up and questioned, "Is this all in order?" Gandhiji laughed and said, "But the fault is mine. I was myself not in order, when I allowed him to speak. Why stop him now, when he is not?" Swami Govindanand was thundering against the spinning franchise, but in the midst of his fulmination he blurted out, "I am opposed to the franchise but I shall continue to spin." Gandhiji put in at once: "Whom will you give your yarn?" That softened Govindanand. He said, "I will give it away as a present." "To me, of course?" asked Gandhiji, and raised a general laugh. "Yes, to you personally," answered Govindanand. "Agreed. You



may vote against the resolution, but send your yarn to me." Pandit Malaviyaji was requested to speak on the Kohat resolution. He objected: "But I can't cut it short. I shall have to deliver a long speech." "But you forget," Gandhiji pointed out, "I am there as President to stop you." And on the next day when M. Mohammad Ali indulged in a long speech, he left his own seat, got a table put on the rostrum, and sat on that table throughout the whole session! Hardly anybody else could have succeeded in tackling the Kohat resolution as well as he did. It required no ordinary tact to put the resolution for discussion and get it passed in the form it had finally taken. Maulana Zafarali Khan's stand was poles apart from Dr. Munje's. It was no easy job to get the resolution accepted by both of them. The discussion was, therefore, stopped on that day. On the next, he first brought round Zafarali Khan. But Dr. Munje was still left. All the soft arts of persuasion failed to win him over. Gandhiji then twitted him: "Dr. Munje! It is preposterous that a man of clear and precise thinking like you should put forth such an unreasonable plea." "Dr. Munje was little put out. He saw some sense in Gandhiji's admonition and said at last, "All right, I accept your advice" and sat down.

When one thinks of his infinite resourcefulness and tact, combined with his constant concern for propriety, and of his light-hearted flashes of wit and humour followed by deeper notes of love that welled forth unexpectedly at times—for instance his references to his inordinate love for Pandit Jawaharlal and Miss Gulnar one cannot help exclaiming:

सकलमेव चरित्रमन्यत् |

(Everything is extraordinary about this man).

It is in order to do them justice, not injustice, and to show what splendid help they gave, that I make a special reference to the Swarajists. In a long and detailed speech at the full session of the Congress, Pandit Motilalji refuted the objections of Maulana Hasrat Mohani and others so dispassionately and cogently that that single speech must have won over a large number in favour of the resolution. I think, Gandhiji must have breathed a sigh of relief at Motilalji's generous declaration during both the days of the Congress session of his hearty support to him in carrying out the year's Congress programme. Nobody is likely to forget his forceful plea for the spinning wheel in answer to the arguments of M. Hasrat Mohani: "I am surprised that, at this late hour, the Maulana is ridiculing the boycott of foreign cloth. He has believed all along that the boycott of British cloth alone would have a tremendous effect. If that were so, how much more powerful would be the effect of the boycott of all foreign cloth! The affluence of the British is a fact that everybody knows. It does not matter if, for them,



the loss of 20 crores of rupees has no sting, but why forget the fact that the spinning wheel will save those some 20 crores to this impoverished country? It is hardly necessary to say that the spinning wheel is definitely the way to cure the country of its weakness and to rouse that political consciousness which is still not fully awakened in us. I am really surprised at the fact that a far-sighted and intelligent man like the Maulana does not understand the repercussions of the boycott of foreign cloth. The training, the wheel gives, is like that given to an athlete. The effect of the latter is not visible all at once, but when we see a man with a well-developed constitution, we see the advantages of that training. And why should the men, who start spinning with only a little faith today, not find their faith increasing with its continued practice?" He had, moreover, even admonished M. Mohammad Ali and one or two Swarajists for re-opening old sores.

The first part of Deshbandhu Das' speech at the Congress was good. It would have been better, if he had devoted its latter part to the discussion of the spinning wheel rather than to the fight with the Government. His statement, "Those who cannot spin and weave, may organise the working of spinning wheels and handlooms" shows lack of experience. But it was a very impassioned speech that he delivered at the Subjects Committee and there was the charming ring of sincerity in it. "Our fight still continues and, in all those things of Mahatmaji which we have accepted, he remains our accredited leader. I have faith in his leadership. I found in him a burning brazier, when I had a talk with him on the boycott of foreign cloth, and it has lighted the fire of faith in me also. From that faith I say, this new franchise and this new programme are going to meet with wonderful success."

It must be acknowledged that the frankness of Sri Kelkar, Dr. Munje, Sri Abhyankar and others was, far from being harmful, really helpful to the Congress work. Had Sri Kelkar not put his questions at the Subjects Committee, could the audience have been treated to the memorable speech of Gandhiji given above?

Sri Vithalbhai Patel and the very few Swarajists who thought with him, took a different line. His opposition to the spinning franchise made at the Subjects Committee was downright but gentle in tone. "Such a revolutionary change has never been suggested before. The Congress will lose its national character." Gandhiji admitted the half-truth in those remarks and answered the argument in his speech before the Congress: "It is true that the change suggested today is revolutionary—as revolutionary as in 1921, or perhaps even more. But I have submitted it because Swaraj can come nearer only through it." Can anyone doubt that it was only due to his



goodness that Sri Vithalbhai, like Malaviyaji, desisted from voicing his strong opposition in the open session? His strong views against the franchise, however, continued till the last and he decided to fight the matter out personally with Gandhiji. Before the session began, he met Gandhiji at his *kutir* and registered his complaint. "I warn you, they will simply send you 2000 yards and do nothing further."

Gandhiji: If they send me 2000 yards and ask others to do the same, I shall say they have done their bit.

Vithalbhai: But what about the fact that they have no faith at all? They will be sending you 2000 yards only mechanically, without any heart in it.

Gandhiji: I admit, many of them have not the faith. But it is enough for me that nobody is opposed. They think, the people are not strong enough to carry out this programme. It is admittedly a novel kind of work set before Congressmen and it is possible that all of them may not understand its meaning and importance. Some of them are aged besides; some others have a thousand other worries to attend to. But it is enough for me if only they honestly implement the resolution to the best of their capacity. If they don't, if they go back upon their word, they will lose the Congress.

Vithalbhai: You are depriving the Congress of all its political power by making it a Spinning Club.

Gandhiji: No, is there not a Spinners' Association in Manchester? Do you know what political power it wields?

Vithalbhai: May be. But it is not right to introduce spinning as the qualification for franchise.

Gandhiji: You don't think it right, because you forget a thing or two. You forget Lancashire. You forget the fact that we are fighting Lancashire. The pity of it is that a practical man like you does not care to sit in quiet and ask himself, "What is the meaning of this huge business of Rs. 60 crores? What is at the back of this huge fleet of steamers and this enormous expenditure after the naval and military arms in order to maintain that business? Can there be any other reason except the fact that the British know that the whole Empire lives upon that business? The loss of that business will deprive them of their superiority. They are a very fore-sighted people. It will not take them long to adjust themselves and change their relationship into one of equality with India. This is but a question of human effort. And what has human effort failed to achieve? Stevenson wanted to build a railroad and there was such a deep ditch that nobody could fill it up. He however, persevered. Everyone laughed at him, but he did not mind. Many advised him: "Forget it. You are not going to succeed." But he told his



workmen: "Carry on. Let tons and tons of earth go into the ditch, don't stop till it is filled up." Many wise men had tried to dishearten him but they all failed. I am now in his position.

Vithalbhai went his way laughing.

Lalaji does not call himself a Swarajist. May I, however, refer to him in this context? He will forgive me if I speak of him in connection with Vithalbhai as he too is an opponent of the new franchise. I must say I did not like his way of opposition. It resembled that of the Moderates in their condemnation of non-co-operation. The qualifications of wearing Khadi and spinning 2000 yards of yarn, which the franchise required, were inadequate, he declared. But would he have accepted the spinning franchise if the conditions were sufficiently rigorous. i. e., if the right to vote was confined only to self-spinners and constant wearers of Khadi? And nobody would expect the following argument from a serious thinker like Lalaji: "Today he demands *sutar* (yarn), tomorrow he will ask for *sakar* (sugar)." But the fact is, the Punjab situation has embittered Lalaji's heart, the Hindu-Muslim differences there have robbed him of even his sleep and his health has gone down considerably in his worry over the ways to bring about a reconciliation. When Gandhiji went to the Punjab, Lalaji used to remark, partly in Jest, "Mahatmaji, I have lost my health so much that I cannot stand the strain even of arguing." This question absorbs all his attention and he cannot think of anything else. Gandhiji thinks that Khadi is capable of resolving even the communal tangle, but Lalaji is of the view that the work of Khadi itself is impossible in this atmosphere of high tension. And yet he also had the forbearance not to oppose Gandhiji in the open session.

But when it was Kohat that was being discussed and he started to speak on it, the whole Congress could hear, as it were, the sounds of the surges in his heart. It was a long speech, and he had entered even into several facts about Kohat, but there was nothing in his utterances which any sensible Muslim could find objectionable. He had only one object in giving these facts to expose how perfectly criminal and indifferent the Government was. And all that he wanted to drive at in his whole speech was: "You must not sin, even if you are sinned against. Vengeance of any kind blocks the uplift of the nation. Any harm to a Hindu or a Muslim by an act of anger or reprisal, or by the infliction of a wound, is like a stab in the heart of our motherland." I should not wonder if the audience forgot Kohat and treasured only these sentiments on their return home. And yet they were not pious platitudes meant for the nationalist ear of the Congress. When he referred to Kohat even at the Hindu Mahasabha, Lalaji was just the



same. Not a single expression that would hurt anybody's feelings escaped his lips there also and all that he said was aimed at showing the Hindus their weaknesses and exhorting them to brace themselves up for self-effort.

It is not wrong to say that the Congress had met almost solely for the Agreement the spinning franchise resolutions. I have, therefore, highlighted the discussions on them and several other details worth knowing. The chief among other resolutions were on the removal of untouchability, on Indians in South Africa, and on Burma. At the very outset Gandhiji admitted that there was nothing new in them and that the people concerned might find little comfort and strength through these resolutions. "I myself would certainly like to pass far stronger resolutions, but I am helpless. Under the present circumstances we cannot do anything more to help them." Two or three resolutions which, by previous consensus between Gandhiji and Swarajists, were not submitted in the open session of the Congress were brought before the All India Congress Committee that was held immediately afterwards. It is enough to say that their submission itself was a breach in the discipline of the Swaraj Party and that if they were passed in the A. I. C. C., Gandhiji's position would have become very difficult. But what we are struggling to regain is exactly these qualities of discipline and loyalty to one's word, which have, at present, almost disappeared from us. Let us hope, we shall recover them gradually.

The impression this Congress left on the mind was different from those that other Congress sessions usually produced. It did so, at least, in my mind. We felt ourselves at the top of the world when we returned from the Calcutta and Nagpur sessions. Fate was against me and I could not be present at the Ahmedabad session, but I know that the exultation there was even wilder and one was reminded of the Sanskrit line:

पीत्वा मोहमयीं प्रमादमदिरां उन्मत्त भूतं जगत्।

(The world reeled in mad hilarity, after copious draughts of the wine of infatuation).

At the Gaya Session, while one section was smarting under defeat, the other was inebriated with triumph. After the Coconada session, Congressmen were proud at the thought that they had achieved unity once again and were full of hopes for the future. From that hope arose our other hope of finding ourselves again under the safe shelter of Gandhiji's presence in our midst. This hope was fulfilled, but by God's grace only, not by our efforts. But unity remained a distant, unrealised dream. Chastened by these experiences, our mind refuses to feel elated even at the success achieved at the Belgaum Congress. It was impossible for the Congress delegates to remain affected by



the supernal joy of the atmosphere, when they saw the ethereal sight which the second day's session of the Congress presented and heard the angelic voice which said in effect, "Bury all your differences and dissensions right here; embrace your opponents with love." But though they felt that joy, it may have been mixed with another feeling. Only the speaker, not we, had that capacity to love the opponent. We have yet to make our hearts capable of cherishing that loftiness of love. Since there was not that love, many may have felt, 'But our hearts are so dry!' How apposite is the English idiom, "Bury the hatchet!" Not only should we bury our quarrels of the past, as well as the painful recollections they may follow in their wake, but we should also bury 'the hatchet' itself the instrument that caused these quarrels, viz., our unforgiving memory which poisons the mind. That, in substance, was the message Gandhiji gave at the end of his speech. That message wants both the Pro-changers and the No-changers to be humble and make great preparations for the future.

For the implementation of his work Gandhiji selected as his Secretaries, a liberal-minded Muslim, Sri Bharucha, a Khadi-mad Parsi, and everyone's idol, Jawaharlal. I was strongly reminded of George Joseph on that day. Had he not resumed his legal practice and left the Congress, Gandhiji would probably have appointed him also as his Christian Secretary. His inclusion of a large majority of Swarajists in the Working Committee was intentional. "Beyond framing imposing resolutions, what more can I do by having a large number of No-changers around me? But for getting the maximum output of work, who are the men that count? What a happy consummation it would be, if the Swarajists take it into their head to work out the Congress programme! That is why there are so many of them in the Working Committee. As for the No-changers, I can expect their support even if they are not included." Gandhiji has thus saddled the responsibility of working out the programme equally on both the parties and both of them know it.

1. Gandhiji's favourite hymn. It gives the characteristics of a true devotee of God. It has been reproduced in English in Vol. II of this series



Extempore Speech As Congress President

d. 26-12-1924

(Navajivan, d. 8-1-1925)

The last issue refers to Gandhiji's preparation—his one hour of prayer-cum-spinning. With his mind filled with the devotional sentiments of these hymns, he left for the Congress. After Gangadharrao's reception speech, Gandhiji, instead of reading out his written address, spoke off hand in Hindi and English and finished the business in half an hour. These extempore speeches are given here almost in full, since they deserve preservation:

"I thank you for the high honour you have conferred on me. You may have already got a copy of my written Presidential Address and I hope you have read it carefully. I have hardly anything more to add.

"A serious situation faces us today. We have not been able to finish our work, by the end of 1921, as we had intended. Differences and quarrels, fear and suspicion, jealousy and animosity, sprang up in our midst, instead. Hindus and Muslims have begun to regard each other as enemies, made free use of their lathis and are still in the same mood. These are no gestures of our seriousness to win Swaraj. Hindus still look down upon untouchables and continue to sin in the eyes of God. For the last four years, we have regarded spinning as everybody's duty, but the spinning wheel is still not in vogue. When I went to Poona a few months ago, I said, "Lokamanya gave us a half of the *mantra* of Swaraj. He declared that Swaraj was our birthright, but it has been left to me to give the other half of the *mantra*. That other half is: If you want Swaraj, the only means is the spinning wheel. We know this simple fact but we have not yet put it into practice. There is no sense in my approaching you and telling you the same things over and over again. That means waste of time for you and myself. I am but a slave of Khuda and I consider my time invaluable. I want to have Swaraj in the present times but I do not find we are serious about it.

"Begum Mohammad Ali Saheba said to me: "We seem to be enjoying Swaraj at least during one week in a year." She made that remark quite casually, but I find it very significant. It means, we are simply enacting the play of Swaraj when we meet in the Congress for a week. In the play of Harishchandra, the hero comes on the stage, sheds tears and acts like Harishchandra, though he knows he is not Harishchandra and nobody ever imagines that there is even a trace of Harishchandra's sterling truth in



him. Similarly, this our gathering of the Congress is but a dramatic performance. We must save ourselves from this play-acting and be in earnest.

"Please pass the resolution which Deshbandhu is going to put before you, only if you accept its usefulness. You will find no reference to Hindu-Muslim unity in it, but only to the spinning wheel. You have come here as representatives of the whole of India. If you accept the resolution sponsored by Deshbandhu and Mohammad Ali, it means you take a pledge to implement the resolution fully. If you see in it nothing but Gandhi's craze, you should reject the resolution forthwith. But if you pass it, and thus take this pledge in the name of God then break it, I leave it to you to think of the consequences. When you take this pledge by voting for it, remember the condemnation of a man of bad faith made by Tulsidas, by the Bhagwadgita, the Quran and the Bible. Such a man is worth a straw. We have not come here to bolster up an empty show. Accept the resolution in the spirit of a resolve and only if your heart says to you, as it does to me, that spinning is the road to the country's uplift.

"I think I have done nothing wrong in arriving at the Agreement with Deshbandhu and Motilalji and submitting it before the country. I have accepted the Swarajists' right to serve the country—in their own way. They think, the country stands to gain by their going to the Councils. I thought, 'When they all declare it so emphatically, who am I to stop them, from going to the councils in the name of the Congress?' It does not mean that the Swarajists will represent the non-co-operators there. It only means that the Congress belongs to both. If you want to carry out this Agreement in the right spirit, we shall have to free our hearts of hatred, to drive out the feeling that Swarajists are traitors. Opinions will always differ and life cannot last a day without tolerance. If we claim to practise non-violence, let me tell you, tolerance is a very part of it. It is because we gave up forbearance that we have come to this plight.

"If you think the spinning wheel will decrease the power of the Congress and harm the country, you should vote against the Agreement. Its acceptance means the acceptance of the spinning wheel, of Hindu-Muslim unity, of removal of untouchability. And let me add, if you are a No-changer, you should have the same place in your heart, should cherish the same regard, for Pandit Motilalji, Deshbandhu and Kelkar as you have for other No-changers including myself. And the Swarajists should feel the same warmth for me and those of my way of thinking as they feel for Panditji and Deshbandhu. This brotherliness is, in fact, the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity.



It means, I should have the same regard for any Muslim—even if he looks upon me as his enemy—as I have for Pandit Malaviyaji. This may appear to you a queer advice, but I assure you the Bhagwadgita, the Bhagwat, the Bible, the Quran teach us this same principle.

"I took up for the Hindi speech a longer time than I wanted to; but I am not going to exceed the time-limit of half an hour. I must, therefore, cut it brief in English. All that I want to say is this: Think deeply over the revolutionary change I am proposing. It is a very serious change and has no precedent. Yes, we did introduce an overhauling change in 1920, but perhaps this one is even more so. And yet I believe that it is only that radical transformation which can bring Swaraj within sight. Those days are gone, when we used to pass resolutions in the Congress and then forget them for a year. Today the Congress gives the country no vague, but a straight and clear directive. It says, 'If you want to win Swaraj, a particular thing has got to be done'. Deshbandhu and the Maulana may not invest this resolution with all the seriousness of an oath, but I, for one, appeal to you to accept it in the spirit of taking a vow, with God as your witness. The value of this resolution is not at all enhanced by the fact that I have suggested it. I am but an insignificant fallible human, liable to commit Himalayan blunders. Infallibility is the quality only of the Perfect Power which needs neither penance for expiation nor arguments with others to convince them. I am as bad or as good a creature as the most common among you.

"There is a variety of views on the spinning wheel. Some regard it useful, some do not and some others look at it as a helpful but a very disagreeable task. I have my own views on the matter. As a result of years of thought spent upon it, my faith has grown deeper and deeper and I have now come to feel that, if I were free to do so, I would go on spinning for all the 24 hours of the day and feel Swaraj coming nearer with every rotation of the wheel.

"Sri Sarojinidevi requests me to say something on two points. The first is Hindu-Muslim unity. What more shall I tell you about it? Shaukat Ali says he is tired of repeating these things *ad nauseum*. A world of wisdom is stored in that head. He says, "Muslims are a worthless lot, are fools. And Hindus the same. Let those, who want it, fight it out among themselves. We need not go to such bloody spots." But I can't, I must not do like that. I have grown mad after Hindu-Muslim unity and that is why you see me doting upon Mohammad Ali's little daughter, Gulnar. Why have I lost my heart to that baby? Because when she grows up, she will say, "There was a man named



Gandhi who would not touch beef, but had no aversion for me for taking beef and loved me intensely" and will spread my message of love. She is innocence incarnate, is free from prepossessions and prejudices. I wish that every Mussalman loves me as much as she. While the Quran sanctions, my religion bans, cow-killing. But who am I to force a believer in the Quran to stop killing a cow? I tell Gulnar : "Let the worship of the cow be left to me. I do not want that you should worship it likewise; All I want from you is to give due respect to my worship of the cow and refusal to take beef." It is from this attitude of respect for others' feelings that I am glad to be put in Shaukat Ali's pocket. And why do I not have the same attitude towards Malaviyaji? Because my reverence for him is natural with me. But I have to cultivate the same respect for a Mussalman. That is the reason why I appear to be partial to Muslims. In that partiality lies my great service to Hindus.

"Sarojini Devi had asked me to refer to the Moderates also. I hold them in reverence. I have the highest respect for their national service. I wish they could enter the Congress. But they must accept spinning. After entering the Congress they can certainly oust me, drop the spinning programme also. But as the situation stands, at present, they can only join the Congress by respecting the thing that the country has accepted.

"I again appeal to you, "Let God be your witness when, you accept this resolution. And if you once accept it, insist on following it up in action till the end of your life."

At this conclusion of the Congress session Gandhiji said in Hindi:

"I cannot sufficiently thank you. No body can expect a love greater than what you have given to me. I asked you to keep patience and you kept it. You asked for a chance to speak and, though you did not get it, you did not raise objections. In the Subjects Committee also, it was smooth-sailing for me, though that was just the occasion when I could have been put to great trouble. You could have opposed the proposal put before you and even thrown it out. You did nothing of the kind and accepted all that. The discipline and forbearance with which you behaved like that must be, I think, the result of the merits earned by my forbears and past lives. Now I request you to take a further step and be as gracious to Bharat-varsha (Varsha=continent, i. e., a big country) as you have been to me. Whether I wish to die or live, it is all for *Bharat varsha*. Whether I get fever or , nobody can change what God has destined for him. But everyone can pray to God to grant him what he wants.



Everyone can, therefore, pray to God, "O, Lord, regard me as your child and grant my wish." I ask you to pray to Him to give you the power to gird up your loins to serve Bharatvarsha and to keep that oath. I wish I get everybody's love, but that alone cannot please me. I should be satisfied only when you actually do the thing which you have promised to do and for doing which you have all gathered here. None of the three things we have decided to do is beyond our capacity. Bhopatkar's speech was a pleasant surprise to me. With great force he contended, "Do you wish to protect Hinduism by inflicting pain on a living creature?" I wish the Shastris (men learned in the letter of the scriptures) saw the truth of this view. I wish Hindus and Muslims to embrace each other. What did Shaukat Ali and Lalaji say? Zafar Ali opposed the resolution, but is he the country's enemy? Let every Hindu fraternize with Muslims. It was a great principle that Lalaji propounded. That is the principle of human fellowship. No religion has a narrow outlook. If some Hindu loses his sanity, true religion lies in refusing to be swept away into retaliation. Lalaji declared that if somebody abused Rama, one need not pay back by abusing the Prophet. If a Muslim slanders Krishna and a Hindu says, "I will then sling mud on the Prophet Saheb," he is not doing right. Being a non-cooperator myself, I, at least, will say that nobody should resort to a law court. It does not require many years to assimilate this principle in our everyday life. In order to win Swaraj, what is wanted is Swaraj fever, a consuming fire in the heart—the thing that Tilak possessed. When Bhopatkar was speaking, I was forcibly reminded of Tilak. He (Tilak) was like the very image of Swaraj. His colleagues told me that he nursed his wife till her last breath. What a fine thing it would be, if we caught his burning zeal for service! Is it any difficult thing to cast off foreign clothes? I shall not, at present, speak of making a bonfire, because we have given up our peaceful attitude. If we regain the old atmosphere of peace, I would indeed revert to my talk of 1921 (clothes were publicly burnt in 1921). I regard it as a sacred work. I know that at some places stones were hid within the mound of foreign clothes collected for the bonfire to make up an imposing show. We must not act a lie like that. Those who then did my work like that played false to me. My heart burns in anguish and, if God wills, this body also will be consumed to ashes some day. My heart tells me, I shall not get angry, if you abuse me, thrash me, kick me with your shoes, or spit upon me. But if you break your word, that would enrage me, though my religion forbids anger. If a woman protests her purity and I find out that she is unchaste in fact, I would yearn for death then and there. For a man's lapse also I would feel the same. You have showered your love on me. You have drowned me in the ocean of your grace. But don't let that ocean dry up right



here. Go to your homes and harness that love in your service of the country. Let Swarajists and No-changers be united into one whole, like the bundle of sticks which, as the story says, nobody could break so long as they remained united. Make it a point to do only that which increases our strength day by day. Let us forget the thought that Swarajists are wicked men. It is impossible for me to expound on the quality of the *atman* (Indwelling Entity). There is not a speck of dirt in it. It has crystal purity. Shankar (Shankaracharya the exponent of the *maya* theory) has declared that the impurity is *maya* (delusion, owing to which a man mistakes a rope for a snake). If doubt and suspicion infest the mind, the man becomes a pervert. Misplaced trust by itself does not harm anybody. It is the betrayer that comes to harm. I say to Jawaharlal, "You are my son." What work can Panditji (Motilal Nehru, his father) give him? But I call him my son in order to take work from him. This world will worship Jawaharlal one day and shower flowers on him. With all my emphasis I say to both Swarajists and No-changers: "Carry out this programme for one year and by its end you will find our power so greatly increased that we shall find Swaraj approaching us."

He then said in English : "It is beyond my power to reproduce what I said in Hindi. I do not think any chairman could claim greater courtesy. I assure you it has been the greatest delight to preside over your deliberations. You have accepted every suggestion I made. I have laid a heavy burden on you. I have not walked you but run. But what else can I do? You have become impatient and so have I. We all want to move to Swaraj, not at a snail's pace, but with double quick march. No time could be wasted. You have responded not cheerlessly, but magnificently. No man could claim more, ask more, get more. But I ask for still more. Transfer all you have given, all your generosity, to what you and I hold dear—Swaraj. You know the conditions. You have endorsed the resolutions. Take them away and fulfil them in letter and spirit and exert all the influence that love can exercise on all that surround you. Go out and spread the message of Hindu-Muslim unity. Spread the message of untouchability and make youngsters real soldiers of Swaraj, not by encouraging malice possibly by burying all jealousy and malice underground. Take the resolve that if heavens fall the tie which has bound you, the Swarajists and No-changers, will never snap. I would not have forgiven myself if I had not tendered my thanks to the noble volunteers trained by Hardikar and the Reception Committee and in my mad passion for Swaraj, forgot them. They have not, I know, slaved for thanks. Service is its own reward. I thank them from the bottom of my heart."



*Pandit Motilalji said: "I am now going to put a proposal which I know must be uppermost in your hearts. It is usual to put it just before the dissolution of the house. But on this particular occasion this is not a formal ceremony—to pass a vote of thanks to the President. You have passed a resolution which is dear to him. He has pointed out the obligations you have laid upon yourself. The greatest gratitude will be if you act up to your undertaking. This is not only a resolution of thanks. I take it you are responding to the call he has laid upon you, Swarajists and No-changers and all others, to perform your undertaking in letter and spirit. I expect you to say that you all agree to all Mahatmaji has said and that you will willingly and cheerfully do what he has asked of you."

At the session of the Hindu Mahasabha, Lalaji said (in English):

*"I cannot admire the Hindu life of today. Their degradation lacerates my heart and I shed tears of blood. With all this, Hindu culture does remain, at present, unsurpassed by any civilization in the world. The greatest heritage a community could inherit is Hinduism. War against war is the law of other nations. Everything else may be destroyed, but it is certain that Hinduism will leave a splendid heritage. Let us meet every community with justice, firmness, and chivalry, only to the extent of not stultifying national existence. A large portion of the Hindu population is cowardly. I beg of you to assume this responsibility on your shoulders and come out of the slough of despond."

Lalaji then continued in Hindi :

My creed does not expect me to go to temples, ring bells and wave lights. (Being an Arya Samajist, Lala Lajpatrai did not believe in idol-worship) But I have no aversion against all that. We must be proud that we are born in the Hindu community. If you were really proud, would there be this daily slaughter of so many cows! Would the number of widows and destitutes among Hindus be so high? Would not a powerful Hindu rise up to end these crying evils? Would you, when there is a riot, raise piteous cries like, "O, I'm beaten!", "Help me, I'm killed," "Alas! my wife is dishonoured!" "I am robbed!" etc.? You yourselves are responsible for all your troubles. You have fallen from your high ideals. No community can raise itself, so long as it does not see its own faults. Were you alert in the matter, was the treatment meted out to Kohati Hindus ever possible? If there was a living consciousness in you, if you had a keen sense of honour, could the Muslims or the Government have driven out your brothers from



Kohat? It is a matter of shame, of stain, of sorrow, that a whole mass of Hindus had to fly and seek shelter 200 miles away. Weep, if you can, over your miserable fall—if God has left you even that vitality. But you have lost the strength even to weep. O, what a fall of that race which could live for thousands of years and keep its head high under any odds! I do not want to put the blame on anybody. But the fact stands that the whole Hindu community of Kohat is begging today for alms in Rawalpindi. What does it help us, if somebody, hearing of Kohat, spits abuses against Muslims or an educated Hindu against the Government? The question is what must now be done to make another Kohat impossible. I shall agree for the moment that the fault lay with the Hindus. But had the punishment any bearing with the gravity of the crime? Some senseless fellow wrote something and then apologised. What more could anybody do? But let it go. I ask you to forget the past. The question is what we must do now. I want to say to every Hindu, to Malaviyaji, to Mahatmaji, "You may be as partial to Muslims as you like, strengthen them as much as you want to, but, please! save this ancient (Hindu) race from extinction. Give it such a potent charm, that it may regain its lost pride, its *dharma*, its strength, its prestige. The reason for referring to the Kohat episode was that it was necessary to go into the root of the matter. That was why I talked of the original cause."

Swami Shraddhanandji (an Arya Samajist ascetic. He made his name by bearing his chest against British bayonets when he was heading a procession in Delhi in 1919): "I do not want to give a treat to your ears with an eloquent speech. The blood of Kohat is crying an SOS to the whole Hindu community. I am an ascetic, but that does not mean I have no heart. And yet I have said not a word about Kohat. I tell you, if you are men and not animals, you must translate your feelings into action. I will give at least one month for the rehabilitation of the Kohat refugees."

An unknown speaker:

"Narsinhdas will fast till 10 lakhs of rupees are collected and will drink water from only that well which untouchables use."

Addressing the Goraksha (cow-protection) Conference Gandhiji said (probably in Hindi):

I am sorry that the Conference which was to start at 4 p.m. began at 6.15 and today I am so fixed up that I must finish the business in an hour and a quarter. I have no other time for the Conference. It cannot be postponed till the day after tomorrow.



That is why I had told Sri Chikodi (Chairman of the Reception Committee) that four hours would suffice and the Conference would be concluded at 8 p. m. But that could not be done.

I consider the question of *goraksha* not less, but even more important than that of Swaraj. Just as I say, "So long as we have not freed ourselves from the sin of untouchability, Hindus and Muslims have not united, and everyone does not wear Khadi, there is no Swaraj," so I say that Swaraj is nothing, unless and until we know the right method of *goraksha*. It may be presumptuous to say so, but I claim to be a Sanatani Hindu. Many laugh at me and say, "It is murdering the language to call a man a Sanatani Hindu, when he dines with Muslims, drinks his water from an Englishman's jar, and adopts an untouchable girl as his daughter." Never the less, I persist in my claim. I have the faith that a time is coming when everyone will agree that Gandhi is definitely a Sanatani, inasmuch as *goraksha* is dear to his heart. I request you to read my article in *Young India*.

I have never before explained the meaning of Hinduism so well, as I have done there. I accept the Vedas etc. The article deals also with Gayatri¹ and other things, but I have pointed out that ordinarily, a Hindu can be recognised from his love for *goraksha*. What did our ancestors do 10,000 years ago? Learned *pandits* say that cow-sacrifice is mentioned in the Vedas also. When I was in the 6th standard, I used to read in Dr. Bhandarkar's Sanskrit Primer²:

पूर्वेषां ब्राह्मणा गवां मांसं भक्षयामासुः।

may that be true? But I have always believed that if such things are written in the Vedas, they may not mean what they appear to. In other words, I would interpret such texts in accordance with the light within me, in the sense which my heart's conviction can make out of them. I had this feeling (of my independent interpretation) in my early years, even before I realised that *goraksha* was the stay of my life. If no other meaning was possible, I would say that those Brahmins alone took beef, who had the spiritual power to bring the cow back to life. But all that has nothing to do with the mass of Hindus. I have not studied the Vedas etc. I know many of these things only from translations. What can a lay man like me say on such matters? But I have the conviction born of listening to the Inner Voice and I speak from self-experience. What do the Hindu masses think in these matters? There is no *Kalma* (initiative formula of Islam) and no Prophet in Hinduism. That is why it is as difficult, as it is easy, to understand



our religion. But even a child can understand that the cow must be protected. Who would call himself a Hindu so long as he has done nothing in that direction?

But I do not like the present method of *goraksha*. My heart weeps silently. I do not like to shed tears. If I break down, I would feel all the more pained, as I want to offer heavy sacrifices and breaking down is not for those who are out for sacrifices. But my heart weeps. I have written in 'Hind Swaraj'¹³ that the present Cow-protection Societies can only be termed Cow-devouring Societies. Ever since 1915, when I came here, I have been growing firmer in my view. That was why, before I wrote to Chikodi agreeing to preside over the Conference, I smiled at the idea and wondered what I should say. But Gangadharrao (Deshpande) wired to me that I could be the President on my terms, as Chikodi knew my views. Chikodi now tells me that he agrees with me.

I made these prefatory remarks to let you know how deeply I feel. I do not deserve to be the President, as I am afraid to speak out what I think. I had put my views before the people at Champaran. They liked them, however. If we want to do *goraksha* let us forget the idea that the cow can be protected by dissuading Muslims and Christians from slaughtering it. We have, in all innocence, simply assumed that our *goraksha* work is over, as soon as non-Hindus give up eating beef and slaughtering a cow. That is a senseless view to take, I think. Let it not be assumed, therefore, that if anybody slaughters a cow, I like it or even bear it. I will not allow anybody to claim that cow-slaughter pains him more than me. No Hindu may be feeling the pain as deeply as I.

But what can I do? Can I preach to others to do what I do not practise myself? Would it do any good if I ask others to observe *brahmacharya* and remain a profligate myself? How is it possible to ask a Muslim not to take beef, when I take it myself everyday? His religion, on the contrary, imposes no ban on cow-slaughter. How can I ask him to desist, so long as I myself slaughter a cow? It is absolutely wrong to punish him. Even in a Hindu State the man whose religion sanctions cow-slaughter must not be punished. *Goraksha* is not a hide-bound creed. When I take a vow of *goraksha* it does not mean that I should save the cow from Muslims only and not from Hindus. The real *goraksha dharma* lies in showing by our action that it is a sin to slaughter a cow or take beef and we must, first of all, free ourselves from it. *Goraksha* can never be propagated by means of the sword. I would even wish that all the nations of the world protected the cow. That is a great dream of my life.



But for it I must first follow the well-known dictum, "Physician, heal thyself." I may not talk of other districts. Let me speak of Gujarat only. Hindus do *gokashi* (cow-slaughter) there. Perhaps you won't believe me. Let me tell you there are people (Hindus) in Gujarat who yoke bullocks to their cart and use a prod with a sharply pointed nail to drive them. I am sure you will not say that cow-slaughter is bad, but bullock-slaughter is all right. I have myself seen people thrusting the prod so fiercely, as to draw out a gushing streak of blood from the bullock. Whether you agree or not, I, for one, call it *gokashi*. 'Himsa' (killing) is not physical killing only but it is also giving pain to others. It is better to slaughter a bullock than to torture it daily like that. I would prefer the finishing thrust of a dagger into its throat rather than live under the condition of being prodded everyday. Hindus who worshipped the cow in Champaranya (in Bihar) used to overburden their bullocks. I told them, "How absurd this talk of *goraksha* by you." They then changed their mode. What I want to drive at is this: I consider it *himsa* of the cow to oppress bullocks like that .

..... met me. He always brought a calf with him when he talked. I went with him to a cow-herd's house where the cows were being milked. They thrust a hollow bamboo piece and blew air into the genetic organ to extract the last drop of milk. This is not a story I have heard. It is a fact I have seen with my own eyes. That scene of murder meets your eyes today also, if you go there. What I saw there was *gokashi* and the guilty were the Hindus. There is no country in the world which has more wretched cows and bullocks than India. They are skin and bones and still we load them with the heaviest burden. So long as we are doing all these things ourselves, we have no right to ask anybody else to stop cow-slaughter.

Why did India come to its present plight? Because we gave up *goraksha*. You and I, who live in comfort in our towns, have no idea. Crores of men in India manage to exist somehow. They live on rotten rice, on nothing but flour, chillies, and salt. I speak from my experience of the times when I used to ramble here and there in third class. These two, *goraksha* and Indian poverty, are closely allied. There is no real *goraksha* among Hindus, because this kind of *gorakshi* is going on. I have seen many a pinjrapole (a place where decrepit cows and other animals are kept and fed). The Jains are usually in charge of them. I like the definition of: Malaviyaji. All Jains are Hindus. Brahmasamajists (a reforming sect which does not believe in idolatry and caste) also are Hindus. Many Jains do not call themselves Hindus. Pinjrapole has become their



special work. What do we find in these pinjrapoles under the care of Jains? They keep ailing and old animals, but is no arrangement worth the name, no comfort for them.

What we ought to possess is excellent dairies. You can't get good milk in Bombay. Children have to go without milk. Milk was available in Ahmedabad 20 years ago. Mothers feed their babies with flour and water today. When pure milk is not available in India, where there are 23 crores of Hindus, it only means we have given up *goraksha*.

If you want to take my advice, forget the Mussalmans. Forget the Christians. I always say to Shaukat Ali quite frankly, "My cow will be saved, if I can save the Khilafat cow." Why do I put my life in the hands of Muslim today in order to get the cow protected? And what do I mean by that? Only by touching their heart to its depth, I can persuade them to refrain from cow-slaughter for the sake of Hindu feelings. But I must keep patience, till that wisdom awakens in them. Man-slaughter and cow-slaughter are one in essence. The way to stop them both is the adoption of *ahimsa* by me with all my sincerity and love. It means a test of my love. It means passing through an ordeal. It involves suffering. That was why I prepared myself to suffer, as best I could, for the Muslim cause. In taking that decision what mattered to me, more than even Swaraj, was saving the cow—by means of love, not law.

Staying in India with Hindus as neighbours and slaughtering a cow is like killing a Hindu himself. The Quran says that there is no heaven for a man who kills an innocent neighbour. I have read the Quran not once but thrice. For all these reasons, I align myself with Muslims and see that my behavior does not hurt them. I flatter them, but never play the *bania* with them (want a balanced return for what I give). I don't make any pre-condition or expect a reward from them even afterwards. I regard it as my *dharma* and hence, a business exclusively between me and my God. I talk with my God in that matter in the language of the Bhagwadgita, which says that a good act can never have a bad result. That is why I have resolved to do my duty without asking for any return, now or in future.

And no enmity with Englishmen also. I want to deal with Them with non-violent non-co-operation, i. e., with love. It means I do not want to fight with them with their method—that of the sword. The cows slaughtered for them are greater in number than those slaughtered by Mussalmans. Even then I want to move the Englishmen's hearts, by persuading them to forget the civilization of the West and adopt that of India. The cow can be saved, if you observe only that limited non-violence which is



enough for bringing results. Englishmen will then be our friends. I want to buy up Mussalmans by my sacrifices in their cause.

Englishmen carry themselves with a very haughty air at present and I do not talk with them in this language. But Muslims are slaves and I can go on speaking to them in this strain. The Englishman is the high and mighty ruler. Would it not be futile to tell him anything? Besides, it is only the deserving who should be given alms, only the eager-to-learn who may be taught spiritual wisdom. That is why I would simply tell the Englishman, "It is out of love that I non-co-operate." At the Chauri Chaura⁴ flare-up, at the Bombay disturbance, at the riots in Viramgam and Ahmedabad, I stopped Satyagraha. Why? Because I do not want to win Swaraj by killing Englishmen, but after ensuring their protection. Suppose I save the cow today by driving out Englishmen and Mussalmans. Is that enough? I would be satisfied only when the cow is saved from slaughter all over the world. And that could be done only by non-violence.

Now let me show the meaning of *goraksha*—the essential, the deep spiritual meaning of the word. It means protection of everyone of God's creatures. Nobody knows, at present, how great the power and far reaching the results of the policy of non-violence are. None—neither the Muslim, nor the Christian, nor the Hindu—knows it, though the scriptures of all the three are full of non-violence. The rishis (Hindu seers) performed terrible austerities to interpret the *mantras*. It is a question whether the interpretations given by the Arya Samajist or the Sanatani Hinduto the Vedic *mantras* and aphorisms are true or whether they have deeper meanings. It is my firm faith that the truths of the Vedas and aphorisms reveal themselves to a man more and more as he advances in his experiments of truth and non-violence. How then can I make you understand the meaning of non-violence today?

A *rishi* has declared that *goraksha* is our highest *dharma* and one can attain *moksha* (redemption) through it. But I do not think that you can get redemption simply by *goraksha*, because it is necessary for one to free oneself from attachment and aversion. But if *goraksha* can lead to *moksha*, the word must mean here not the cow only, but all creatures. One must never inflict pain on anybody. Hence, if by his harsh words a man hurts the feelings of his wife, his brother, or anybody else, instead of doing *goraksha*, he has committed *gobhakshana* (eating a cow). Let me not go still deeper into the meaning of the word but leave the subject just here. But I showed in brief how *goraksha* has an expanded sense also. It has been stated in Hindu Dharma that the cow must be worshipped, but it does not mean that our worship must end



with the cow. If I save a cow but kill a goat, that is not *goraksha*. The word really means what I have shown. Among the followers of Hindu Dharma there are many who take flesh. I will not call him a Hindu, simply because he abstains from beef.

There must be a complete change in our way of treating the cow. They say the cow must be exempted from all physical labour. That mad cap, Lala Dhanpatrai, saw me. I shall not let him speak here today, but I had asked my son to write to him. He asked me at Lahore, "Do you really want *goraksha*?" Then he explained why such a large number of cows were slaughtered and how far Hindus were responsible for it. If Hindus did not sell their cows, who could slaughter them? Is not cow-slaughter impossible if there is no sale of cows to butchers? This is thus an economic question. One of the primary reasons for cow-slaughter is the fact that Government has taken possession of all common pastures. The second reason is that (even) Brahmins sell off their cows when they are old and dry. That is what is going on in Ahmedabad. But we must never do it even for crores of rupees. Dhanpatrai asked me, "Why should we not employ a cow in the work we take from a bullock? Our religion at least does not prohibit such use. When we put a load on a cow, we may be as considerate as when we put something on our mother's head. How is it wrong if we feed the cow well, worship it in the morning and then take a little work from it?" I would always give a careful hearing to a mad man's talk. That man has many cows with him. He feeds them well, makes them sturdy and strong, and then yokes them. They can also breed and thus his stock increases. I have not seen all this myself, but what reason has he to cheat me? If anybody does *goraksha* that way no Brahmin should look down with contempt at him. I wanted to put a resolution in this Conference, but there is no time. It may also be that some of things I said today may be new. You may not have read of them in history. Some of them may be a revelation to you. Your verbal 'yes' besides can do you no good. You should also discuss the question with someone learned in the Shastras. That is why I advise you to form a Committee after my speech is over. Let that Committee consider all the aspects of the matter and then found an institution to protect the cow. There may be on this Committee a few Hindus possessing sterling merit and devoted to the cause of *goraksha*. They may frame the rules and regulations of this institution, include those points which they approve of in my speech today and put them before the next session of the Conference. In this way they should frame a constitution and give *goraksha* a workable form. You cannot continue this Conference as I have to go to Shahpur. But make Malaviya the President and form a small Committee. The Committee must give this work a permanent shape.



In reply to the Municipal Address given him in the evening, Gandhiji said :

I thank the Municipality for this address and the ladies and gentlemen who are present here. Let me state here that, in return for agreeing to accept the address, I have taken a promise from the members that they will spin for half an hour and turn out at least 2000 yards of yarn (per month). Somebody may object: "Why impose that condition?" This is my answer. "I am tired of accepting addresses and delivering speeches. What is the good of saying one and the same thing over and over again? It is better to do some work than talk. What is that work which everyone can do, which has no impediments, political, religious, or practical? It is spinning. It is, therefore, not at all difficult to take that vow and give me an address."

I have already stated in my replies to such addresses what a municipality should do, but I wish to say something here also. The wind that blows in India today has a mixed reception—some people praise, some others condemn it. It is not enough if a Municipality is able to benefit individuals or even a whole district. It is its business to do things that would help every man, woman, and child, the whole country, in fact. It may try to settle a Hindu Muslim quarrel and remove caste-Hindu aversion against untouchables. And why may not Municipality attempt to improve the economic condition of India and save it from starvation? The most important thing to bear in mind is, this: Why should we bring from outside the thing that we can produce here? It is foolish to do so. It is like committing the folly of a man who possesses a stock of grain, but does not cook at home and sends out his corn to get prepared meals in return. We do this same thing about cotton. That brings about starvation. There remains no scope for work, with the result that we become unemployed idlers. I thought I should say all this to you. I hope you all, sisters and brothers, will do this work (of spinning). If all of us do it, how greatly will our power increase. We talk of education of women, but is there anything that educates and trains them more than this spinning wheel? If women take literary education, well and good; but if they continue to take the part they do at present in national service, there would remain no complaint of any difference between the rights of men and women. I say to women, "Swaraj is a good thing, but what I mean by Swaraj is Ramrajya. (Traditionally, the rule of Rama is regarded as an ideal rule). That Ramrajya exists only in that state where women are exceedingly chaste, virtuous, noble. If women like Sita, Damayanti, and others, whom we remember with great reverence, are born in India, our salvation is a certainty. Hence I beg of Indian women to raise themselves in purity to such a height that



nowhere else can there be women with greater moral strength. May God grant them that power.

1. A sacred *mantra* taught to a Brahmin boy, (formerly all Aryas), when he is invested with the sacred thread. It means: "We meditate on the divine light of the Sun (also, the Creator). May it inspire our intellect!"
2. Brahmin of old used to take beef. This sentence, however, is found Nowhere—either in that book or in the Second Book by Dr. Bhandarkar—even in their very early editions.—Editor.
3. This booklet by Gandhiji written in 1908 has an interesting history. It was openly sold in 1919 as an act of 'Satyagraha' against the Press Act. The Government then declared that it was not 'proscribed' literature.
4. Gandhiji stopped his proposed mass civil disobedience at Bardoli in Gujarat in 1922, owing to the outburst at Chauri Chaura in U. P , fasted by way of penance for the Bombay riot in 1921, while the outbreaks at the last two towns in 1919 made him withdraw Satyagraha, which he called a 'Himalayan blunder.'



What We Must Do?

Delegates from Tamil saw Gandhiji before leaving Belgaum. They asked for final orders for doing their work. The message that Gandhiji gave them is, I think, useful to all workers and I give it here almost verbatim:

*"With this 'unwilling' franchise you can pack the Congress with 5 million voters. A friend promises to introduce 10,000 Charkhas (spinning wheels) before March 1925. Any one who has got a little bit of will can do so. And if we are about capturing the Congress—'capture' is a hateful word—but we have at that rate 5 million charkhas going and we should have so many voters. You get pocket burroughs then of course. (But after they get interested in spinning by payment of wages) I will ask them to give 2000 yards free, which means the spinner will believe that she will be able to present her half an hour (to the country) and she will be a real genuine voter. If you can organize like that you will have developed that capacity. (Then,) I know that there is no waste and no despondency. You will, if you work it out, make of all India a living reality. The only thing I would like all Congressmen to do is to concentrate their attention on charkha and the best way to go about is this: If you are not unwilling and I hope no one is—then you will at least give half an hour and give 2000 yards of yarn. Then you have at least ensured your vote. Next thing I suggest is equally easy. In your own village you should find out how many charkhas are going amongst the poor people. Organise them and pay them for the yarn they spin. That establishes a common relationship between you and spinners and that relationship should be perfectly honourable, as you do not want to exploit them. But you should, at the same time, tell these spinners who work for you that they should make a free gift of half an hour's labour to the nation and tell them that they should wear Khadi, otherwise their occupation will be gone. That establishes an *adhyatmic* (spiritual) and national relationship between you and the spinners. So that if there are 50 such spinners in your place, you have 51 voters—you and the spinners. But there is another thing. These are people whom you have not brought in the political life of the country. But there is also a political-minded class. For them you should establish a spinning club and I say a club of 20, no more—one man to be organiser of that club, He must be an expert, know the mechanism, know how to card and make slivers. And then 20 will be spinning, you supply slivers; but 20 at a time may be an idle group, it may be 10, not more. For a time the organiser may have to give the whole of his time. But as soon as you have organised this club, it will mean that it won't take more than 1 hour per day



e. g., (at) a billiard club. And don't stop to inquire whether one who enlists is a practising lawyer or a titled man or what he is. He joins you, becomes a member as soon as he spins, no matter if he has not faith. They all then become voters. You may be a *pucca* Non-co-operator or Swarajist. It does not matter in the slightest degree what you are. But we who organise the spinning club must have a living faith in charkha. Therefore, just imagine that you are the only one working and that round you there are 50 and that makes 51 voters. If we go on like this, I promise that within the end of the year we will forget that we are No-changers and Swarajists and I know that people then will hug me at the end of the year, if they do this. But if at the end of the year people who came here fail to do this thing which costs nothing, then I will take it you have breached a promise and come here. Imagine (then) the grief of this old man who loves you. I have finished and I must run away to keep my appointment with the dear cattle."



31-12-1924

BOMBAY

M. Mohammad Ali's resolution on Kohat at the Muslim League Session created a great stir in the friends' circle. Bapu complained, "Nothing could be a greater eye-opener than this".

1- 1-1925

Mohammad Ali came to see Bapu, but this matter was not discussed.

Bapu wrote the following letter to Maulana Mohammad Ali.¹

*My dear Friend and Brother,

Never do anything in a hurry. The resolution of Zafarali 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 Hindu suffering was great, (but) 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. The resolution, after recording its emphatic findings on the main facts, asks the public to suspend its judgment on the details of the allegations of the Government. Does it not follow that the Government version being true on the main facts, their findings on the details is likely to be true? If all parties are agreed on the main facts, is it worthwhile asking for a Commission on details? You make the League ask the Mussalmans to invite the Hindus to go to Kohat and to settle their differences with the Mussalmans honourably and amicably. This means that the Hindus are the offenders in the main. But if such is your opinion, then again why a Commission? You then proceed to invite the Hindus not to provoke and ask the Mussalmans not to resort to violence. This means that there was extraordinary provocation by the Hindus. The fact is that the kind of language used in the vile verses has become the normal condition of the Punjab. You might have said that such language was unpardonable for Kohat. Your condemnation of the Government coming at the end and in the language it is couched has no force whatsoever and you have made no case for condemnation either.

Zafarali Khan's resolution is in every way much superior to yours, and far less offensive. 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 thereon (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. You should not be ignorant of Hindu opinion on these matters. You must not say that Hindus even denied provocation and initial violence. They may be wrong in so believing, but seeing that they believe so, you should not have stated what you have. If you could not have the resolution like the Congress one, you might have protested and voted against it without dividing the League. With deep sympathy and love,

Yours,

M. K. Gandhi

1. This letter refers to the resolution on Kohat passed at the session of the Muslim League held at Bombay on 31-12-1924. At first Zafarali Khan was going to propose a resolution and M. Mohommad Ali an amendment to it. But later on, Zafarali Khan himself accepted Mohammad Ali's amendment and put it before the session as a substantive motion, which was passed—Editor.

Bapu at first would not let me take down a copy of this letter but agreed afterwards. When I talked of Shaukat Ali's shamelessness, Bapu said: "The cat will be out of the bag by the end of the year." "Rather by the end of two or three months, Bapu!" I said. "Still better then," Bapu returned.

2-1-1925—Dohad

Sri Amritlal Thakkar had invited Gandhiji to Dohad specially to meet the Bhils (an aboriginal community). Addressing them Gandhiji said:

"I have come here not to meet the townsmen of Dohad, but to have a darshan (sight of the holy) of the Bhils. Sri Amritlal Thakkar requested me to spare a day for their *darshan*. It is not necessary to say much to the Bhil friends. You have your 'gor' (religious preceptor) here. I mean Sri Amritlal Thakkar,¹ i. e., Thakkarbapa: Cherish him



as a treasure. Trust him. Your welfare is a certainty, if you do what he says. He has given you certain directives. If you look up to him as your father, consider them as orders and if you regard him as your brother, take them to be pieces of sound advice. He has asked you to hold on to truth and be good. If a man like myself questions you, 'Do you like Khadi?' you should say plainly whatever you feel. We can realise God only that way, for God is Truth. I do not know of any other God.

"And the sign of your good behaviour is abstinence from alcohol. When I say that it is a sin to take it even moderately, I speak from the experiences of friends. Cleanliness means purity, both internal and external. Both are essential. It may not be necessary to speak to you on the need for bathing and washing clothes, but the fact is that these bad habits have stuck to you, as the higher classes did not keep any contact with you. You may safely entrust your children to Thakkarbapa. You may tell him at the same time, "Don't teach our children to lead a city life, to wear many clothes, and fall ill. Our children don't need a variety of tasteful dishes. We are quite happy with our maize porridge." He may teach your boys not only the ABC, but correct pronunciations also. Every one must learn up reading and writing, must be able to read hand-written letters and chits. It would be a good thing if you (teachers) teach these boys stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

"You may not have heard the name of the Congress. It is an institution which represents men of all views in India. One of its activities has very much to do with you. And that is the *charkha-rentia*—(the spinning wheel). It is the business of all of us, to ply the wheel—of myself, you people, and all men and women. We must all have it in our homes, just as we have our plough and other implements for our farms. A Bohra (a Muslim sect) gentleman told me, "My mother used to spin regularly."

The wheel was thus a household implement. We used to spin the cotton that grew in our farm with it. That nation is happy which has not to look to other countries for its food and clothing. But we send for foreign clothes. I do not see Khadi on anyone present here. Leave the mill-made clothes for the use of those to whom our message of Khadi cannot reach. All others, who hear of it, should wear Khadi and nothing else. Let the biscuits made in Delhi be "swadeshi" (made in one's own country), but what use are they in Dohad? If you begin taking them, there would be starvation here. It is true, indeed, that some selling agents—middlemen like myself—will build palaces thereby. If I bring you clothes from Ahmedabad likewise, whatever else may happen, one thing is certain—you are doomed. Let there be big and affluent businessmen in



Dohad. Happen what may to them (by your adoption of Khadi) but may only good come to you! Bhils like all others, must never give up the spinning-wheel.

"To the people of India also, I want to say that the Congress has given them this same message of mine. I am not the Congress. There is no such thing as undue pressure from me. If there is, it is a matter of shame for us. But will anybody obey my behest, if I ask him to hang himself head downwards? This resolution is certainly drastic, but that is the right one to pass. Is it any sin, if you discard foreign cloth? Is it any sin, if you spin? The fact itself is unfortunate, that I have to plead with you, to beseech you on bended knees. What harm do I do you, if I ask you, Hindus, to chant the *dwadasha mantra*² and go on repeating my advice, even if you abuse me for it? What is wrong with it, if, instead of slander and filthy words, that mantra comes out of your lips? How is it wrong then, if I ask you to give up foreign cloth? I may even call for its bonfires, but why not coax its use out of the wearers themselves? My dear Muslim friends, I may not do you much good if I appeal to you to say your "kalama" regularly. But how do I do you any evil if I point out that a majority of women in Bengal spin even today?

"I see some great purpose in the fact that God secured my release from jail through my dangerous illness. It seems, he had released me so that I may roam all over the country and talk to everyone of that elixir of life—the spinning wheel. If even now India does not listen to the message of the spinning wheel, starvation is certain to increase. It leaves me cold, if Dohad becomes another Bombay and has a few millionaires, because everyone has the right to get his food and clothing, but none to amass wealth and be rich. I do not wish for Dohad that just a few in it may grow rich and become money-lenders. I would like a condition under which we may sell Khadi in Dohad as much as elsewhere and Khadi may become as easily available as current coins or postage stamps. Though the condition is there, that a man who may not spin himself can get his quota spun by someone else (to let him be a Congressman), I wish no Gujarati takes advantage of the concession. Sri Sukhadev (a member of the Bhil Seva Mandal, i. e., an association for the service of the Bhils) told me that he had given up spinning. I did not know it. He may be doing some other work but that he should give up spinning passes my sufferance. Would it not bring disaster, if our national workers themselves desist from spinning? Not that Sri Sukhadev does not like to spin, but laziness holds him back. I do not wish to hear that word from any Gujarati.



"The second condition, to wear Khadi (on national occasions), is the easiest to comply with. But I want you to wear Khadi everywhere and always. The doors of councils have now been thrown open. You may go there, attend Government-recognised schools, and practise in courts. You may do all that so long as you hope to get Swaraj through those means. But this is my prediction: "You will not get Swaraj, till you achieve the boycott of foreign cloth."

Sri Abbas Tyabji (a distinguished Muslim colleague): "Don't fail to carry out Gandhiji's advice. Why don't you wear Khadi though it gives us good warmth? And everything is bound to be costly in the beginning."

Sri Vallabhadas Modi: "So your business of having the Mahatma's *darshan* is now over. But have you cared to listen to his message? If you have not, why should you have come here at all? And what will you do, since you have now heard the message? Let those raise up their hands, who mean to put his precept into practice. The Congress has decided to ask people to put a check on the zooming of their intellect, as the country has been suffering from a plethora of wild intellectual flights."

At a ladies' meeting Gandhiji said:

"You may have heard of Ramarajya. You may have heard also the word 'Swaraj'. I need not explain what the word means. Just as to a man who owns a well, the water in a reservoir has no charm, the person who has had a taste of Ramarajya does not need the taste of Swarajya. And what does Ramarajya mean? Everyone was happy in those days. Everyone had his full two meals a day. Men and women used to speak the truth. Businessmen trusted one another. The eyes of men were pure and free of lust. In our morning prayers we remember the names of Sita, Damayanti and other holy women and also of Rama and Sita. But is there correspondence between our behaviour and theirs? And what life did they live? In Ramarajya, just as fire blazed in every home for feeding the family, so the spinning wheel hummed in it for clothing it. Women regarded it their *dharma* to spin regularly. Every home, rich or poor, possessed a spinning-wheel and so everyone was well-off and nobody feared to face distressing times. The wheel used to act as the widow's brother. She would rush to the wheel to relieve herself of her acute distress. There are women even today who burn inwardly for the loss of their husbands. But shall I tell you what plight they are reduced to for want of a wheel? I know it as a fact that they have to go out to break stones. Who can bring us Ramarajya (except women)? Women chant the names of "Radha-Krishna" and "Sita-Ram.t". But is it possible for me to know of Rama, if there was no



Kausalya (Rama's mother) ? And what is Rama, if there was no Sita (His queen-consort)? In fact; the whole galaxy of the exalted souls in Ramayana is revolving round the figure of Sita. Sita is the sun and the others its planets. Dasharatha was helpless before Kaikeyi.³ That was her power, I mean that of the fair sex.

The second thing I want to speak about is untouchability. Do not regard the untouchables as extraneous scums of our society. I am sure you know the story of Shabari's 'bores' (a kind of berries). It says that Lord Rama ate her defiled berries.⁴ That is real love. You must make the untouchables your own by loving them that way.

1. He devoted his life to the uplift of the aborigines and untouchables. He was popularly called Thakkarbapa (bapa or babu=father) because of his intense sympathy for the downtrodden.

2. Mantra—any charm that yields the desired fruit. The *dwadasha* mantra uplifts the soul and gives it absolution by repeated chanting *Dwadasha*—twelve; the expression means the mantra consisting of 12 letters: ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय | (Om. Bow to Lord Vasudeva, i. e. the All-pervading).

3. Dasharatha, Rama's father, wanted to instal Rama on the throne, but Kaikeyi, his third queen, insisted on the grant of the two boons promised her by Dasharatha much earlier. She thus got Rama exiled for 14 years and her son Enthroned. Dasharatha died of a broken heart.

4. Shabari, an old low-caste woman, first tasted the berries to make sure that none of them was sour, but she did not know that she defiled them thereby. Rama saw only her love in the act and ate them without the slightest repulsion.



2-1-1925—Godhra

Reached Mama's¹ Ashram at 7 p. m. He had invited Gandhiji specially to see under what circumstances the work of removal of untouchability was carried out in Godhra. Gandhiji criticised the construction of the rooms: the windows and the doors did not exactly face each other; there was thus no free passage of air through the rooms.

Talked with Mithibai Petit² regarding her mode of living. She described in detail how she gave up eating flesh, chicken, etc., and added that never in her life she had taken a drop of liquor. (Parsis have no inhibition in these matters). Bapu was amazed. He remarked: "Must be your *sanskaras* (tendencies imprinted in the mind owing to actions of past births) of course !"

Had a talk with Thakkarbapa about the religious ceremonies of the weavers. They had told Gandhiji that they belonged to the 'Pranami'³ sect, but they could not say anything as regards its tenets. They spoke of *nakalanki avatar*⁴ also. That started Bapuji to narrate one of the anecdotes of his own life.

"My mother was the fourth wife of my father. It was not easy even for State minister to get a fourth wife. The search discovered her in some village near Junagadh. She belonged to this 'Pranami' sect. I remember, during our round for Gods' *darshans*, we, the newly weds, were taken not only to the temples of the Vaishnava sect but also to that of the Pranamis. How could my father have any idea then (when he married) of what the Pranami *dharma* meant? But I came to know afterwards that in that sect there is some admixture of Islam also."

Then on looking at the (aristocratic) construction of the commode, Gandhiji remarked to Thakkarbapa, "I often wonder why I should not give up all this (work) and perform austerities (for my own purification). When people put to a bad use the best things I give them, why should I press so insistently for their acceptance by them or even propagate them? In Belgaum there were thieves clad in Khadi. That sight brought to my mind this same doubt."

Mamasaheb Phadke is working here for the last five years. At the Political Conference held in Godhra (on d. 3-11-1917) Gandhiji had visited the untouchable quarters. Some gentlemen had thereafter given to Gandhiji contributions for giving a permanent shape to the work of the uplift of untouchables. Mamasaheb's work here began on that basis. He lived among the untouchables in their very locality. He opened



morning, afternoon, and evening schools for them, cleaned their streets and frontages and told them religious stories at night. All the same, we had the misfortune to find that all this work in Godhra had borne no tangible fruit so far. An 'Antyaja-ashram' (ashram for the lowest born i.e. untouchables) was then opened in a spacious, imposing, building constructed from the munificence of the late Parsi Rustomji⁵. But out of the 17 boys of that free residential school, there is not a single student from the whole Panchamaharaj Dist., not to speak of Godhra alone. Ignorance has spread so dense among them, that the Ashram children have to suffer unbearable sorrows of learning to give up those bad habits to which their elders are addicts. These boys of Mamasahab's Ashram have been beaten very severely for refusing to eat putrid flesh. Mamasahab had sent one boy to the Satyagraha ashram (of Gandhiji). He stayed there quite happily for 6 months, but never returned after he went home for the holidays. Gandhiji happened to meet his father at Dohad. The father said, "I can't bear the idea that my son should give up our ancestral profession." But as a matter of fact, the boy was learning that same art of weaving at the Ashram! The truth was that his father got alarmed lest he would be excommunicated by his caste. Would he not be outcasted, if his son stayed in that Satyagrahashram where the pollution of sitting for meals side by side with (the still lower-caste) Bhangis was going on? That is the sad situation.

In his speech before a gathering held in the courtyard of the (Godhra) Ashram Gandhiji said: "You have listened to a variety of dialogues and hymns. Who could have made out, if he did not know beforehand, that it was the *antyaja* boys who had performed these pieces and sung these hymns? Who could have imagined, at the time of the last Conference (in 1917), that it would bring this result? Regarding the resolution on untouchability what I had suggested then was that we all should visit an *antyaja* quarter. I had thought that among those who went with me there were men and women of Godhra also. But I was mistaken. Many men and women did accompany me but, though they belonged to many other parts of Gujarat, there was none from Godhra. We got a good amount of money at the time. From it an *antyaja* school was opened. Not only did the caste-citizens of Godhra not approve of it but they showed a positive aversion from it. The *antyajias* also showed the same disregard. For a school, specially for *antyajias*, it turned out to be a hard job to recruit *antyaja* boys! A time came when we were tempted to consider seriously the question of closing this work. But the idea was postponed.



“Mama is a Deccani (Maharashtrian) but is conversant with Gujarati. When he was in the Ashram (Gandhiji's Satyagrahashram) I had observed that he had a liking for *antyaja* work. I advised him to go to Godhra and stick in there. Then I went to jail. Vallabhbhai⁶ took the whole charge and bore its unbearable burden. This building was constructed during that period. I do not like it. Not that anything is wanting in it, but it does not become us to have such a big building. There is no defect in the beauty of the structure, but it does not fit in with our circumstances. Mama is not an architect, but is full of love and devotion. He was carried away by his love for the *antyajas* and spent twentytwo thousand rupees after the building. Vallabhbhai does not command the influence to collect that sum. But, fortunately, Parsi Rustomji had given a donation for such work. We availed ourselves of it for this commodious convenience. But our comforts and conveniences should look well on us—the poor, the *antyajas*. We are a very poor people and *antyajas* poorer still. They are like cattle left to fend for themselves by their owners. Hindus have cut them from their society and that is a sin they have committed. I request you people (the higher castes) to take charitable view. A too imposing building has been constructed for *antyajas*, but please do not frown upon it. If there were such a building for a Bania Student's Home, you would never get excited over it. I say there should not be a single building which does not fit in with the condition of the people of India. There are more splendid buildings which are used for boys of other classes. Never should the thought, 'But the *antyajas* have no right to use this building,' flit across your mind. All the same we may persuade *antyajas* also (to let us give up its possession). I am only discussing the subject, but it would be good if some rich man of Godhra buys up the building. We shall then shift somewhere else—to some place befitting the poor. In the meanwhile you should tolerate Mama's stay here.

"I visited three different localities - all of *antyajas*—today. What I saw there was not human beings but animals. If we start talking with them, we feel as if we are speaking with strange creatures. But even they know and can respond to love. If it is not we who are responsible for their pitiable condition, who is? To me Swaraj is less than nothing before the service of these people. I have not begun to serve the *antyajas* with a view that that service may bring us Swaraj. Before the idea of Swaraj was even mooted, thirty years ago when I was in South Africa, I stated my views on the service of the untouchables. At present, we are not protecting Hinduism, but destroying it. I would wish that you people took up this service to save Hinduism from its impending doom. You, who have come here, should consider yourselves purified, not polluted,



by your coming. I, for one, have no hesitation in affirming that those places are our '*tirthas*' (places of pilgrimage), where there is *antyaja-seva* (seva =service), or an *antyaja-shala* (shala =school) or an *antyaja-ashram*. For,that place alone is a *tirtha* where we become fitter to cross this ocean of life by purifying ourselves. Why are Father and Mother our *tirthas*? Why are Gurus our *tirthas*⁷? We purify ourselves if we help the *antyajas* with all our heart. Don't think that you have become defiled and must have a bath. Had you not known it, would you have imagined that the actors of these dialogues were *antyaja* boys? If we take sufficient trouble after the training of these children, they can excel us. Don't think that a Bhangi child is incapable of thinking high thoughts. I say from experience that, if we make the effort, noble thoughts are certain to strike him also. I pray that none of you who have come here today may regard this as his last visit. Do come here frequently and help these people.

"There is the Antyaja Seva Mandal (Association for the service of the *antyajas*) here. It owes its existence to Indulal (Indulal K. Yagnik, has served the country in various ways and is now a leading Opposition M. P. from Gujarat). He has rendered great services. Even in jail he used to think of the people. If in his exuberance of enthusiasm he did something we cannot approve, let us ignore the point. And now Amritlal (Thakkarbapa) has come here (in Indulal's place) from his exile to other parts of the country and he has become the 'Gor' of Dheds, Bhangis, (untouchables) and Bhils. When Indulal thought of leaving the Antyaja Seva Mandal, I had stated that we would entrust the institution to the Gujarat Vidyapith. But Amritlal said, "The institution must not be allowed to pass into the hands of the Vidyapith (and thus be only a side-work)." He took the burden of conducting the institution upon himself. But how much load can one single man carry! You may, therefore, help him also. The work of the Antyaja Seva Mandal is by no means small. He is preparing a survey of the *antyajas* of Gujarat. I do not know if Godhra has contributed a single pie to the institution. If God moves your heart, you may send your contribution to Amritlal or Mama. But do so with the full knowledge of the meaning of your donation."

At a public meeting in Godhra, Gandhiji said:

"I have not come here to make a speech. I know that your love for me continues unabated. I am a man who believes in clinging to a single thing. What do we all want for India? We want to make it free. At this very place, Godhra, I had given a definition of freedom. Freedom means possession of the power to err. He who does not possess that power can never gain the capacity to reform himself. Freedom does not at all



mean perfection. Man often commits serious blunders. He sins also. But he atones for his sins and reforms himself. These things themselves mean Swaraj (= 'self-rule' both individual and national).

"The spinning wheel is a very part of me. If some other person draws out yarn from it, the yarn is not for me—and I cannot feel happy. To me, the idea of accepting somebody else's yarn—no matter if it be my brother, mother, or any other—is unthinkable. I would be happy only when I have with me the thread I have drawn out myself. We want that Swaraj in which we can go on committing blunders and repairing them. My eyes search the horizon in vain for that Swaraj. At present at least, it has receded into a distant dream for us. Once upon a time—and I encouraged the Nation—we believed we would get Swaraj in a year. But we forgot to observe the necessary conditions that could bring it. We had believed (at the Congress) in 1921 that we were celebrating the advent of Swaraj. Three years have rolled by, and still there is no Swaraj. The reason is we are men of little faith.

"I see some great purpose behind the fact that God brought about both my recovery from a deadly illness and release from jail for your service. That purpose is this: I should inspire you with faith and courage by coming again in your midst. Let me put before you the result of my deep reflections during my jail period. Carry out only three conditions and we win Swaraj. They are: the spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity, and removal of untouchability. I have put the spinning wheel at the head, because out of these three conditions it is the only one about which we are wanting in faith. The second reason is that the spinning wheel is the only item among the three which demands some tangible work from us every day. If I wish to spend half an hour daily to do some work for Hindu-Muslim unity or for removal of untouchability, it would be difficult to think out what I should do every new day. But in working the spinning wheel for an hour you have a definite work to do and with specific results. It is an inanimate object—this wheel—but possesses invincible power. I wish everyone grows willing and eager to turn it.

"You feel that Khaddar is coarse and thick. You complain that Khadi grates upon your skin. That means your own country grates upon your mind. And how can they get Swaraj who have such apathy for their country? Tilak Maharaj used to say that he would feel highly annoyed and disgusted, whenever anybody talked to him of going to foreign parts for a change of air. Since God created me here, might he not have expected me to remain healthy in the climate of this same place? Do Englishmen run



away from England even though there is unbearable cold there? They keep their hearths burning, wear warm clothing, and devise a thousand other ways to keep themselves warm. But what would a millionaire do here? He would think of a change of air. I tell you, that is nothing but a fraud, on the country, on his part. In the same way, our devotion to the country is real only when we wear Khadi, whether good or bad, fine or coarse, cheap or dear. To speak of *Swadesh* (my country), otherwise, has no sense. Will any mother ever leave aside her ugly child and set some other's beautiful baby on her lap? I wish you may have the same solicitude for the welfare of your country, of the corn produced here, and of Khadi, as God has implanted in the mother's heart for her baby. Swaraj is love for the country. We must feel the same love for our motherland as the mother has for her son.

"In the same way, let us wear only Khadi made by the sons and daughters of India. Why can we not see this simple truth? How can we be free so long as we wear foreign clothes? There is only one answer to our plight. There is no other go—we have but to wear Khadi and we have but to spin for it. The call is for 2000 yards of yarn. If there happens to be any unfortunate Gujarati who has no liking for the spinning wheel, he may get his quota spun by someone else and give it. Some may object: 'That means a concession granted only to the bigwigs, not the poor.' But for you (the poor) spinning is a necessity and the question of likes and dislikes does not remain. You may, therefore, take to the wheel, start spinning, and learn up the art. The man who quarrels with his tools is no carpenter. You may make your slivers also or get them from the Provincial Congress Committee. What is the meaning of the fact that the Congress has given this mandate? Is it anything unusual that the Congress should be asked to give you this call? No. The real reason is that what the Congress wants you to do is the right thing and the millions of India like its commands. The millions can only pray to God for power. Do not for a moment assume that you have accepted all these things because it is I who have been speaking of them. But you do some things which I plead for because your heart attests to their truth. I see white caps here. But wearing white caps only will not bring us to the goal. 60 crores of rupees can be saved only by your wearing Khadi from top to toe—and by no other way.

"Godhra has a population of 25,000. If everyone of them produces Khadi worth Rs. 5/- how many thousands will the whole town save? If you save that amount, you the people of Godhra, will be better-off, your whole look, will brighten up and you will be fired with patriotism. The spinning wheel is the one kind of work to which man,



woman or child, rich or poor, can contribute an equal share and which, besides, is capable of bringing great results. Think of the proverb, "Little drops of water make the mighty ocean" and fill the ocean of Swaraj by the contribution of 2000 yards of yarn from each of you. We should also have the capacity to sell Khadi. Start spinning and fill up the store-house of the Provincial Congress Committee. I have only put before you the neatest and the most acceptable reasoning.

"Do you think if Wamanao Mukadam, (a local Swarajist leader) goes to the Council and scowls at the Government, it will wilt and give us Swaraj? But Wamanrao himself says we cannot get Swaraj unless he goes there and you all spin. I tell him, "Then you may go to the Council and clamour for yarn and Khadi only." If you cannot bring about the boycott of foreign cloth, you will not get Swaraj, even if Vallabhbhai goes to the Council and thousands of others like Wamanrao follow in his footsteps. But nobody even claims that Swaraj can be gained from the councils. All they say is, "We will offer, at least, some resistance, get Khadi worth a few thousands sold, put some check on the sale of liquor." Well then, let them do that.

"Two different voices have come to my ears today. There is constant friction between Hindus and Mussalmans. The Mussalmans have layed the blame on the Hindus and the Hindus on the Mussalmans. I ask both of them, "What is all this bickering for? There is no other go for you except to be friendly with each other. If you want to arrive at an amicable understanding only after breaking your heads, you can certainly do that. You are your own masters. Everyone is free to do what he likes. But Shaukat Ali and I prefer this humble plea: 'It will take you thousands of years to win Swaraj through the way of breaking heads.' Both of them (Hindus and Muslims) have got to live only as meek and friendly neighbours. There are 7 crores of Muslims and 22 crores of Hindus in India. Let the world outside have a Muslim population of even more than seven crores, but India, at least, is filled up with Hindus and Muslims. It is a must with both the communities to consider themselves as servants, as slaves of each other. That is plain and clear. Both must drive out their fear of each other. It is the coward who bullies others and creates distrust. But why should I distrust anybody? The world will cast a slur on the man who plays false with me. And what will the world say of me? At the most it will laugh at my gullibility for a while and rest at that. But God is certain to pat me on the back. Both of you must sit together and come to an amicable settlement. Shaukat Ali and myself—how many pieces do you want to cut us into? Shaukat Ali says, "Keep away from the place where Hindus and Muslims are fighting.



If they fight everywhere, we may simply sit at home. I would say I should then go to the Himalayas (renounce the world). Please know this: Your quarrel cannot end simply by our coming to you. We may even come in the way of settlement. You must settle your disputes by yourselves, through a mutual understanding, but without any mental reservation.

"And now about untouchability. The world is going to feel itself polluted at touching you, so long as Hindus feel polluted at the touch of the untouchables. Man reaps what he sows. There is no *dharma*, but all *adharma* (irreligion) in regarding an *antyaja* as an untouchable by birth. I am absolutely convinced that those who refuse to accept me as a Sanatani are themselves sunk in ignorance. You may argue that there are even learned men who defend untouchability, but the (Gujarati) poet Akha's dictum: **“भणतर मिथ्या वगर विचार”** 'Vain is learning without wisdom' applies to them.

Hinduism does ordain one sort of untouchability viz., of keeping away from the wicked, the sinful, the hypocrite, the lustful, the adulterer. Think of these people as untouchables and fly from them. But to regard as untouchables, those who serve you, who clean your latrines, who tan your hides, who make leather bags for watering your fields from wells! That is a travesty! That is not Hindu *dharma*. That is a shame. If Hindu *dharma* affirms that they are untouchables, I would advise you to give up that creed. This attitude of untouchability is nothing but a later accretion. If you are not hardhearted, the depth of the Bhangi's ignorance would move you to tears and rouse your conscience to your duty towards them. Who is to blame, you or I in the matter, if you boycott me, drive me out into the wilds, and I go mad? In the same way, the poor Bhangis and Dheds (untouchable weavers) have become wretched and miserable. They are sunk in abysmal ignorance and heavy drinking; but whose is the fault, theirs or yours? There is no doubt that the fault is yours. I beg of you to free yourselves from it and redeem yourselves."

Vallabhbhai said :

"You heard the very same things you were told three years ago. But as I want to know where we stand, I keep a watch and observe your faces to find out whether the words of Bapu create as deep an impression on your hearts today as they used to three years ago. Don't imagine, that any of us is fond of speechifying. No occasion at all should have arisen for this speech.



"It is this man alone who will bring us Swaraj. The Mahatma's word is going to come true and we shall then make merry. But if you want to ascend to heaven, you yourself must die. What is the way to get your name entered in that list of blessed souls? The present Congress Committees will be closed and a new register is going to be made. Now tell me, how many of you are going to contribute 2000 yards of yarn?"

About 5 persons raised their hands.

"So, it seems, you all have come here Just for *darshan*. Do you hope to please Lord Vishnu by offering him a pice-worth of sandal-paste ? If you hope to do so, your present birth is wasted—and so is your next going to be."

1. Sri Vithal Laxman Phadke, popularly called Mama Phadke, is one of the earliest of Gandhiji's colleagues. He served the untouchables for many long years—till old age forced him to retire. He was managing this Ashram for untouchable boys.

2. This Parsi lady of a well-known aristocratic family of Bombay is another of Gandhiji's staunchest adherents. Grown aged now, she has been staying for many years past in her Ashram at Maroli (Bulsar District), where low-caste girls are educated in a free residential school.

3. A saint, Mehraj Thakore, born in Saurashtra, was afterwards called 'Prananath' (the adored, or the Lord of life) and the sect he founded began to be called 'Pranami Panth.' The sect was also called 'Dhami Panth' (Panth =path=sect that leads to the Abode = Dhama) . It was an attempt at the synthesis of Hinduism, Islam and other faiths. It was Sri Prananath who pointed out to king Chhatrasal the spot where he struck a diamond mine at Panna in Rajasthan. Most of the temples and followers of this sect are found in Panna.

4. Avatar is the Hindu belief that God takes forms to destroy the wicked and found a new order, but the 10th avatar—Kalki—who is to come in future—will bring about the end of the world. Nakalanki is perhaps a corrupt use of 'Kalki'. Some Hindu-cum-Muslim sects in India believe in His future advent.

5. Rustomji Jivanji Ghorkhodu. He was Gandhiji's colleague in the South African Satyagraha and remained one of his (Gandhiji's) devout followers to the end of his days.

6. The British left India after Balkanizing the country. But Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel made history by his statesmanship in amalgamating without shedding a drop of blood all the hundreds of 'Native States' with 'British India' immediately after Independence. The princes were given princely annuities.

7. A Vedic mantra says: **मातृदेवो भव| पितृदेवो भव| आचार्यदेवो भव=** Regard your mother as your God. Your father as your God, your Guru as your God.



8-1-1925

Gandhiji was elected President of the Kathiawar (Saurashtra) Political Conference held at Bhavanagar. Very eagerly I was looking forward to see the faces of the persons who had presented themselves at the station to receive us. During the journey itself we were told that Nagars who belonged to Narsinh Mehta's¹ caste, were enraged at Gandhiji's championship of the 'untouchables,' and Vaishnavas, who had made Sanghvi and Sangani their leaders and were moving heaven and earth to see that 'untouchables' remained 'untouchables,' were going to bring in a colourful novelty in the manner of the reception. But as it turned out, the reception was quiet and orderly. Some people had also thought that there would be a row in the Conference pandal. But the Vaishnavas of both the schools – those who wanted to adhere to untouchability and those who wished to uproot it—deserve thanks and congratulation in as much as there was no quarrel. The attitude of 'Sanatani' Vaishnavas even after Gandhiji's arrival in the pandal was one of perfect peacefulness and civility, but it was difficult to know how many genuine Sanatanis were present in the pandal, because many reformers had the cheek to convert themselves into Sanatanis for the time being, as they had found that there were many vacant seats in the block reserved for the Sanatanis!

That apart, could there be anything wanting in the manner of the reception given in these parts? The observation of the poet Navalram (of Surat, in South Gujarat) rings true even today, though thirtyfive years have rolled by since the lines were written:

“मीठा तो मधथीए अदका लोक आणीकोर भाल्या”

"I found the people honey-sweet
And that is how the guest they treat."

The Conference began with a hymn in Urdu sung by Miss Raihana Tyabji.² The hymn, sung in her melodious voice, was really very pertinent to the occasion. The author prays at first for removal of distrust and sin from the hearts of Hindus and Muslims. Then he says, 'Let Thy will be done and let all our acts be dedicated to Thee.'

But let me quote the song in full:

O, holy Lord of all the worlds:
We humbly pray to Thee;



In this Thy earth we all may live
In peace and harmony.

Whether we live as lords or serfs,
We leave it all to Thee;
We only want to do Thy wish,
No matter what it be.

Our apple-cart has been upset,
All our schemes were raw;
Now show us the plan that does conform
To Thy sacred law.

May Bharat shine in the world, as do
The eyes in human frame;
May it become a model state
For the world to emulate.

May our hearts remember Thee,
Our lips pronounce Thy name;
And all our work may be for Thee,
From sorrow we all be free.³

The most remarkable incident among those that happened on the first day was the presentation of an Address at the hands of Gandhiji to H. H. the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot. When he was handing it over, Gandhiji said to the Thakore Saheb, "I respectfully beg of you to be good enough to read the Address, ponder over my speech and grant to Rajkot that Ramarajya whose picture I have drawn."

In reply to the Address, the Thakore Saheb said:

"Today my cherished dream (of honouring Gandhiji) is fulfilled: I know that the idea of a Chamber of Princes has not yet materialised and I regard it as a misfortune. One single act of Mahatmaji is sufficient to show how greatly he deserves the title 'Mahatma' (- great soul); and that act is the sacrifice of his life at the altar of Hindu-Muslim unity. I may be committing many errors in my administration, but this much I know: If there is love for the people in your work for them, the people are capable of appreciating your work."



As Gandhiji was accompanying the Thakore Saheb to give him a send-off, they came near the rostrum. Gandhiji requested the Thakore Saheb to mount it, so that all the delegates could see him. The Thakore Saheb did so and the delegates greeted him with cheers.

The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Sri Modi, said :

"Pattani⁴ Saheb, sisters and brothers. I hope the delegates present here have already got my (written) speech. (Some disturbance in the audience). Please keep silence and order. That shows, I am afraid, some of you have not yet got a copy of my speech. I had hoped and had made arrangements for it—that everyone of the delegates would get it by yesterday or at least today. But this could not be done. I apologize for the remissness. But I do not wish to spend our time in reading my speech before you. However, none of you may, please, go home without getting a copy with you. As it is you before whom the resolutions are to be put tomorrow, you will have to think over them and over my speech in that context. I do not think, therefore, that you have lost much in being at present without a copy. Only, you would perhaps have better understood what I have to say, if you had already possessed one."

In his inaugural speech as President, Gandhiji said:

"I have stated in my (written) speech that I was much averse to accepting the presidentship of this Conference. But man proposes and God disposes. I have had many experiences of this type in my life and I do not think there may be any thoughtful man or woman who has not met with them.

"I had also thought that I would have to lay stress only on one thing. Fortunately, however, I shall now have to emphasise not one, but two points. One of it is Khadi, which is dear to me as nothing else. Some people think I am '*Rentia*-mad' or '*Khadi*-mad' and they are right. It is only the crazy lover who can understand his beloved. Only the lover can say what mohabbat,⁵ prem,⁶ ishka⁷ is. It is because I am a lover that I alone can know what 'love' means and how much that fire inflames me. But I don't want to say anything about the burning brazier in my heart.

"This is a political conference and you may be hoping for a talk on some political topic. Though I am born a Bania (a merchant community), I am a farmer all over. And though my father and grandfather spent their lives in statecraft, I do not possess a diplomatic frame of mind, and I am sorry if I have it. But I have something else—not inherited, but acquired. I have made myself a complete farmer, a Bhangi, a Dhed—in



short everyone of those who are regarded as the refuse of society. As I am a man of these attitudes, I will not interpret the word 'political' in the sense you do, i. e., as pertaining to statecraft. When a man like myself thinks of a 'political' subject, he will not deal with the political set-up of the state, because a farmer cannot cultivate his farm with the implement of speeches. but only with that of his plough. He cannot afford to leave his plough under the most scorching sun. The weaver also can carry on his profession only if he works his loom. The usual connotation of the word 'political' is making speeches, raising up agitations, and pointing out faults of Indian princes. But I understand the word in just the opposite sense. Even during my career of 22 years outside India, I had given this same contrary sense to the word. But just as distance lends enchantment to the view, people have taken me also for a 'political-minded' person, i. e. an adept in statecraft. I know how to take diplomatic moves, but my diplomacy is of a different kind. Politeness and love are its elements. There is no place in it for underhand dealings. The things you achieve by means of love and politeness are a thousand times greater than those you gain by crooked manoeuvres. And in my moves the interests of all of the farmer, of the Bhangi, of the Dhed, of all—are considered and protected. You know that even at the Indian National Congress I had given this same definition of the word 'political' and I did not feel shy at giving it. From that very point of view I have included Khadi in politics. I claim that there is sanity and wisdom in my attitude on Khadi. I feel that a time will come when you also will acknowledge that there was great wisdom and extremely clever perception in Gandhi's plea for the spinning wheel. I simply pity those people who laugh at me today and call the spinning wheel a Gandhian fad. However, much they may ridicule me, I am not going to give up my talk of Khadi.

“Now let me come to another thing. When it was suggested that I should come here I wrote in *Navajivan* that, in case the Dheds were provided with separate seats, the organisers had only one choice for my providing mine, namely, in the separated bloc of untouchables. Since then there has been quite a commotion in this city (Bhavanagar). I have seen with my own eyes, what frightfulness 'untouchability' means in Kathiawar. My revered mother used to regard it a sin to touch a Bhangi. But the fact does not create any aversion from her in my mind. But I don't propose to sheepishly follow the ancients' custom and harm myself by committing the sin. As for my parents, they have given me the heritage of freedom. Though I now hold views opposed to theirs, I am quite certain that my mother's soul will say, "Well done, my darling! I am so glad!" because among the vows I was asked to take, there was no mention of the



sin of touching an outcaste. Before letting me go to England, I was asked to take three vows, but none among these three required me to regard untouchability as my *dharma* during my stay there. I find that there is a little stir- or a great row, I do not know—in Bhavanagar today and Nagars, Banias and others are highly irritated. To those among them who are here and who think that Gandhi is a fallen soul, is out to eradicate the Sanatana (ancient) Dharma, I want to say with politeness but firmness, 'Gandhi's actions will not uproot the Sanatana Dharma. On the contrary, the very strength-and-support of Sanatana Dharma lies in what Gandhi advocates.' No matter, if there be learned men among you - men who have committed to memory every word of the Vedas—even to them I say, "You are making a serious blunder." As a matter of fact, the grave-diggers of Hinduism are exactly those who regard the custom of untouchability as the basis of Hinduism. I wish to say with due respect that there is no perspicacity in that belief, no thoughtfulness, no wisdom, no decorum, no pity. Even if I am deserted till I am left alone in my view, I will go on saying to the last, "If we continue to give room in Hinduism to what we mean by untouchability today, Hinduism is going to suffer from consumption and die of that corrosive element in it. To Brahmins, to Kshatriyas, to Vaishyas and to Shudras- to all Hindus—I say, the resurgence of India depends, not so much on Muslims or on Christians as on the right observance of their *dharma* by the Hindus. The Kashi Vishwanath (here the city of Benaras, the centre of Hinduism since times immemorial) of the Indian Muslims is not in India but in Mecca, and of the Christians in Jerusalem. But you, Hindus, can attain liberation by continuing to remain in India itself because this is the land of Udhishthira,⁸ the land of Ramachandra.⁹ It was on this land that the *rishis* (sages) and *munis* (men perfected in silence) had performed austerities and it was they who had taught us that this (Bharata) was the land of righteous action and not of the enjoyment of fleeting pleasures. To the inhabitants of that land I say that Hinduism is being weighed today with all the religions of the world. And if that thing is included in the Hindu Dharma which no intelligent person will agree with and which outrages our sense of human-fellowship and compassion, that Dharma is certain to meet with only one end—its doom. My conscience is awake in this matter of *daya dharma* (mercy and compassion for all) and it is on that basis that I see what abysmal ignorance and what colossal sham pass these days under the name of Hindu Dharma. Against that ignorance, against that sham, if it comes to that, I will fight single-handed, go it alone in the performance of austerities and repeat and repeat my loud protests till death silences my voice. If by chance it ever happens that I lose my saintly and in a fit of



madness declare, 'I was wrong in my thoughts on untouchability, I committed a sin in calling untouchability a sin of Hinduism,' I ask you to think even in that eventuality that I had recanted only because I had lost courage, because I had found myself too weak against the Sanatanis and because I had given way to despair. Even in that case I ask you to think that when I was saying like that, I was speaking in delirium.

"I have no axe to grind for what I am speaking today. I do not want any worldly position thereby. The position that I really long for is that of the Bhangi. How sacred is this work of cleanliness! That work can be done only by a Brahmin or by a Bhangi. The Brahmin may do it in his wisdom, the Bhangi in ignorance. I respect, I adore, both of them. If either of the two disappears from Hinduism, Hinduism itself would disappear.

"And it is because *seva-dharma* (seva-service) is dear to my heart that the Bhangi is dear to me. I may even sit at my meals with a Bhangi on my side, but I do not ask you to align yourselves with them by intercaste dinners and marriages. How can I ask you to do so? I am like a fakir—whether a real fakir or a fake, I do not know even that. And I do not know also whether I am a true *sannyasi*. But I can say I like *sannyas* (total renunciation). I like *brahmacharya* (perfect continence and also in its root meaning, viz. the quality of being immersed in Brahma i. e. God or the Absolute) but I do not know whether I am a real *brahmachari* (observer of brahmacharya), because I believe that he is not a true brahmachari who, though physically continent, cannot help thinking lustful thoughts or even dreaming them in his sleep. If a single word escapes my lips in irritation, if a single act is done by me in malice, if I blurt out something in anger or resentment even against one who is regarded my deadliest enemy, I cannot call myself a *brahmachari*. Hence, I do not know whether I am a perfect *brahmachari* or a *sannyasi* or not. All the same I can definitely say that my life-stream is flowing in that direction. That being my condition, I may not say that I must draw the line and refuse either to serve a Bhangi girl or a leper even if any of them wants my service or to take food prepared by them if they want me to. I would leave it to God to do with me what He wishes, i. e., save me or kill me, on that account. I would even go the length of saying: "If despite my service of the leper, God cares to keep me alive in His own interest, He may. But the leper's service is my *dharma*, because I think that my *dharma* clearly lies in taking my food after feeding the Bhangi, the Dhed, and the lepers. But I do not say that, in your way of living, you should transgress the limits about dining etc. set by *dharma*. All I wish you to do is not to create a fifth *varna*. God has created four *varnas*¹⁰ and I can understand their



significance. But you should not create the fifth class—that of 'the untouchables.' I simply cannot bear the idea of 'untouchability.' That word itself cuts me to the quick. To those who oppose me I say, 'Just think.' Discuss the question with me. Have the patience to understand what I am prattling so much about. But you have given up thinking and good manners, and that cannot impress anybody.'

I have received today a telegram signed by two pandits. I do not know them personally. They wire in substance:

'THE ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST YOU IN THE NAME OF OUR PANDITS AND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF HINDU DHARMA ARE FALSE. WE WILL SEND YOU STATEMENTS SIGNED BY MEN OF OUR CLASS AND YOU WILL FIND THAT MANY SHASTRIS (LEARNED IN RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES) SUPPORT YOU, THOUGH WE CANNOT DEAL WITH THE MATTER AS FORCEFULLY AS YOU, BECAUSE YOU ARE A FEARLESS MAN WHILE WE HAVE A THOUSAND THINGS TO CONSIDER.'

"Shri Krishna approached Dronacharya and Bhishmacharya and exclaimed, 'You will fight against the Pandavas!' (Their hearts were with the righteous Pandavas). In reply they said, 'Brother, we are helpless. We have to think of our livelihood.' There are many Dronacharyas and Bhishmacharyas among us. So long as they have their bellies to fill, what can they, poor men, do? Nothing at all. But the fault lies not with these savants but with their destiny, with their circumstances. They dare not express their convictions, but they believe that Gandhi is doing the right thing and their hearts shower their blessings on me.

"But let me say one thing also in this connection. I am a Satyagrahi. 'To die, but not to kill'—that is my creed. That is why I will deal with this question in my own way only; and I should like to make one request to you. If you think that untouchability is the very *basis* of Hinduism, you may certainly continue to hold that belief. But please give me also the right to regard untouchability as the very *canker* of Hinduism. You may, if you can, awaken the heart of Hindu society to your view; but please give me also the same freedom, i. e., to try to convert it to mine. The path of the Satyagrahi is clear, straight and narrow. He has no need to consult others, to come to terms with any, I, therefore, promise to behave lovingly with you. If I am left alone in my view, I will keep a distance from you and respectfully cry aloud, 'Away from me, please! Away, (to save you from pollution.)'



"To those who are my associates today in this untouchability work and to the untouchables themselves I say, 'Suffer those who abuse you. Tulsidas has left us the word: दया धर्म का मूल है! 'Pity (here, love) is the root of *dharma*.' Lose your love for the Sanatanis, and you lose your game. You, who believe that untouchability is a sin, you must not fall into that other sin of hating your opponents. Speak with a loving smile to those who spite you. If you really love them and maintain speckless purity of behaviour, this sin of untouchability is certain to leave the land.'

"But I cannot understand all this opposition in Kathiawar—the land of Sudamaji¹¹ and the adopted land of Sri Krishna. It was here that¹² Aniruddha' used to live. If the sin of untouchability finds a place in this land of Saints and heroes who never flinched from shedding their blood, I wonder where I should go for a holy place. Bhangis tell me that their plight in Kathiawar is perhaps worse than anywhere in the whole of Gujarat. And my heart weeps.

And who is Narandas Sangani? None other than my son. A time was when my word was law to him. He used to stay with me and be always at my beck and call. He had given away his whole library to me. But God has now perverted his mind. I honestly believe that his perversion is the work of God. All the same to me he is still my son. I think his turbulence will not last long and what he has sworn to do, may not be actually done. But if it is God's Will and he acts upon his oath and assaults and batters me, I will tell him, 'What you have done is all right.' I will only bless him at the time. Prahlad¹³ did not obey his father. He asserted that it was his *dharma* to disobey him, if the father required him to commit a sin, to take to the path of untruth and injustice. If today Narandas Sangani believes that, though he is my first-born, I deserve to be killed by him because I have fallen from virtue, he should decidedly kill me. I am sure that while the deed is being done, the scales will fall from his eyes and, with head bent in shame, he will repent for his act. He is but a child. He is still a young man, while I have grown old.

"There had been many attacks on me in the past, but I have been saved. I was attacked with appendicitis, was operated upon and, while the operation was still going on, the lights failed. Even Col. Maddock (the Surgeon of the Sassoon Hospital, Poona) was perplexed. But God wanted to save me and can anything come in the way of His Will? There is a parable in one of the Upanishads. Wind is asked to blow away a straw, Fire to burn it. But both of them have to go away crest-fallen, admitting their helplessness. If God does not want my death, who is there on earth who can kill me?



And if the hour has struck, my life will fly away—and no human being can stop the flight—even while I may be speaking as at present or sitting at perfect ease and before anybody can even understand what is happening. But as I have got some experience of the world, learnt some lessons, I appeal to you to listen to me and pity Narandas at that time. I do not ask for pity for myself. I pray to God only for His mercy. But I would like you to behave like a soldier who takes a pledge. I want to hammer upon you, if you take a vow, you shall have to keep it. If you take the vow thoughtlessly, you will find me a very hard task-master since I am certain to exact the fulfilment of the vow by you. So don't come here tomorrow in an off-hand manner, without giving serious thought to my warning.

"I wanted to take your 30 minutes, but have taken 35. I had no right over these extra 5 minutes, but you have kindly given me that concession for the cause of untouchability and I have availed myself of your generosity."

The Subjects Committee met that very same night and Gandhiji did not allow the members to disperse till its business was finished, i. e., till 12 midnight. Gandhiji declared: "It is my method of work to serve Kathiawar through my service of India. You know how quickly the hardships from the custom duty at the Viramgam¹⁴ station could be brought to an end."

But the discussion that was really interesting took place when some people asked, 'Shall we, the male sex, degrade ourselves by doing the woman's work of spinning?' Let me give here some of Gandhiji's thoughts on the spinning wheel in answer to the question. His statements on the spinning wheel at the Congress session were for the ears of scholars in economics, those in his written speech at the Kathiawar Political Conference were addressed to the farmers of the region of his birth and were dripping with the blood of his heart, while those that he gave vent to on this occasion were intended to win over the lawyers and others who had no faith in the spinning wheel. If there was no novelty in his treatment of the wheel at every new occasion, would not the spinning wheel itself be said to be without the miraculous power which it has?

"There is only one way today to conquer the empire of the people's hearts—and that is the spinning-wheel. Adharma¹⁵ stalks in India and *dharma* can be re-established by only one means – the spinning wheel. We, are all at present in Trishanku's¹⁶ wretched plight and there is no other method except that of the wheel to extricate us from it. Only that way we shall be able, not only to impress the *praja*



(subjects) but also rouse the *raja* (ruler) to his duty towards them. A friend asked me, "Shall we, men, having moustaches, spin like women?" I want to remind him that this is the time when we should get our moustaches shaved.¹⁷ And are those, who work the machines in Lancashire and thus make a whole empire hinge on them, men or women? It is men who have laid down the law as to what the respective duties of men and women are. All the same, while it is women who cook in our homes, it is men who become indispensable when the question of giving a big caste dinner faces the family. And let no man retort that the work of cooking for a big treat is given to men, because they are Brahmins – the highest caste. I am in accord with the view that *varnashram* is a good system as it means proper distribution of work. But 'work' here means that particular kind of work for which each varna is specially fitted and which it is called upon to perform. There is no water-tight compartment for all other work which can be and which today has got to be, done equally by all the varnas. Sri Satishchandra Das Gupta has made a veritable science of the spinning-wheel.¹⁸ I got a beautiful letter sometime back from an administrative officer in Palitana. He says, 'I spin daily, but neither the Thakore Saheb nor the Devan Saheb (minister) raises any objection. The more I practice upon the wheel, the better I can assess its power. I feel I can even carry a small spinning wheel on horse back during my official tours.' Is there any wonder if an officer of this type becomes popular among the people? What would make the public go mad after you? When King George was first sent to a ship as a naval cadet, he used to take 'black coffee,' 'black bread,' and 'cheese' just like the others. No special arrangement was made for his food or stay. He was given the very same uniform which all others on board were wearing. That will show why the British nation is so mad after their "Sailor-king" George V. The rulers and the ruled, the workers and the public, can be joined together by the slender thread of the spinning wheel. The other day I had been to *Moti Maarad*. The hamlet is miles away from any railway station and yet I saw that the foreign muslin had made its way even there. The fact itself that there are seven hundred thousand villages in India came to be known to us only after we became the Empire's subjects. Not a single preceding power could hold even a nominal sway over all the seven hundred thousand villages of India, but now, not to speak of British rule, even the British muslin and calico have captured them."

The spinning franchise raised a good deal of discussion.

G. B. Trivedi: "If the franchise has to be introduced let it be confined to the membership of the Executive Committee. The circle must be narrowed."



Popatlal Chudgar: "There was a talk of such a franchise during the days of the fight (of 19 21). There is no room for it anywhere now. We two, Devechandbhai and I, used to hawk Khadi, but we found that the people did not catch the idea."

There were several other speakers too, for and against.

"We want something—some dynamic programme—that could create love in us for spinning, that could make us take up spinning with zest and vigour." "Can spinning make an old woman fitter to exercise the voting right than others who don't spin?" "What is the essential difference between this spinning franchise and the one restricted to capitalists?" "Better confer the right of voting to one who does 25 *danda-bethaks* (physical exercises) daily." "Why should we not spend 10 minutes after Indian clubs rather than after turning the wheel?"

The trend of the argument set spurs to Sri Amritlal Sheth: "I doubt if we can find even a thousand men (in the whole of Saurashtra) who can pass the severe test under which even 25 out of the 110 members of the Subjects Committee cannot be members under the old franchise of 4 annas. The real problem we have to tackle, at present, is that of selling Khadi."

Meghanil¹⁹: "How can the spinning wheel unite the hearts of townsmen and villagers? For that we should go to villages, distribute medicines and show the farmers how to improve their agricultural output. What the people need is not a worthy example which they may follow, but food and raiment."

Gandhiji felt it was now necessary to key up the members by giving them some home truths. He said : "I did not come here with a single ready-made resolution in my pocket. It is the Reception Committee which has thought of this resolution. Rule me out of consideration in voting on it. You are free to reject every single item of it. I do not wish that you should pass it simply in order to save me from pain. What could really grieve me would be your sleeping over the resolution after passing it. How long can it last, if India simply dances to my pipe? In such a weighty matter as franchise, it is not right that you should vote for it just because I happen to be the President. Welfare of Saurashtra must be the only consideration that should weigh with you.

"I have been given a note. It makes an humble request that I should clarify one point. The question is whether the resolution applies to Life Members.



"As truth is dear to me, justice also should be, because justice and truth are not opposed to each other. The question of Life Members does not remain, because a separate resolution would be necessary to include them in the spinning franchise. The nice and just rule for a judge is to give to a law an interpretation which is consistent with its two relevant but opposing clauses."

After a very long discussion a spinning franchise resolution similar to the Congress one, but stricter with regard to the wearing of Khadi, was passed. On the next day, it was put before the Conference and passed. The remarkable thing about it was the fact that none of the lawyers who had strongly opposed it in the Subjects Committee carried their opposition to the Open Conference. Here are some spotlights:

Shaukat Ali: "How can you bear the idea of an untouchable coming to my house and becoming a Muslim? If all of them do so, a stupendous community of 5 or 6 crores would leave your fold in 2 or 3 years. When my religion was attacked, Mahatmaji came to fight on behalf of my religion. We can repay that obligation to some extent, if you fraternize with untouchables and make them your own."

Vallabhbhai: "Kathiawar wonders if this man (Gandhiji) is made of frail human clay."

"All this Khadi (of the Pandal) belongs to Wadhawan (now Surendranagar) Khadi Institution."

"I am going to the untouchable quarters this evening at 6 p.m. for the *darshan* (to purify myself) of the untouchable brothers."

At the end of his concluding speech as President, Gandhiji announced that Pattani Saheb had taken the spinning vow. He gave also the circumstances under which that vow was taken: "I wanted two such names of fresh converts to the spinning wheel, as might create a new consciousness. One name had come to my mind and so, partly in jest and partly in earnest, I said (at the Subjects Committee), 'In my view, one of these two names is that of Sir Prabhashankar Pattani.' Immediately thereafter Sir Prabhashankar rose up. With the utmost gravity and firmness and to my mind with a really religious attitude, he declared, "I want to remind the worthy audience that though an officer I do not cease to be a human being." After these words spoken in the most solemn tone he took the spinning vow in the sweetest language."



Gandhiji proceeded: "Though our families knew each other since a long time I did not know that, between us, he was the first to approach me to make a personal contact. We came closer as time passed. That does not mean that the differences in views between us have been dissolved. It only means we understand each other. When I say that there is unity of hearts between me and the Maulana, it does not mean that we hold identical views. The Maulana may very well keep me in his pocket but he does not my views. His religion differs from mine, and yet he wishes that I may die a Hindu chanting Bhagwadgita at the end. And I would like that he might die like a pious Muslim with the Kalma on his lips, when his time was up. That is the only way to stay friendly with the world. But all this by way of a preface.

"You know the vow Pattani Saheb has taken. He is going to learn up spinning and turn the Sudarshan²⁰ Chakra daily for half an hour before taking his meal. And now I have to stay with him for three days as his guest and be his spinning teacher. But even if I can't train him up, his vow stands. Now let us see how far I succeed as a teacher and he as a pupil. The burden of finding out the second person willing to take the spinning vow also rests on him. I would not like to leave Bhavanagar, till I get 102 persons who acquire the voting right under the spinning franchise."

These expressions of Gandhiji coupled with the announcement of Pattaniji's vow had, it seemed, an electric effect on the listeners. The despondency felt at the disallowance of all other resolutions evaporated. They thus got a good recompense for the loss of the joy of delivering perorations on other resolutions.

From the reading itself of Gandhiji's written Presidential address, I think, many must have predicted that hardly any other resolution (besides that of Khadi and the spinning wheel) would be passed. It may have cost Gandhiji some trouble to persuade the sponsors to drop their resolutions, but all of them accepted the rulings cheerfully. Gandhiji analysed this phenomenon in his concluding remarks:

"Let me first of all tell you that I wish you to be all attention and not miss a single word and that none who takes down notes, may publish them without showing me their reports.

"Whenever I have come to Kathiawar, I have been drenched with a very heavy downpour of love. There is no wonder if the experience of the same inordinate love has been repeated this time also. Wherever I go about in India, what meets my eyes is nothing but this same Kathiawar—I mean, this same exuberance of love. But I want



something still greater from you, something that is exceptionally sublime. It may happen that your love may make me even unhappy. If you do not carry out your promise in action, this love may even kill me instead of putting fresh life into me. To say the least, it cannot elevate my character; it may

even induce lethargy in me. It would definitely lead to my degradation, if I was not sufficiently awake in the matter. It is not in my nature to be swept off my feet by love. And what would happen to the relationship between us if that love was not translated into action? That relationship is a public affair, not a private one. It exists for the purpose of serving you. If you give me a private invitation, I may or may not be able to accept it, but I am at your beck-and-call for any public service. So long, therefore, as your love is not transformed into actual work it has little value for me. Let that love have any value in God's account book, but I am your friend for a worldly purpose and want from you love that does some actual good. I am but a common man, certainly not free from fascinations and aversions. It is my *dharma* to suppress emotional surges. I would, therefore, always attempt to resist the ripples of the mind. (Allusion to Patanjali's aphorism on yoga: योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः|(yoga means the subsidence of the wavelets of the mind.) I would, therefore, want love of that helpful and not merely sentimental kind. I would give such a form to love as would make my mind serene, as would save me from being consumed with love. Love is like a fire. If it is put to the right use, it would purify a man, as fire does an alloy; otherwise it would, like fire, burn a man to ashes. I do not wish to be burnt to death. Hence, your love for me is valuable to me only when it is transformed into the service of the country. I, therefore, ask you to ponder deeply over what would happen to Kathiawar, if despite your serious promise, you do not act upon your word and disappoint me.

"Last night at the Subjects Committee meeting you let me have my way in many things. You had brought with you a number of resolutions under the hope of unburdening yourselves of your sorrows and of getting some relief through that outlet. But I advised you to give up the habit of loudly wailing over your woes and start developing your innate power. And you accepted my advice. You did so, not because I am a great man but because I am a man of action, a man who speaks only from self-experience. I have not allowed you to pass a single other resolution. I have not allowed you to discuss in public your complaints against the Indian Princes. You can as well say, I have gagged your mouth. But don't be under the delusion that I too have sealed my lips and shall now go to sleep. By silencing you I have taken upon myself a very great



burden and I do not wish to sit at ease. On the contrary, I want to work all the year round. But my way is different. The advice I have given you reveals the faith I have in man and only hence in the Princes of Kathiawar. At Amritsar too I had advised the Congress to desist from condemning Mr. Montague. There also I was impelled by my trust in him and in the Royal Proclamation. I had appealed to the Congress to accept the Montford (Montague-Chelmsford) Reforms and develop as much strength as it was possible to do under that scheme. The Congress had accepted my advice by and large. What was at the back of this acceptance, though I had then to face even a veteran like Lokamanya Tilak Maharaj? What made a man of Lokamanya's stamp align himself to me? Simply this. He saw that there was sense in Gandhi's pleading. He, therefore, accepted my draft in *toto* except for the change of a single word. I had then entreated him: 'Let us trust their word (Englishmen's) and accept the Reforms today. On the day when you and I get disappointed, on the day when the Reforms chafe us like curbs, we will throw them away and will then get the right to condemn them. We are not entitled to reject the Reforms outright, as Mr. Montague declares he has tried to give us as much as he can. Lord Sinha,²¹ a man who knows, who, is brave and patriotic, even that man advises us to work the Reforms. The Royal Proclamation, besides, was couched in a very cordial language. All these factors made me advise the acceptance of the Reforms. From this position of trust arose non-co-operation. Today also I am suggesting the method of trust.

"But don't stretch this analogy of the 1919 situation to its logical end. You can interpret my reference to it to the extent of assuring yourselves that I am not going to put your grievances on the shelf. Shrill cries of complaints, more painful than even what you have made here, have come to my ears. I do not know whether they are all true or false. If they are definitely proved true, I will exercise all my influence, use without stint all my sagacity for their redress. I will try to meet the Princes concerned. If they grant me leave to see them, I shall approach them like an humble petitioner and if they give their approval, I shall release in the press the substance of our talk. Muslims from Dhoraji (a small town in Kathiawar) had come to me. They grumbled: 'This, they say, is "Kathiawar Political Conference," and you will not let us speak a word about Dhoraji!' I gave them a 'No,' because I did not know how far their allegations were true. I know the Thakore Saheb of Gondal. I am fairly well acquainted with him. I regard him with respect and I think he is a capable ruler. That the subjects under him should be victims of oppression is a thing I can't bear. But how can I condemn him from the complaints of a few, of even fifty, of his subjects? How can I expose him to



public censure? I am temperamentally so constituted that I cannot give you any advice, so long as I have not seen him and talked with his officers. I, therefore, told the Dhoraji people, 'I will go carefully into all your allegations.' And now that Maulana Shaukat Ali has come, I feel all the more strengthened. There is no difference in my eyes between Hindus and Muslims. But how can the Muslims of Dhoraji know it? Hence, I told them: 'Maulana and I will confer together and give you the necessary advice.' They also agreed and said, 'We will accept your advice whatever it be.'

"As of Gondal, so of Jamnagar. Many complaints have reached me about Jamnagar also. If a commoner can call himself a friend of a Prince, Jamsaheb and I were friends in our childhood. I had gone to England with a letter of recommendation to the Jamsaheb from the late Mr. Kevalram Mavji Dave. That letter raised me in the eyes of the people. I had seen the Jamsaheb often enough in England. Those of us, who were there at the time, earnestly wished him to be installed on the *gadi* of the Jamnagar State. But today I hear grave charges levelled against him. I don't know whether and how far they are justified, I wish none of them was. And I also wish that he would, with his own hands, wash out the acts of tyranny perpetrated directly or indirectly by his officers known or unknown to him. It is not my business to alienate him. I should rather speak to him with due humility and create an atmosphere suitable to the reform of abuses. On such an errand I would go even barefooted to meet my enemy, if I have any. For instance, Sir Michael O Dwyer (Governor of Punjab during and before the Martial Law there) consider me the most wicked man on earth; but if he comes again as a Governor, I would go to meet even him barefooted in all humility). I cannot, therefore, even dream of approaching the Jamsaheb in a haughty air. I have got letters of complaints against both these States in shoals. I am also flooded with literature on the subject. But I can never make use of all that, so long as I have not exhausted all my means for a full inquiry. That is why it is impossible for me to storm at the Princes in public. But I am not going to forget these complaints. During this year I will do my best to see that they are removed and I hope to submit to the public the diary of the work done at the end of the year.

"And now I have one request to make to you. Don't throw any obstacle in the path of your own work by bitter criticism, either public or private. Don't rouse the ire of Indian Princes by publicly condemning them. They are rulers, *amaldars*,²² men endowed with authority and authority is proverbially blind. Can you have Ramachandraji in every age? Can you have every generation of Khalifas of Oomar's



calibre? The careers of 4 Khalifas who represented Islam at the zenith of its glory finished up in 30 years. None of the Khalifas who succeeded them could even approach those 4 in their greatness of heart. But that is but the way of the world. You cannot have gems for the asking. It is only when we dig deep into mine that some stray gem can be discovered. For this reason, I am not prepared to dub a king a fool, because he is short-tempered and flares up easily. And who is free from anger? Neither I nor you. Kings certainly are not yogis. But are we ourselves yogis for that matter? There has been only one instance of a yogi-king, that of Janak²³ Videhi. Only one instance, because, though an erring mortal, he grew into a yogi. As for Ramachandraji, He is regarded as an incarnation of God Himself. History teaches us that on this earthy earth there has never grown another spiritual giant to match with King Janaka. Kings are after all amaldaars. And once a man becomes an amaldaar, the people have but to suffer at least something from him. Even when we get a free democratic rule, there is bound to be an amaldaar whom at least in some respects, we shall have to put up with. But why go that far? Take my own instance. How much you had to suffer from me! May I not have blindly used my power at times? One pundit requested my permission for a speech, but I did not give it. One *muni* (originally meaning one who keeps silence, hence a recluse) wanted to speak. I told him pointblank, 'You cannot be allowed to enter into the race for an effusion of words. Visit every house and hut and set the spinning-wheel working in it.' How can I say whether I behaved rightly or wrongly, politely or impolitely, in these matters? But I was the king—whatever my worth—during these days and you had to bear with me. In the same way, however small his principality, whether he belongs to the 4th or 5th class (Indian Princes were classified under the old regime), a ruler is a ruler, possessing a title and a position. Where there are these two, there is power; and where there is power, there is room for injustice and wrath. We have, therefore, but to swallow the bitter draughts we get from a ruler's amal.

"I thus showed you two sides of the problem—the ruler's and the people's. Any injustice committed by any Prince of Kathiawar passes my sufferance. I will plead with him only this: 'Do you know what kind of next birth you will get from this injustice?' To the people I will simply say, 'I wish, you learn to bear injustice with patience and forbearance.' In the last paragraph of my printed speech I have referred to the rights of the public. I ask you to read that paragraph again and again. Chew it, digest it, commit it to memory. No nation has ever risen which has insisted simply upon its rights. Only that nation has elevated itself which has performed its duties in a religious



spirit. It was from such performance that these nations secured their rights. Let us discharge our duties and also pray to God, so that the acquisition of our coveted rights becomes a certainty. Our scriptures teach us devotion to Mother and Father. What is the sense behind it? Even if my father gets cross with me, abuses me, beats me, I must not fall to serve him. At the most I may, say, 'Please Father! Don't beat me so severely.' Why has such an injunction been given? This Shaukat Ali, who roars like a lion before you, even he, this giant-like son, is used to sit silent if his mother frowns upon him. What is the secret of this willing and meek submission? The reason is that the son gets all the rights and privileges of the parents when they die. Behind that obedience to parents' commands lies the principle that the son is going to inherit his father's property—though of course, I would die my spiritual death, if I obeyed my father in the hope of reaping a reward. That is why these same scriptures ask us to obey our parents as a part of our duty and not for any selfish purpose. The law of rewards revealed in our scripture is thus so quaint. He gets the rights who cherishes no hope for them and he who talks of rights falls thereby. That is the law and I put this same law for your acceptance. If you obey this law, take it from me that you will have created by the year's end an army—civil in manners, powerful nevertheless—for the Swaraj of Kathiawar. Do but organise during this year an army of such courteous and earnest workers and no king will be able to despise you. Just now you wonder if any Prince of Saurashtra will let you hold your Conference in his state next year. It was with great trepidation that the residents of Sorath (a part of Kathiawar) gave an invitation for the holding of the next session of the Conference. They were afraid lest the ruler of any town they chose as the venue might refuse permission for the holding of the Conference. Hence, you should purify your atmosphere to such an extent, you should increase your strength of character to such a degree, that no king could refuse that permission. But you should not take me to mean that I ask you to do something you never should or something that stultifies your self-respect. Don't give up truth, don't be slack in sticking to your principles—even while doing the most difficult work—but also don't give up gentlemanly behaviour and charity of heart.

"I am a journalist myself—an old and seasoned journalist at that. I have been doing that work since 1904 and I believe I know it well enough because even when I am full of a subject it is my nature to write as little as I can on it. And now, if I publish in *Young India* mutual recriminations and complaints of all sorts, from all persons, do you think the paper will retain the prestige and reputation it has got? Suppose I fired off in *Navajivan* all the stuff that came to me through correspondence, would there



remain a single reader of the paper? I have made it a rule not to do so and that is the reason why both the papers have gained some prestige. But even then the rule is sometimes broken inadvertently. That is why I say to politicians and writers: "Pull up your pen and give the reins to the light within. Be miserly in the use of words, but let there be no 'enough' in self-development. Do not indulge in flattery or lose your temper. While self-restraint in speech is by no means flattery, an outburst of anger, caustic language, is worse than flattery. Flattery and anger are two sides of the same thing—weakness. Anger is the rough side of it. A weak man may either flatter somebody or get angry with him in order to hide his weakness. Let no man given to anger imagine that he thereby displays his strength. Strength comes from solid work and work means the performance of one's *dharma*. Those who have ruled the empire of the world's hearts have burnt their sense-impulses in the fire of self-restraint. You also, if you wish to raise Kathiawar, must remember that you can do so only by means of peace and self-control. The king gets his work done by means of his sceptre, the symbol of power and punishment. But you should get your work done through love and service. Shower your love and service both on the rulers and the ruled, so that Kathiawar becomes a heaven on earth and draws the world to itself for the glorious sight. My blessings go with you for consummation— if I am entitled to confer blessings on any one. In any case, it is my prayer to God that happy day may dawn soon."

Everyone then felt that the meeting would be dispersed. But another pleasant surprise was awaiting them. Immediately after the Address of the States' Peoples' Conference was read to Gandhiji by the Sheriff, Sir Prabhashankar (Pattani, the Dewan) came up to the rostrum to hand it over personally to Gandhiji. On the preceding day, it was Gandhiji (a non-official) at whose hands the Address to the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot was given. On this, the next day, it was Pattani Saheb (a state-official) at whose hands the Address to Gandhiji was given. The significance of both the events was equally great, but the second had another striking feature. The distinguished gentleman (Pattani Saheb) who actually put the Address into Gandhiji's hands was no longer content with being a devotee of Khadi in poetical outbursts; he had put into practice his precept and come dressed in Khadi. While the Thakore Saheb had to bear in mind his position (as a feudatory Prince under the British Empire) and therefore to read a written reply, Pattani Saheb began to speak slowly but *extempore* and went on raising the speech to such a pitch that the listeners wondered which of the two excelled in his speech—his powerful oratory or his devotion to Gandhiji. Nobody would have ever expected that the speech would be devoid of charming expressions and only



a few that it would not reveal astute statesmanship, but hardly any in the audience might have expected that it would be so full of childlike simplicity.

Before handing over the Address to Gandhiji, Pattani Saheb touched his feet. He then said:

"I have addressed very large gatherings, but today my throat is so affected that I can hardly speak. It was the States' People's Conference that made the proposal that the Address should be given at my hands. As I am not a member of the Conference, I demurred at first but finally accepted the proposal. It is difficult for me to say 'no,' as I am a pliant, weak-hearted man. The people here must have observed that trait in me. The Sheriff besides, carried his complaint to such a quarter as made it impossible for me to refuse his request. In consequence I had the spiritual benefit that comes from touching Gandhiji's feet and I regard myself as exceptionally fortunate.

"Those who were present at the meeting of the Subjects Committee know all that happened there. It is no ordinary generosity on the part of the Conference leaders to let me attend its Subjects Committee, where everyone is allowed to have his full say without any hindrance. You have all resolved to be fearless and you have proved your courage through the act. Let me, on my part, assure you that you will not be lashed by way of punishment for your courage. In his speech yesterday Gandhiji gave us his idea of the true relationship between the king and the people and with it his view of the kind of Swaraj we should have. The basic idea of his whole speech, it seemed to me, was this: That king who is self-controlled will be able to receive everybody's hearty homage. The king should not brandish his sword of punishment and the subjects should prefer their petitions with humility and love. That alone can bring about a strong bond between the two. Gandhiji is not a crowned king, but he is a man of such sterling worth that the people of a whole big empire have to listen to him. But even he has to often control himself.

"You may as well think that I have spent my whole life in flattery, but it is also true that I have spent it in executive power. Both are closely inter-linked. Let me say before this public gathering what I said yesterday at the Subjects Committee. I think that there should be 'The Kathiawar Spinning Wheel Conference' instead of 'The Kathiawar Political Conference.' I believe Mahatmaji also will approve. Has he left you, I ask, any ground for discontent, even though he did not allow you to speak anything on political matters? On the contrary, he has taken the whole burden upon



his own shoulders. Of course, a fancied grievance may persist, but there remains no ground for a genuine grievance in that matter.

"I was reminded of the fight between the Kauravas and the Pandavas (cousins who fought the Mahabharata War). I asked myself, 'Cannot a family feud be made up by peace parleys?' Lord Krishna was very ticklish by nature. He was about to go to the Kauravas to make overtures of peace to them. He asked one and the same question to all the Pandavas individually: 'I am ready to go, but suppose they do not listen to any talk of peace?' He put that question first to Bheema (the next eldest Pandava known for his physical might and use of his mace), who said, "Tell them, if they don't come to terms, I will smash their heads." Arjuna said, (the third brother and an expert in archery) 'Tell them, if they are asking for it, they will see what havoc my Gandiva (Arjun's special bow sanctified with God's blessings) plays on the battlefield.' When Draupadi was approached, she warmed up : 'Remind them that a *sati's* (a perfectly chaste woman, who had the power to give a blessing or a curse which came true) curse will burn them down to ashes.' But what did Yudhishtira (the eldest Pandava, known for his *dharma* as Dharmaraj) say? From him came out only one sentence: यत्तुभ्यं रोचते कृष्ण यत्तुभ्यं च रोचते (Whatever pleases you, Krishna, whatever pleases you). In the same way I say to you all, 'Do whatever pleases Mahatmaji.'

"He has laid a great emphasis on the spinning wheel. The thing looks quite simple on the surface. But it was really the spider's very simple proposal to catch the fly, as the story goes. Gandhiji's statecraft can match that of Bhishma²⁴ lying on his bed of arrows. Maybe, it was Gandhiji's shrewd political sense that lay behind the invitation to me (the Dewan of the State) to attend the Conference (in order to let the Conference function without any State interference). To those who want to flock to Gandhiji's standard and remain his staunch adherents, I say,

'I suppose you know that story of the moth and the other insect, which we shall call, the pseudo-moth. Both of them cluster round a light. But while the pseudo-moth does not jump into the light, the moth is so charmed by it, that it burns itself. Nobody sings of the pseudo-moth's love for the light, whereas everybody is mad after the moths. These pseudo-moths once wanted to get into the moth's caste. The moth said to them: 'You see, I am a being with a simple heart. I walk prayerfully in the fear of the Lord. I stir out only at night. You may join me then.' And so the pseudo-moths accompanied the moth. But at the last moment they faltered: 'We believe in what you say, but'.



That is the nature of the pseudo-moth. What Gandhi wants are genuine moths that will immolate themselves, not those pseudo-moths which, the moment they see danger, fly away from it."

Let me satisfy myself with only so much, though much more can be written on the Conference. In pursuance of the resolution of the Conference, Messrs. Shankarlal, Bharucha, Vallabhbhai and other gentlemen went into the town to beg for cotton. It was announced that they got about 75 maunds (1 maund =78 lbs). Let those villages which want to invite Gandhiji before warned. He is not going to spare a single cotton-producing village from this cotton-arms. His representatives too will beg for this same cotton.

The Bhavanagar Municipality wanted to give an address of welcome to Gandhiji, who refused the request. Its representative urged: "Why should you not accept the Municipal address, when you accepted that of the States' People's Conference?" Gandhiji said: "I wonder how I could make you see my point. If you can't understand it after all this talk, I shall have to describe something of the scene I saw yesterday. I may tell you that while the States' People's Conference is a voluntary, self-made organisation, the Municipality is a body created by the State and hence has limited freedom. While the Emperor's veto hangs over the Municipality in everything it does, the People's Conference has a much wider scope of work. My object in refusing to accept your address was to make matters smooth for you yourselves. When I came to know that the Bhavanagar Municipality desired to give me a welcome address, I thought over the matter and decided not to comply with the request. For, what is the good of accepting your address? I am not hankering after an address. And how does it help the Municipality? Did you want to use the occasion for taking a step forward through your address to me? But I happen to be a man with whom even enemies cannot behave as enemies, because I am stamped a saint. Let me tell you what happened with the Belgaum Municipality. The members passed a resolution to give me an address, but they did not take the permission of the Collector. He, simply wrote to the Municipality that the Municipality seemed to have forgotten to take his permission and that he would grant it immediately on their asking for it. Indian municipalities have a delicate business to handle. There is no reason to think that the Belgaum Municipality took a forward step by not asking for the Collector's previous permission. We must never give up courteous behavior and its language is the same every-where. The Collector's draught was not unpalatable and I could drink it. The



Municipality also realised that it was good to accept the Collector's polite suggestion. It is I today to whom you propose to give an address. But what will the officer-in-charge do, if you make it a rule to give an address to each and every minister? You would wish that all power should fall into your hands. But how is it possible? If you make it a convention to give an address to one and all, it is not a thing that can be allowed. You may rest content with the consciousness that on your part you had offered to give me an address and it was I who said 'no.' Do you want me to say something more still? I think I have done a wise thing in giving that advice to the Municipal members and that they too have done a wise thing in observing self-restraint. I would be the last person to accept any suggestion that would put someone else in an awkward position. I would refuse to accept an address even in Delhi, if there was Hindu-Muslim tension there."

A professor and the students of the local Shamaladas College had invited Gandhiji to speak to them on 'The Student's Dharma' on the College campus in the evening. Owing to the terrible pressure of work, he was at first very reluctant, but he relented and agreed to say something if time permitted. A tent was erected on the campus and the meeting was fixed at 7.30 p. m. Gandhiji had intimated beforehand that he would speak in Gujarati only. Besides the professors and the students, many citizens, both men and women, were present at the meeting.

Gandhiji is very particular about keeping time, but Bhavanagar's inefficiency in organisation compelled even him to break his rigidly observed rule. Even the Conference was not held punctually and at this meeting he was late by a full hour, because the organisers never knew where the locality of the *antyajas* lay, which Gandhiji was scheduled to visit. His guides took a wrong route with the result that much time was wasted in merely finding out the locality. He, therefore, sent Vallabhbhai to the meeting in advance in order to request it to excuse his late arrival.

Gandhiji came up at about 8. 15 or 8. 30 p. m. There was no President. Nobody saw any need to go through the formality of introducing Gandhiji and he was requested to address the meeting forthwith. This was exactly the right thing to do. Pinfall silence prevailed inside the tent and outside there was the full moon shedding both her soft light and soothing calm.

Vallabhbhai said: "My student career began when I entered public life in the year 1917. When the Mahatma came to India and started his public life, I felt it was a crime to keep aloof from him. It was only after I came in his contact, that I realized that whoever had a call to serve the people must offer his services to this man. As a student



under him, I found I was a backbencher—didn't know how to speak even Gujarati well enough. When I am reminded of my old days, I think of my dress at the time and I feel ashamed. I used to think that the *summum bonum* of life lay in imitating the foreigner in everything—in speech, in dress, in all things that mattered in life. But after I came in touch with him, I discovered that all that was a sign not of wisdom but of folly and that I should unlearn and forget all that I had learned. But you, the rising generation, are fortunate inasmuch as a new wind of self-respect is now blowing over India. As soon as you enter college, you must think of the future and chalk out your plan. You must find out, by reflection, the real reason for getting knowledge. Students have no idea of the purpose for which they spend their precious lives. College education has come to mean at present as nothing more than a means of earning money. But that is the lowest reason for which knowledge should be sought. Our capacity for writing elaborate essays has increased, but our strength of character has been lost at the same time. You will hardly find any other person who does not mince matters and gives you his life-experiences with utter frankness. All your learning is wasted, so long as there is a barrier between you and the people around you."

Gandhiji said:

"I hope you got my message before 7. 30 p.m. I have come here to speak on the duty of students, but by coming late at the meeting I unwittingly gave you a bad object lesson.

"What shall I say of my difficulty? I wanted to go to an untouchable quarter but there was nobody who knew the way! We rambled through all lanes and by-lanes except the right one! At last a shepherd met us. How can Devchandbhai (being a 'caste-Hindu') ever know where the untouchables live? A guide to that forsaken locality could only be either an untouchable himself or a shepherd whom also we still keep at an arm's length.

"I am going to speak on the *dharma* of a student. It is at once difficult and easy. In Hindu *dharma* the student stage in life is regarded as that of *brahmacharya*. What we ordinarily mean by 'brahmacharya' is physical continence, but Hindu scriptures mean much more by the word. The popular meaning conveys a narrow sense. According to its original sense *brahmacharya* was the first i. e. the student's stage of life. During it the stress was on control over all our senses and the whole period was regarded as belonging to *brahmacharya ashram* (ashram=stage in life here). In that innocent stage of *brahmacharya*, there was much to take from others and very little



to give. During that period we simply go on acquiring everything we can—from parents, from teachers, from the world. But what is our object in being so voracious? The one and only one of repaying to society in future, and with compound interest, all that we had assimilated during the early stage. It is for this reason that society supports his *brahmacharya ashram* stage.

"Brahmacharya ashram is shown to be similar to *Sannyasa ashram* (the final stage of life when the world is totally renounced for paying exclusive attention to Self-realization) in Hinduism. The student is a *sannyasi* by nature, though not by volition. But today the minds of students also have become perverted, my own mind was at the age of 12, and I became sexconscious. The student's very nature must be innocent and free from lust, but my fall began even at that tender age. Thousands of like instances can be found but, by giving you my personal instance, I want to put before you a clear picture of the present state of things. While the student is a *sannyasi* by nature, the *sannyasi* is such by deliberate choice. As things stand, real life has departed from all the Ashrams (the 2nd and the 3rd ashrams were that of an active gentleman—a *grihastha*—and of a retired gentleman—a *vanaprastha*) and only fossils can now be seen. But I have too high a respect for the ashramas in their pristine glory to be able to find words for my veneration. They have an intrinsic value and I think they can show us *dharma* even today.

It is difficult today to explain his *dharma* to the student, when even parents unconsciously teach him false lessons. They send him to school with the sole object that their educated son may gain money; so at present we have an upside-down arrangement. Education is really our *dharma* but it has been prostituted into a means of earning money. As an inevitable result we do not find now in a student's life that perfect serenity, that geniality, that innocence which he ought to have. Our students are sore and heavy-laden. But really there is no scope for giving anything to society in that stage of life. The student's only business is to receive, and go on receiving, but use his discrimination as to what to receive. Through many experiments shown to us, our teacher shows us how to discriminate between things worth our acceptance and rejection. If, during our student career, we do not learn this art, we become automatons. But we are living beings, individual forms of Consciousness, and it is the innate nature of Consciousness to discern what is worth receiving or discarding. Hence, in that stage (of a student's life) we learn up the art of accepting truth and rejecting untruth, of speaking soft and pleasing language and avoiding the use of harsh



and cutting words. Such lessons learned in adolescence make our whole later life smooth and easy.

"You may say to yourself, 'Oh, but this is all pedantic dissertation on Hindu *dharma*. But I have come here to give you only what is mine. And what other thing than this can I call 'mine'? It is just in order to give that thing that I have made all this analysis and exposition. And that is why I told you that a *brahmachari* should learn to know what he should assimilate and what throw out. But today our society has debased our *dharma* into an unholy hotch-potch and against that debasement we have to fight. Had parents given a different kind of education and thus not vitiated the environment, there would have been no need for student to resist it. In ancient times the student life was all lived in the ashramas of *rishis* (sages). But today conditions have become topsyturvy. On a sea-shore, where you get fresh air, we may go on freely inhaling it. Our physicians advise us to take deep breaths at such places and avoid breathing where the air is filthy and stinking. There are many spots in England where particles of coal-dust infest the air and where I have seen old women working with their mouth covered with a very fine gauze, so that only purified air can enter the lungs. In the same way the air of our country is stinking and filled with vermin and has got to be resisted.

"From the test I have given you to help you in your judgment, you will find that there are many things today which are nothing but harmful to you and must be given up. In times past education was imparted only from mouth to mouth.²⁵ Only mantras were taught. (Gandhiji probably means *Sutras*—aphorisms). A mantra means revelation of truth or essential knowledge in a short pithy expression. Expositions were then made on these aphorisms. But at present there is a plethora of books. When I think of my own student days, I remember many things which deserved to be shunned. It was then difficult to know which student of the 6th or the 7th standard did not read Reynold's novels! But I was one of the dunces of my class and was content to think of nothing more than how to pass my examination. Service to my father and reading just enough for passing my examination were the only two things that mattered to me. I was, therefore, saved from reading those novels. I do not know how these books affect others, but I saw in England that high society did not approve their reading. Such literature was looked down upon. I found, therefore, that I had lost nothing from not reading it.



“In this same way we are today in such a predicament as requires us to discard many things. As early as from the age of 12, the student is compelled today to think of his livelihood. That means a motley of two stages of life—of a student and of a mature citizen. The waters of the holy rivers, Ganga and Jamuna, also mingle together, but that is *sangama* (an elevating confluence), while this is *sankara* (an unhealthy mixture). That is why it is necessary for the student to know to what plight the country has fallen. There may be hardly any student today who may not be reading newspapers. Situated as I am, how can I tell him, 'You must make it a point not to read newspapers?' But I will certainly say this: 'Avoid the ephemeral literature of newspapers. They do not provide really good literature or cultured language. Newspapers teach you knowledge of what is transitory. What you should learn is the language of eternal verity. The student life is the very foundation on which his whole later life is based. It is the preparatory stage. Why should we, during this impressionable period, form our views from newspapers? If you now tell me you will not read them any more it will be a hollow promise, because you have formed an inveterate habit to exclaim on reading Das' or Gandhi's 'Speech, 'O, this speech was excellent, but that other one was tame and insipid.' This situation is pitiable, is dangerous. It is a 'must' for the student to save himself from it.

“I am talking in this strain, because I have myself made many experiments in education. I had incurred the very great risk of huddling together my own sons, those of relatives and friends, and still other teenagers, both boys and girls, into one communal life and teach them. But I could steer clear of the dangerous bar, because, like parents, I used to keep a vigilant eye on the movements of my wards. I had constituted myself their parent, their detective, their king, and also their slave. From this experiment I learnt what education really was and how it should be imparted. From my reflection over it I discovered both Satyagraha and the method of its application non-co-operation. That is why I continued that experiment for long. Don't carry the impression that I ever had any pangs of repentance for having made that experiment. And don't imagine that I made it for the mundane object of getting earthly Swaraj.

I could thereby put before the world a spiritual principle of eternal value and that principle has taken deep roots. That is why I do not hesitate to put it (Satyagraha) even before children.



"How can I show you its harmless character? I discovered that violence spread from my message of non-violence and peace. So I withdrew my arms and now have put before you this single weapon of peace—the spinning wheel. The people first laughed at it, then showed their contempt and now the stage has come for hailing its advent. And so I am now talking to students to accept it. Even the Congress has passed a resolution in its favour. I am prepared to put the spinning wheel even before Lord Reading (the Viceroy) today. If ever we meet, I would tell him, 'Please, sir, ply the spinning wheel.' The statement made you laugh, but I say it in all seriousness. I would not hesitate to make that request to him, because if he does not comply, it is he who stands to lose, not I. What can a beggar have to lose? Supplication is his *dharma*, his profession. In the same way it is my *dharma* to stretch my hand before him and give him thereby a chance for an act of Christian charity. It is but natural that I should give him an opportunity to do the best thing. If he does not seize the chance, it is he who suffers. I invited the Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta to join our community prayers. He did so and also sang a hymn. A strong bond of mutual love grew between us since then, but I was not content with even that. I talked to him of the spinning wheel. Colonel Maddock operated upon my abdomen in order to save my life. He used many instruments for the operation and in return for the obligation, I suggested the spinning wheel to him. When Mrs. Maddock was going back to England, I gave her a Khadi towel as a parting gift. She accepted it lovingly and said she would spread the message of that towel to all around her.

"This is a harmless unseasoned dish. Healthy dishes are not flavoured with hot spices. They are not *bhajias* (chips of bananas, potatoes etc. covered with spicy gram paste and fried in boiling oil), that you get from a confectioner's shop. There was a famous confectioner in Rajkot. He mixed various spices in his *bhajias* and hundreds used to run up to his shop. They were of course anything but good for health. On the other hand, there are a number of things which may, at first, appear *neeras* (tedious, or without taste) but are in effect *saras* (having flavor or interest of the right kind). That is why there is the saving grace of the Bhagwadgita injunction which asks us to accept things that are bitter in taste at first, but which prove to be sweet like nectar in the end. One of these ambrosial sweets is the thread of self-spun yarn. There is no *yagna* (sacrifice) more potent than that of plying the spinning wheel for giving peace to the soul, for relieving the student of his worries, and for installing *dharma* in its rightful place in human life. I cannot, at present, put before India any other thing—I can not put even the *Gayatri*²⁶ before the whole of India—because this is a practical-



mindful age and wants immediate results. I would be so glad to put Gayatri before the public, but how can I demonstrate any practical immediate result from its use? While this thing is so feasible that if you draw out a thread of yarn and utter Ramnam simultaneously, you will get everything.

"There was a high officer here, Mr. Tudor Owen, by name. He is at present in the Panchmahal District. I converted him to the cult of the spinning wheel and today I give out a gist of our private correspondence. He wrote to me "I like the spinning wheel very much as, my English common sense tells me, it is the best hobby." I wrote back to him, "It may be a hobby to you, it is all in all to us." I am not enamoured of the English way of living, but I do enjoy some of their cultural treats, because, like a bee, I am ever in search of sweetness. There is much sense in this—their 'hobby'. Though Col. Maddock was blind of one eye, he lost it during an operation he was performing, and was nearing sixty, he was an expert surgeon. He could make a long incision almost before you could realize what was done. But he did not spend all the 24 hours after surgical operations. He gave 2 hours regularly to gardening, which was his hobby, and that kept him up in high spirits.

"In order that you too may pick up your spirits, earn *dharma* and *karma* (good action that may result in happiness), peace and wisdom, I put the spinning wheel before you. Faith is an essential element in the life of a student. It is necessary to accept some things which his intellect may not agree with. My Parsi friends will agree, as they are like myself big ciphers in Geometry, that many things have to be taken as true in it. My brain simply refused to have anything to do with Geometry. The 24th Theorem specially was all Greek and Latin to me. But I managed to plod on and now I find that same subject interesting. If a book on Geometry happens to fall into my hands, I can now engross myself in it. I am now that deeply interested in Geometry for the simple reason that, during my student days, I was full of faith and believed I would be able one day to master the subject. If you too are endowed with faith, you will say to yourself one day, "Yes, the man who spoke so warmly of the spinning wheel was right." It was not without deep thinking that a Shastri declared the other day that the following verse was perfectly applicable to the spinning wheel:

“नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्॥”²⁷



When Gandhiji finished his speech, Prof. Bhide thanked him in a single beautiful and apposite sentence: "May your heart be as filled with Gandhiji's speech as the sky is with the full moonlight just now."

1. Narsinh Mehta was 'the father of modern Gujarati poetry,' but is much better known for his hymns that are still popular all over Gujarat. He lived during the 15th century at Junagadh in Saurashtra, one of the staunchest strongholds of rigid casteism in its heyday. And though he belonged to the highest Brahmin caste he committed the crime of visiting 'untouchable' quarters and singing to these devotees hymns to Lord Vishnu. Of course, he was much harassed and even excommunicated, or about to be, but the Lord, says the story, intervened and every Nagar had a vision of an untouchable sitting by his side at a caste dinner. That softened his caste men. The reference to Narsinh Mehta seems to be a fling at Nagars, as they were thought to be going to repeat the harassment.

2. A Muslim lady of the distinguished and cultured family of the Tyabjis. She retains complete devotion for Islam, while her spiritual make-up has much to do with devotion for Krishna as well. Besides being a writer of excellent hymns in Hindi she is known for her prose-poem in English entitled, 'The Heart of a Gopi.' The writer also of this Urdu hymn is a, Muslim gentleman, probably of Baroda, as Miss Raihanaben tells me. —Translator.

3. तुझसे यह फरियाद है ऐ पाक रब्बुल् आलमीन्|
सब रहें मिलजुल के, तू मालिक है, यह तेरी जमीन्||
जिसमें हो तेरी रजा, हम चाहते हैं बस वही|
हम रहें महकूम, या हाकिम हों, कुछ परवा नहीं||
हममें सोचीं जितनी तदबीरें, वो सब उल्टी पड़ीं;
वह तरिका अब बता हमको, जो है हब्बुल मतीं|
हिन्द बन जाये नमूमा, जुम्ला कौमों के लिए|
जिस्म में आलम के होवे मिस्ले चश्मे सुर्मगीं||
लब पे तेरा नाम हो और दिल में तेरी याद हो,
काम जो कुछ को, तेरी खातिर हो रब्बुल् आलमीन्|
हिन्दू और मुसलिम के दिल से दूर हो बू ग़मों की||

4. Sir Prabhashankar Pattani. rhe Devan of Bhavanagar at the time. He too came into the orbit of Gandhiji's magnetic charm and was gradually so drawn to him that he would not leave India for the Second Round Table Conference, in 1931 unless Gandhiji too, who also was an invitee, could clear the political hurdles in his path and proceed to England. Sir P. Pattani was thus the only non-Congress member of the R. T. C. who had the courage and the resolution to openly show such concern for Gandhiji.



5, 6 and 7—'love.' All these words are also used for love for God.

8. The eldest Pandava known also as Dharmaraj for his strict observance of *dharma* (*raj-king*). By his one single ambiguous statement (even though it was technically correct, but not the whole truth) , says the Mahabharata, his chariot, which used to float on the air owing to his power of *dharma*, came down to the earth.

9. The Hero of Ramayana, who combined in his person the ideal king, the ideal son, the ideal husband, and so on, in short, the ideal Man.

10. Hindu society was divided into 4 varnas (classes) according to their professions and aptitudes. viz. (1) Brahmin (the scholar, who was expected to devote himself to religious pursuits and be above anger, desire for wealth, etc.; (2) Kshatriya (the warrior, expected to defend the country and so be a lover of power and bravery in battle-field); (3) Vaishya (the businessman, farmer, industrialist etc. who was to gain wealth but honestly); (4) Shudra, who was expected to serve the above 3 varnas. Right up the time of Manu, the first law-giver, inter-marriages, though not frequent, were not quite uncommon. In his later life Gandhiji had changed his views on caste considerably.

11. "The co-disciple of Sri Krishna and His brother Balaram. The two princes honoured him as their leader, though he was only a very poor Brahmin. In his later life he went on a visit to Sri Krishna in the hope of getting some monetary help. The ragged Brahmin was laughed at by the public. Sri Krishna, however, received him with great warmth and respect, but sent him back apparently empty - handed. When he reached home, he was amazed to see his hut gone and a palace standing there. The Lord thus made him prosperous and also redeemed the whole family.

Incidentally, Gandhiji was born in this Sudamapuri (*puri-town*) now known as Porebundar. Sri Krishna was born in Mathura (U. P.) but made Dwarka in Sautashtra his permanent stay in his later life.

12. Son of Sri Krishna. The word means 'unconquered.' Aniruddha was a great hero, as his name indicates.

13. Lord Vishnu's child devotee, who refused to obey the order of the king, his father, not to worship the Lord. Lord Vishnu took the man-lion form to save him from death.

14. At Viramgam. the border-town between British India and Kathiawar, the passengers coming into British India by every train were subjected to great hardships owing to the close scrutiny of their baggages in order to see that they did not smuggle goods without paying customs duties. Gandhiji gave almost an ultimatum with a time-limit for the end of this harassment. The Government then acceded to the demand.

15. Allusion to Bhagwadgita's famous verse: Whenever Right (dharma) declines and wrong (adharma) prevails, then O Bharata, I come, to birth to establish Right.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥



(Gita IV—7 “The Gita According to Gandhiji” by Mahadev Desai p. 193).

16. This King wanted to ascend to Heaven, even while retaining his bodily form. The Gods would not allow it, but Sage Vishwamitra took up the challenge and by the power of his austerities sent him up to the middle region, above which he could not rise owing to the counter-force of the gods. He is, therefore, hanging midway between earth and heaven.

17. Wearing a moustache was, or is, regarded in India as a sign of manliness and honour. There is, besides, the custom of getting it removed during the mourning period. Gandhiji suggests that a country in chains is always in mourning and that a slave has no right to strut proudly with a moustache.

18. An eminent scientist and enthusiastic supporter of village setvice on Gandhian lines. He has written, accordingly, several books on those subjects including "Home and Village Doctor" for cheap remedies.

19. Saurashtra was stirred to life by the writings of "Foolchhab" . Shri Amritlal Sheth's weekly, and specially, the patriotic songs of Sri Zaverchand Meghani which appeared therein.

20. The spinning wheel of the old pattern, here referred to, but now mostly discarded, was fairly big—about 2 ft. in diameter. Lord Krishna had a wheel-shaped weapon called 'SudarshanChakra' which could defeat the strongest enemy. Gandhiji, therefore, gave this very suggestive name to the olds pinning wheel.

21. Sir S. P. Sinha, an eminent lawyer and politician, and President of the Congress in 1915, was the first Indian to be dubbed a Lord and appointed a Governor.

22. The Gujarati word for an official is amaldar The word *amal* means both authority and intoxication from liquor (and daar - possessing). So they say in Gujarati, 'An amaldaar is amaldaar', meaning a man vested with authority by the government is a mad man intoxicated with power. Gandhiji uses this pun here.

23. King Janaka, father of Sita, has been called Janak Videhi, meaning both ruler of Videha (northern Bihar and part of Nepal) and 'bodiless', because of his wonderfully detached attitude to life. As he was the most beloved disciple of his Guru, Yagnavalkya, other disciples, some of whom were even anchorites, were jealous. To prove Janaka's spiritual greatness, the Guru created an illusion and Janaka's palace and his whole town, Mithila, seemed to be on fire. The recluses ran to their huts to save their miserable loin-cloths, but King Janaka sat unconcerned, rooted to the spot and listening to the Guru's discourse.

24. The patriarch of the clan of the Pandavas and Kauravas. Though he recognised the justice of the Pandavas' case, he fought for the latter out of loyalty to their salt which he had eaten. He proved himself a terror, but was at last defeated by Arjuna owing not to his skill in arms but to stratagems of Lord Krishna. As he wanted to give up his body only after the auspicious solar solstice, he asked Arjuna to make for him a bed of arrows on which he lay for several months. After the end of the war, Yudhishtira was struck with remorse for the carnage. Bhishma, the patriarch, brought peace to his



soul by his teachings on politics, kings' duties, etc. Bhishma was thus both a great statesman and a saintly soul. His teachings in Shantiparva cover the big last chapter in the Mahabharata.

25. It may not be widely known perhaps that, as an aid to memory, books in Sanskrit were wholly composed in verse form. There is, for instance, Amarakosha a sizable dictionary volume all in verses. There are also books on mathematics, astronomy, medicine, etc. in verse form.

26. The well-known Vedic *Mantra* for self-realization:

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः। ॐ तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य
धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्॥

Om (That pervades) the earth, the ethereal region and the heaven. Om. We meditate upon the Supernal Light of that God—the Sun (or Creator)— Who may propel (inspire) our intellect. Om is "the sacred monosyllable representing Primordial Sound underlying and sustaining all creation. It is written with the three letters AUM but pronounced OM." Formerly, every Arya, boy or girl, was invested with the sacred thread and given this *mantra* for chanting and meditation. Later, the investiture was confined to boys only, and still later to Brahmin boys only.

27. "Here no effort undertaken is lost, no disaster befalls. Even a little of this righteous course delivers one from great fear (or danger)." Bhagwadgita II-40.—'The Gita According to Gandhi' by Mahadev Desai.



10-1-1925 to 11-1-1925

On the Hill of Trapaj

We arrived at Trapaj on the 10th.

A whole new chapter would be needed, if I wanted to narrate the enlightened dialogue between Pattani Saheb and Gandhiji and the lessons on spinning given to the former. Pattani Saheb's sallies of wit and humour, his child-like unaffectedness, and deep feelings for Gandhiji, which could only be partially seen at Bhavanagar, were fully revealed here. In the same spontaneous outburst in which he had told the matchless story of Mahabharata at Bhavanagar, he quoted a number of anecdotes from Mahabharata and Bhagvata¹. Many have read his poem on Khadi, but that poem was composed before he had a taste for wearing Khadi. But now that the spinning wheel and Khadi-clothing have cast their spell upon him, the next poem that his muse will deliver will be exceedingly charming, because this poem on Khadi is not at all a stray creation of his. It is only his habit to compose poems for his personal delectation. For instance, when once he saw his children listening to a *raas* (a folk-song sung by many persons during a round dance) performed at a public place, he composed a charming *raas* of the same rhythm for them. Then again, once when he himself was depressed at the situation around him, he laughed away his blues by weaving his own predicament into another *rass*. There is an element of joy spread throughout God's creation, which, sages say, is created for his *lila* (sport) in countless forms, and he who has the knack to perceive and extract happiness from this all-pervading joy can never feel unhappy. It seems Pattani Saheb has had some perception of this immanent joy. When I heard him singing the song beginning with:

"The Golden past will come with kettle and drum
When Gandhi's wheel in every home will hum;"

I thought it to be one of the many folk-songs, composed by nobody knows whom, which he was singing for his own pleasure. But when I heard him singing also some other songs written by him on various subjects and different situations, I realized how greatly he can identify himself with the masses, though he has to keep aloof from them owing to his official position.

But this is not the occasion for giving a character-sketch of Pattani Saheb or dilating upon his poetical powers. Tongues are wagging that this friendship at Bhavanagar between Gandhiji and Pattani Saheb is a novel, new-found one. An even



more seathing remark has come to me: "By holding the Conference at Bhavanagar and securing Pattani's sympathy, Gandhi contrived to sell Khadi worth 25 to 50 thousand rupees and Pattani in return bought from Gandhi peace in his State for one year." I agree with the remark so far as the actual result goes, but the insinuation of an ulterior motive and the characterisation of the friendship as a business deal are wrong. If it be such a deal, Pattani Saheb's is the one solitary instance of a Dewan going to the length of taking the vow of spinning in order to buy peace in his State. And supposing that was his only object, is it any sin to take a holy pledge for that purpose? But it is true, a pledge taken with such an intention has an air of affectedness. There was, however, not an iota of affectedness in Pattani Saheb's case. I saw this with my own eyes at Trapaj. He took to the spinning wheel in the most natural manner, as is evident from the fact that, immediately after getting his first lesson in spinning from Gandhiji, he carried his wheel back to his room and went on turning it all the day long. One would, naturally, fear that a raw pupil would feel disgusted at his new lesson, if he sat too long at it. To ward off that fear he told me: "I don't feel tired at all. This is so interesting! It is a good recreation after the strain of daily work. And when by practice the thread comes out easily and evenly, I shall find spinning all the more interesting." On the very next day, he showed to Gandhiji a short thread of yarn spun by himself. On the third day he took his lesson again. Then after three hours' practice, he drew out 48 yards of yarn in two hours and on the last day of our stay with him, he spun 25 yards in one hour. That yarn was well twisted and even. I remarked to Gandhiji: "Very few can spin so well in so short a time and Pattaniji learns by himself some of the intricacies of the art of good spinning." Gandhiji agreed: "Could he have administered a big State without possessing that acumen?" But Pattani Saheb himself was dissatisfied. "It is true that the yarn I draw out is good, but the thread still snaps too often and the result is as much cotton wasted as spun into yarn." At this remark Gandhiji gave a smile which could not fail to charm a man like Pattani Saheb. "You see it is just like this. Countless official despatches are shuttled from India to England and back. But the molehill burrowed out of this mountain of despatches is the tiny little 'Swaraj scheme' that we get. The excellent yarn you spin is this 'Swaraj scheme' and the broken threads, the wastage, are those despatches. When you sit to make a neat draft, how many rough ones you have to cancel before you can get at the right one?"

People from villages roundabout used to come up even here on the hill. There were farmers also among them. At the Subjects Committee or the open Conference one did not see many of them. I was very eager for long to have a glimpse of the



tenacious farmers of Kathiawar, tall and straight like bamboos, wearing *angarakhas* (tight jackets with strings for buttons) and *choranas* (trousers loose upto the knees and tight below them) or *thepadas* (thick sheets worn below the waist) and speaking perfectly their indigenous Kathiawari dialect. It was only here, at Trapaj, that I had my wish. Two aged peasants who had joined such a group gave a pleasant surprise to Gandhiji. "Maharaj! (Honoured Sir) these foreign clothes have robbed people of their decency. It is only our thick Khadi that keeps it. A bania boy of our parts has imbibed this new-fangled fashion of wearing fine foreign clothes, and he looks so ugly! How can our sisters and daughters move about with decency in those thin clothes? Our thick thepadas moreover last us two years and then, if they are used for making cotton quilts, we can use them for 5 years more. They can also be used as plain sheets for bundling the harvested crop into them to bring it home. These foreign clothes are no good in winter. Wear only two Khadi clothes and the cold is gone!" I give only their arguments, not their patois. It is only a son of the soil of these parts of Kathiawar who can reproduce their actual words. Referring to them Gandhiji remarked to Pattani Saheb: "What more can I have to say to these men? They themselves have treated me to an excellent speech on Khadi."

Before leaving from here. Gandhiji visited the village of Trapaj. Pattani Saheb was of course with him. Gandhiji gave the villagers some figures for a straight computation. "I am not going to deliver a speech but put some simple accounting before you. The village consists of 2500 men, Hindus and Muslims all told. You give Rs. 4,000/- as land revenue to the Maharaja (of Bhavanagar). I am going to suggest a way by which you can get a remission of all that amount. Pattani is not going to grant that remission. If he does, the State-treasury will soon reach its Bottom.

"A local gentleman told me that his clothing expense comes to Rs. 30/-per year. If everyone of you spends the same amount on clothes, this village cannot afford all that huge expense. Pattani Saheb's expenses may equal the amount of the land revenue of your village. Let us say you spend 10 rupees per man after your clothes. Then produce cloth worth Rs. 25000 and pay Rs. 4000 to Pattani Saheb from it That leaves you Rs. 21000. Take from it Rs. 7000 for buying cotton, which means there is a net saving of Rs. 14000. The way to do so is for you to store cotton, turn it into yarn by spinning it, and then into cloth by weaving the yarn. Do you discard your home-made bread and order biscuits from Delhi? You don't. There was a day when, just as you have your own oven for cooking, every hut and every house had a spinning wheel. But



now you send for foreign cloth. It is foreign cloth for you, even if you get your cloth from Ahmedabad. You cannot afford to let your money drain away even into Ahmedabad, because that is a violation of the healthy rule, 'Charity begins at home.' Khadi is Khadi only when it is locally produced. It cannot be imported from Ahmedabad. You have heard a lot of praises for Pattani Saheb. But the still greater thing to praise in him is the fact that he has begun to spin. Your children have drawn the figure of a spinning wheel on the national flag. That flag does not become your flag just because you have drawn a picture of the spinning wheel on it. In order to make it really your own flag, you all must spin. I wish you competed with Pattani Saheb. Beat him at least in that one matter and thus save the drain of Rs. 25000."

Pattani Saheb said only two sentences, but they are worth quoting : "I have often visited your school and your village. But during my next visit my first inquiry will be about the number of spinning wheels working in your village." The people caught the idea so heartily, that they immediately gave a promise to supply as much as 20 maunds of cotton. If every village with a like population of 25000 contributes 20 maunds of cotton, the question of cotton supply would be immediately solved.

Gandhiji and Pattani Saheb had a chit-chat on their way to Trapaj. Gandhiji said: "I went to see Kashi Vishwanath in 1901. I gave a pie the smallest coin= 1/192 of a rupee) to the *panda* (Brahmin guide) and got in return a shower of abuses. All the same when I was going away I was called again! In those days I used to travel third and with only a small amount in my pocket. And today I put you to all this expense in order to go to Trapaj." "Expense! Not at all," returned Pattani Saheb." That amount is put to a good use. It might, who knows, have been otherwise squandered away after an unworthy object. This is in any case better than that."

Pattani Saheb gave a few bits of his experiences. "I had been to Dakore (a pilgrimage town in Gujarat). At every shrine I gave a rupee. My *panda* fell at my feet, when I was leaving, and said: 'Among the thousands that come here, you are the only one who did not get angry. One man had come to fulfil his vow to give 2000 rupees in acknowledgment of the grace showered on him, but he took back the amount and abused us in addition!' ' Then he said, "If you ask me to wear only a loin cloth (i. e. renounce everything), I will do so. If you say, 'Enough of these lordly pleasures now. Throw them off and wear a loin cloth', I will certainly do your bidding."

Bapu had asked him, "Who, do you think, is the best among the public workers of Bhavanagar?" Answer: "Vallabhbhai (Modi) and he alone. None else." On the next



day at his bungalow conversation was long and free. He sang the hymns he had composed. The first was:

I

Our freedom will come with kettle and drum
When Gandhiji's wheel will everywhere hum;
And the Whites—they will quake with fear and be sick
At the chant of *ahimsa*, at Khadi so thick.
When religions give up their hate and their pride,
Our freedom will come on a galloping ride.
Our past will return, when learning's imbued
With *dharma*, and sham and cant are eschewed.
With services kicked and titles thrown out,
Freedom will spread our country throughout.
With peace in the mind, no withering tongue,
On serfdom, be sure, the curtain is rung.
Don't mind if they beat, cry Gandhi always;
To help He will rush, as that is God's way.
If baits you resist, take troubles as a game,
Nothing can stop your reaching your aim.
Let jail be your fate or a scaffold so grim,
Do sing the Anthem and keep up your vim.

II

One day a letter from heaven did come
Written by Laxmi², it said: "Don't become
"Uneasy at all for Gandhi my child;
"Lord Vishnu will save him from dangers so wild.
"At the elephant's³ cry to help did He rush;
"The reptile, though fierce, so soon did He crush.
"Like Krishna⁴ and Arjun, a pair that's rare,
"This Mohan and that are also a pair.
"Let him be kept in a dreary cell,
"As God is with him, it's heaven, not hell.



"King Kansa⁵—he lost his throne and his life,
"As he jailed Vasudev and Devaki, his wife.
"So freedom we'll gain by Gandhiji's jail,
"For soul force before no arms can avail.
"The Empire on which the sun does not set,
"At the frail little man with fear is beset.
"God cannot help, His nature it is,
"To save His devotee and put him at ease.
"Like Krishna-Sudama's⁶ unity bond,
"Of Mohandas Gandhi Lord Mohan is fond.
"Gandhi is safe under Shankara's⁷ eye
"By day; and by night Lord Kaanji is nigh.
"My Lord! He forgets even Me and His food!
"His one care and worry is Gandhiji's good.
"Countless are saints, but Gandhi is the best"
Thus writes the Goddess at Vishnu's behest.
She says, She has been, and others have been,
Adored by the Lord, but Gandhi does win.
"Krishna⁸ is tied with the thread that is thin,"
So say the scriptures; "nought else can Him win".
Him Gandhi has tied with gossamer thread;
Who else in footsteps so holy can tread?

The above was sung on the 11th. On the 10th he sang the following:

III

If I can but enter the mind of a man
And weep for his grief, which makes him so wan!
Let me, if I can, afford him relief;
Let me, if I can't, shed tears in his grief.
As He⁹ came from the hunt, She couldn't be seen;
So Rama bewailed the loss of His queen,
"O Seeta! O Seeta,"—So torn was His mind!
Let me, if I wed, be a spouse of His kind.
A God if I be, Lord Krishna I'd be
Who worked a miracle to save Draupadi¹⁰,



Wicked Dusshasan, with all his bombast,
For strong were his arms, felt tired at last.
He¹¹ knew that the beggar was Lord God and still
'As a king I must keep my word and I will';
King Bali so thought. My charity be,
And truthfulness too, like that of Bali.
If I be a father, as loving be I
As Dasharath¹² who died at Ram' exile.
Let me be a child like Nandakishore,¹³
Whose flute was so charming, whom Devaki bore.
"A handful of rice, but flattened and dried,
Brings me this palace!" Sudamaji cried.
If ever I have a friend, may he be,
As generous as Krishna, as loving as He.
I wish I may have a wife that submits,
Like Ajamil's¹⁴ wife, to all my surfeits.

When he was about to sing the last couplet, Pattani Saheb remarked, "Gandhiji will not like this, but let me out with it." Bapu remarked. "Simply a daydream. No woman will accept such submission."

After this song there was the usual light talk. They discussed the shades of the meanings of the Gujarati words 'vevala' (hotch-potch) and 'dindavanu' (medley).

Pattani Saheb then told an anecdote of Gandhiji's life bearing on **कुछ फिकर नहीं!** '*kuchh fikar nahi*' ('Does not matter' or 'Don't worry').

In the year 1915, Bapu went to Poona to receive the 'Kaisar-i-Hind' medal. I met him there at the governor's Levy. Bapu wanted to go back by the night train and he got up early. I too woke up and took him to the station. There was a third class compartment filled with soldiers. As Bapu was trying to get in, the nearest soldier confronted him with his bayonet pointed at him. Bapu merely said, "Kuchh fikar nahi" ('does not matter' or 'I am not afraid'), entered the compartment and squatted near the feet of a soldier. We asked him, "Where will you sit? They won't give you a seat." He replied "Kuchh fikar nahi" ('doesn't matter' or 'you need not worry'). At last when the train was about to start, I said, "Have you now had enough of it? Let me take you to another compartment." But Bapu's only reply was the same "Kuchh fikar nahi." You



people stay so long with him, but I picked him out in a trice from that little 'Kuchh fikar nahi'.

Then about Gandhiji's reference to Narandas Sangani, in his Bhavnagar speech, Pattani Saheb said, "When you called him your son, I was reminded of Lord Krishna's attitude when he received the royal guests at Udhishthira's *Rajasuya-yagna* (a sacrifice performed by a paramount sovereign) Shishupal¹⁵ stretched his leg and the Lord washed his toe. But the haughty king said: "You there! Wash my leg from the knee downwards and drink that water¹⁶." But the Lord replied, "Maharaj (Sire)! If I start with you and wash the legs of all these august guests, when will it end ? Please come to my palace and we all—Satyabhama (queen) and Radha (Lord Krishna's girl-friend in his childhood days) and myself will bathe you with anointed water from head to foot." You spoke of that fellow Naran in the same vein.

"And let me tell you another thing. Krishna egged the Pandavas and Kauravas on to fight with one another and in the end brought that climate of war into his own clan. Similarly, you brought fighting spirit among non-co-operators and hence all these internecine squabbles. Lord Krishna died like a hunted doe, and you are talking of retiring to the Himalayas. But mind you, if you really go there, you will find me dogging your footsteps and telling you, 'You can do everything else, but this will not do.'"

Then this little incident with Laxmi (Gandhiji's adopted 'untouchable' daughter). Pattani Saheb treated her to a light repast. At the end of it Laxmi remarked, "So many as four dishes for this little repast!" He laughed and rejoined, "O dear! How else will a dignitary behave? He is a big man who can bolster up a big show from nothing."

On the next evening I had long talks with him. About Lord Morley he said, "I met him in 1910. He was then recently raised to peerage. He had the knack of making a man feel at home and chat without reserve. You can open your heart to him and he would not misuse the candour. The question of holding a Durbar was then in the air. He asked my view. I said: 'Don't hold a Durbar of Indian princes. They will fight among themselves, if they meet, and mutual jealousy and bad blood will only increase.' You see, this has been the case even with the Mahabharata. It is the Conference of princes that ultimately leads to the war. Lord Morley agreed: 'In Europe also, let the Kings meet, and there is sure to be a war. But nothing can be done now. It seems certain that the Durbar is going to be held.' "Sydenham (Lord Sydenham, once Governor of Bombay)" remarked Pattaniji, "was a very clever man. He might have grown bad, but was not bad by nature. His family troubles embittered him in later life. Lord Peel gave



on the impression of a dunce but was in fact quite shrewd. Willingdon (Governor of Bombay and later on Viceroy) was good, was a sport. He appointed an Englishman as the Vice-president of his Executive Council. As I was the Senior Member, the appointment raised a long discussion. I said to Sheppard, 'You may enjoy the superior post. It is not the position but the reason for superseding me that matters to me and I am going to fight on principle. All the papers were sent to Lord Hardinge. He replied, 'I fully agree with Mr. Pattani. I am trying to so arrange things that no difficulty may arise in the matter.' On receipt of that letter Lord Willingdon sent me his card, called me to his residence, though it was a Sunday, and giving me the letter said, 'You have won at last.' That shows what a sport he was. He respected my view quite often. And then he would say, 'So what should I write?' And I would reply, 'You may say that you had a talk with the Honourable Member and that you agree with him.'

"I crossed swords with Sydenham twice. Once at the time of the Public Service Commission. The Bombay Government had framed a confidential scheme for appointment of 6 Indians in the I. C. S. Six Indian boys were to be sent to England at their tender age of eight years, given a long training, and then brought back as members of the I. C. S. (A copy of my confidential note on the scheme has been made by Ranjitram himself, (Pattaniji's Private Secretary) and is still lying in my private file.) I opposed the scheme. After a long discussion, they defeated me by a majority vote. But my opposition itself infuriated Sydenham. I told him, 'Your scheme is not going to work. You will have to cross-examine the sponsors of your scheme.' Then I met an Hon. member. He said, 'Yes, we shall then cross-examine them.' Then I said, 'I may not agree with you, but I accept the majority view.' He (Sydenham) liked this principle very much and congratulated me afterwards.

"On the second occasion the subject discussed was communal representation. Lady Sydenham was also present. Her husband was putting forth all arguments in favour of communal representation. I said : 'You condemn the caste system. Do you then want to perpetuate the same caste system in the political field?'"

Talking of his early contact with Gandhiji, he said, "In 1904 I had been to England where I saw Sir Bennet. I talked to him on the South African trouble and asked him : "Is it possible that the Mother Country will simply look on and do nothing, if there is a fight between Canada and Australia? And now here is a quarrel between India and South Africa. How can the Mother Country sit on the fence?" This talk was passed on by Bennett to Lord Ampthill. Gandhiji learnt it from him and congratulating me, wrote:



'Please broadcast your plea wherever else you can.' It was a brief letter. I replied: 'Tied down as I am at present, what more can I do?' Gandhiji wrote back: 'I was attracted towards you from your talk with Bennett, but the end of your letter has disillusioned me.' The thrust went home and I have not forgotten it still."

About Sir he said: "The meanest and most despicable liar. Montagu himself had appointed me. With the malicious intent to separate me from the Princes (of Bhavanagar, who were minors), he once told me, 'I had put the question before the Viceroy and he agrees with me.' I went home and asked my wife, 'What do you want? The Princes at the cost of the (management of the) state or the state at the cost of the Princes?' She said, 'I want the Princes.' I wrote pointblank, 'I am sorry, I must resign. I shall not raise any row in Bhavanagar, but I cannot serve the state on these terms. That perplexed and annoyed him. At last he told Kerar, 'Call him (Pattani) and say there has been a misunderstanding. As President the Board of Administration, it is of course he who has to look after the Princes.' I had then a humourous chat with Kerar, I told him, 'Misunderstanding? Nothing of the kind'.

Then the talk turned to the officers of 'The Steel Frame' (I. C. S. European Officers). He (Pattaniji) remarked, "I have yet to see officers of the stature of Sir James Dobbley and Proctor. In that Benares incident¹⁷, Dobbley advised Lord Hardinge, 'Let the newspapers bawl anything. You need not mind them.' "For rather I would have ten Hardinges dead than " (said Gandhiji at the time) but the sentence was never completed as Mrs. Besant created a great row just then. Then I talked to Pattaniji about Murphy and the Governor of Bihar. I told him they were both excellent men.

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1. The gospel of those who believe in the path of *bhakti* (devotion). It narrates chiefly the exploits of Lord Krishna.
 2. Lord Vishnu's spouse. Lord Vishnu is the Preserver in the Trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer).
 3. An elephant, says the parable, was dragged into a lake by crocodile. When all his own strength was exhausted, the elephant cried to Lord Vishnu for help, Who rushed to the place, before even His name was fully uttered, and saved him. The elephant stands for man, the lake for the world and its sins, and the crocodile for the Enemy of man.
 4. God and Man, the Guru and the Disciple, of the Lord's Song, Bhagwadgita. Krishna's another name was Mohan (magnetist). Gandhiji's name was Mohandas (das = servant).



5. Lord Krishna's maternal uncle. Being told by a Voice that his sister's son would kill him one day, he kept his sister Devaki and her husband Vasudev (Hence Lord Krishna is 'Vaasudev') in jail. Kansa killed seven sons but the eighth, Lord Krishna, could be miraculously spirited away to Vrindavan where His foster parents, Nanda and Yashoda, reared him up. At the age of 12. He was challenged to duels by mighty athletes who were killed by Him at Mathura in the presence of Kansa, whom also he killed and saved the people from tyranny.
6. Co-disciple of Lord Krishna. Years after they separated, Sudama (pronounced: U like rook, da like arm, ma like arm) being miserably poor, went to Lord Krishna who received him extremely warmly despite the big gulf in their status. Sudama's gift was only a handful of flattened rice. Krishna rewarded him for that gift by making him a millionaire owning a palace.
7. Lord Shiva's name, Gandhiji's co-prisoner was Shri Shankarlal Banker. A pun is played here upon the word. Kaanji is a short form of Krishna.
8. Love, and single-minded love, is meant by the 'thin thread.'
9. A golden deer once appeared before Seeta. Lord Rama's spouse, during their exile in a forest. She urged Rama to shoot the deer in order to make for herself a golden upper wear from it. Much against His will, Rama set out in pursuit of the deer which was really a Demon. When He returned, He found that Seeta was kidnapped. He was wild with grief and strained every nerve to find out where she was carried away. Finally, He killed, Ravana, the kidnapper, and recovered Her, whose soul force, owing to her chastity, was so powerful that Ravana had not dared to touch her during her detention.
10. Dusshasana, maternal uncle of king Duryodhana, wanted to rob Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas, of her honour in the open Durbar. But before she could be stripped of one sari, another appeared and so on till the arms of Dusshasana were exhausted and the honour of Draupadi was saved.
11. King Bali was such a Powerful Demon that the Gods feared the collapse of the 3 worlds and their own ruin. They appealed to Lord Vishnu, who took a dwarf's form and stood as a beggar only 3 steps' length of ground. King Bali was intimidated by his Guru re the identity of the beggar and asked to refuse the request to the beggar. Bali, however, stuck to his royal duty his word. The Dwarf increased his size infinitely and in two steps covered the earth and the heavens. Bali then offered his head for the third step. The Lord put his foot on it, sent him to another world, but made him a king there and became Himself his door-keeper-for ever.
12. Lord Rama's father: Just on the night preceding the day fixed for Rama's installation on the throne and Dasharatha's retirement, the third queen Kaikeyi demanded the grant of two boons promised her long ago, by which Rama was to be exiled and her own son, Bharata, enthroned. Torn between his sense of equity, as Rama was the eldest son, as well as his love for Rama and his traditional honour by which he wanted to keep his word, Dasharatha could say nothing and fainted. But Rama, immediately he knew of all this, came forward to keep the royal word and left for the exile. The shock of separation killed Dasharath.



13. As he had fallen into the company of a low woman, Ajamil, a Brahmin, deserted his wife and his relatives and went to live with her. He had several children by her. The youngest was a son, Narayan by name, whom he loved very deeply. When he was drawing nearly his last breath, he called this Natayan to him. But as Narayan is also Lord Vishnu's name even this unwitting remembrance of Him sent back the emissaries of Death, who had come to carry away his life. The story is meant to extol the power of God's remembrance but there is no reference in it to Ajamil's wife. Hence, it is difficult to understand Pattaniji's reference to her in the couplet.

14. Name of Lord Krishna meaning son of Nanda (foster-father). Krishna's flute has been the favourite theme of many a poet down the centuries, as it stands for the Call Divine, both of which have a compelling charm.

15. King Shishupal, ruler of Chedi (on the Narmada river, in M. P now) was an enemy of Lord Vishnu even in his previous two births. In his eighth incarnation as Lord Krishna, Lord Vishnu Himself kills him for the third time and restores to him his old honoured position as the Lord's door-keeper. Shishupal, of course, does not know all this. He commits 99 crimes against Lord Krishna which the Lord forgives. At this Rajasuya-yagna, he commits the 100th crime, is therefore killed and is thus redeemed.

The guest is to be treated as a God and hence there was the custom of washing the guest's toe with water and that water was sipped as *charanamrita* (the ambrosial grace of the Holy Feet). Sages or revered Gurus are even now respected in this way sometimes.

16. After the Mahabharata War, the clansmen of Lord Krishna became intoxicated with pride and heavy drinking , with the result that they fought among themselves till they were all exterminated. Lord Krishna remained a silent spectator of this holocaust, because he saw God's justice in it, but He saw that His Mission for incarnating Himself as Krishna was then over. As he was sitting under a tree with his legs outstretched a hunter took the soles of his feet as the faces of a pair of deer with their bodies hid behind the tree. He shot an arrow at one sole and thus ended the 8th incarnation of the Lord in a forest.

17. The incident happened "at Benares on February 4th, 1916 on the occasion of the foundation of the Hindu University. As H. E. the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) had attended the function, many Indian Princes had also come there. In that very first speech after his return to India, Gandhiji stated that the body-guards and aids-de-camps and stringent police precaution for the protection of H. E. the Viceroy betrayed a distrust of the people."—"Day to Day with Gandhi', Vol: II, preface by Narahari Parikh. And Gandhiji added: "Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?" Mrs. Besant raised a commotion just then and Gandhiji had to leave his speech unfinished. The words quoted by Mahadevbhai here bear the same sense but are not exactly same.



Back to Bhavanagar

As Gandhiji was to go back to Ahmedabad via Bhavanagar, at least one meeting in the town was the inevitable. There also Gandhiji spoke on nothing but the spinning wheel and untouchability and gave an account of Pattani Saheb's experience as a beginner in spinning. To the religious *Shravaks* (Jains) he said: "It is in order to feed the ants, that you sprinkle their holes with flour. But the ant itself begs nothing of you, because there is the One Who provides food to all. The ant, besides, is no idler. It is rather these little insects, like the ant and the bee, that teach us to be industrious. If we emulate them, starvation is certain to disappear from this land. If, therefore, you give up providing flour to ants, God will forgive you, but, take it as certain that God will put you in the dock, if you do not spin."

Referring to untouchability: "We must learn the *dharma* of peacefulness and courteous behaviour. Everyone has but to follow his own dharma. Let him who believes in retaining untouchability follow his dharma, but let us follow our own. If we follow it unaggressively and with good manners, others will one day be converted to our dharma. The one sure remedy for their conversion lies in removing the slightest trace of untouchability from ourselves. At the same time, as I have often stated before, I do not want inter-caste dinners and marriages with antyajas. All I wish you to do is to serve an antyaja child with as much loving care as you would your son or brother, if he were ill. I would go even further. I appeal to you to serve the antyajas first and then your kith and kin, because there may be none else to serve them, while there will be many at hand to serve your dear ones. Therein lie culture, Hindu dharma and your salvation. After the antyajas, the next party you may serve are those caste Hindus who believe it their dharma to continue untouchability, so that you can wean them from the sin; but never use coercion for the purpose."

Pattani Saheb's speech deserves to be given here also: "The day has come for that man, who is used to give orders, to obey them. I spent these so many days with the Mahatma. The man cooped up in the same air badly needs a change and these four days of my stay in the Mahatma's atmosphere have made me purer." His throat was choking with emotion as he was uttering these words. "The thought that it would be unfair, when I spend 24 hours in your service, to refuse to Gandhiji the half an hour he wanted made me resolve to spin. Gandhiji says I shall be an expert spinner in a month. But I would rather wish that many others were induced to spin at seeing me spinning the wheel given by Gandhiji than be an expert spinner myself. There is no



political game behind this spinning. It is only a way to remove the stark poverty of our country. Without it all talk of upholding the Sanatana (ancient) Dharma and the like has no value at all. Gandhiji wanted the names of 2 persons who were new converts to spinning. He got one of them in me. That means his wish was satisfied 50%. But so many of you, who have been old hands at spinning, have not yet been able to add a single recruit. That recruit is still wanted in order to satisfy Gandhiji completely." In response to this appeal for complete satisfaction the Sheriff got up and declared his decision to be a disciple of Pattani Saheb and spin for half an hour daily.

Pattani Saheb remarked jocularly: "An idiot has been given to me as a pupil."

It was then announced that 275 maunds of cotton were collected and 54 persons had enrolled themselves as regular spinners.

The Gujarat Vidyapith Convocation

dt. 14-1-1925

Immediately on his return from Bhavanagar Gandhiji attended, as the Chancellor, the Convocation of the Gujarat Vidyapith, in order to confer degrees on the new graduates. The function was quietly performed. It began with the reading of the Registrar's report.

The usual mantras for the occasion were then chanted and their meanings explained. This was followed by the recitation of the first ayats (verses) of the Quran-e-Shareef. The new graduates then took the following oath by repeating its words as pronounced by the Registrar: "I promise to try constantly to follow the injunctions of my religion all through my life and to spend it in such a way as would enhance the glory of my *alma mater*, my country and my language. May I succeed in keeping this oath by the grace of God and the blessings of my elders."

Then after awarding the degree certificates to the new graduates Gandhiji said: "Students, sisters and brothers,

I congratulate you, students, for the degree you have acquired and I hope you will keep the oath you have taken. It is usual in ordinary institutions to give on similar occasions the figure of the increase of boy and girl students during the previous year as well as a record of the all-round progress made by the institution. But from the



Report the Registrar read today, we saw that, during the four years' career of the Vidyapith, the number of pupils had been going down. This would usually create a sense of disappointment, but I am not disheartened. I may admit that I would have been glad if we too could have shown progress—as the world understands the term—either by an increase of names in our roll or by any such accepted standard. I cannot say that I am glad at the present situation, but I am not disappointed either. I myself, and many others with me, did hope that this work would not need to continue after one year and that, before the year's end, you would be already studying in these same institutions which you had vacated. Four years have rolled away in place of that single one and now we cannot say for how many long years we shall have to suffer this exile. But I have begun to take the view that this is no exile at all. Perhaps even after we get Swaraj, there will be quite a number of institutions which may be free from Government control. The difference at that time will lie in the fact that such independent institutions will not have to compete with those controlled by the Government and the latter will not be regarded as inimical to national interests and hence as worthy of our boycott. All the same, even after Swaraj, numerous experiments in education will continue to be made and among these such Vidyapiths and National Colleges will have their rightful place. That is why I hope that those students who are attending the National College and other institutions of the Gujarat Vidyapith will not feel disappointed and regard the years spent here as wasted.

"When I reached the Ashram (Sabarmati Ashram) this morning, I found a post card awaiting me. It contained charges against the National College but the writer had not given his name. I have often written in *Navajivan* that none should write an anonymous letter. It casts a slur on the writer and betrays his cowardice. We must, therefore, give up the habit. It is best to forget, to bury, those thoughts which we have not the courage to publish before the world. All the same, it is a long standing habit with us to write anonymous letters and perhaps it will continue still. I, therefore, went through that anonymous letter. It says: "Why don't you close up the National College? How is it that your eyes remain closed to facts even now? Some students are misguiding you. Students have been leaving this college to join Government institutions. Whatever you may think, the fact stands that the boys and girls of the college have no faith whatever in your spinning wheel. Please, therefore, close the Vidyapith and all its institutions. I do not agree with this advice and I wish you also don't. Each and every activity on earth need not be judged by the number of men engaged in it or by the money spent on it. If that is our one criterion to base our



judgment, there is every danger of our falling into an error. There is this activity of self-purification going on in our country, for that is the name we have given to non-co-operation. It is wrong to expect that the number of students must necessarily increase in an institution that does such work. If it does increase, well and good. If it does not, we must hold on to our faith and, so long as we have that faith, we must continue to perform the activity.

"If it is true that the students have no faith in the spinning wheel, it is surely a matter of regret. Whoever has no faith in the spinning wheel ought to leave the Gujarat Vidyapith at once. I am sure you remember the resolution of the Indian National Congress about national schools, but I remind you of it here. Nobody had any objection against the definition of a national institution given in that resolution. To think that there really was a mental reservation but nobody openly declared it, is disgraceful for me, for them, and for the country. How can I believe that the acceptance of the resolution by the So many intelligent, sober and independent-minded men that had gathered there, was only superficial and did not come from their hearts? That is why I say that thousands of men were in agreement with that definition. And now the Kathiawar Conference also has accepted it. And what is that definition? Only that school can be termed a national institution in which, everyone, both teachers and students, spins for half an hour and wears hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi; regional language or Hindustani is the medium of instruction; physical culture is given a deserving place; the art of self-defence is taught; attempts are made to bring about heart unity between Hindus and Muslims; and the untouchable is not boycotted in any way. It is the Congress that has fixed this definition of a national school. If, therefore, I say that those who have no faith in the spinning wheel may leave their respective national institutions, you should not regard my demand as exacting. If such students leave these institutions, we shall be able to know whither we are going and how many men and women, as well as boy and girl students, are really with us.

"My attention was drawn to the criticism that appeared in an article in "Sabarmati" (the National College magazine) some of the allegations are unjustified, since I have never been guilty of expressing some thoughts attributed to me. I have not said that students must give all their time to spinning—not that such thoughts are entirely alien to my way of thinking. If I am able to win over the country and the students to the view that the best thing to do for the country is to spin for the whole day, I would definitely appeal to students to do so. But today I cannot carry the country



with me in the matter. I am unable to do that thing myself at present. If I can go on spinning all the day long, I would not hesitate to urge the country and the students to do the same. I certainly cherish the goal of convincing the country that learning in its true sense lies in turning the spinning wheel for all the 24 hours of the day. Viewed from that angle, real learning lies in taking up any clean activity, whatever it be, and pursuing it till you gain full concentration in it. We do *yoga* sadhana (spiritual pursuit for attainment of unity with God) thereby. But I am not speaking of that thing just now. All that I say at present to students is, 'You must turn the spinning wheel cheerfully and with faith, spin excellent yarn, learn up the whole science of spinning and have the same love and eagerness to learn this science as you have for the study of your favourite science. I have no grudge against you, if you give the rest of your time to all your other studies. Only, I want you to do whatever you do, with faith in it and not as an irksome task.'

"The second count charges me with stating in the past that the Vidyapith should prescribe a curriculum that would enable its graduate to earn his living. I stick to that statement even now. But the question of livelihood is not, and should not be, the main point either with you or with the Vidyapith. It is possible that you may degrade yourself, if you begin to look at learning as nothing but a means of livelihood. According to definition of *vidya* (learning), which the Vidyapith has accepted as its motto, *Vidya* is that which leads to freedom'. Hence, it is not right to study in that institution, which has this ideal as its motto, with the sole eye of getting maintenance through it. There are a thousand ways of earning one's living. But the object of *vidya* (learning) is the elevation of the soul, mind and body. Only he can be said to have acquired real learning whose limbs are well-proportioned, whose body is strong and serviceable, who can bear intense heat and cold, whose mind is strong enough to do what he wills. who is self-controlled, whose soul is crystal clear—so clear that he can rightfully affirm he is going to listen only to the dictates of his heart, which also, being the seat of the soul, has to have snow-white purity. Why should that man need to take lessons for earning his livelihood who has become a master of this lore? Why should he worry for his maintenance, since he has the faith that the same Providence that has provided him with his hands, will bring them work to do also. I am told that students are saddled with worldly responsibilities, that they have to feed two or even three mouths. Well, let them have that responsibility—they should perform their duty and bravery lies in that performance—but one's livelihood is secured by the very attainment of the qualities given above. It is not by hunting for jobs that you can maintain yourselves.



The man who looks to learning as nothing but a means of subsistence, is unable to get even that. And as a matter of fact, even today, the Vidyapith is providing you with the means of maintenance. You will be crippled, I warn you, if the Vidyapith decides to give you a written bond to the effect that, immediately after you complete its course, it will provide you with a job carrying a salary of Rs. 300/- or Rs. 30/-. You will then be incapable of doing either any national service or any *purushartha* (effort to gain spiritual or material benefit) whatever. All that the Vidyapith can give you is the power of struggling against your difficulties and overcoming them ultimately; or to put it better still, the Vidyapith can give you nothing—not even that power; it can only draw out and develop whatever is inherent in you. I would, therefore, like you to firmly believe in the view that neither have you lost, nor are you going to lose, anything by coming to the Vidyapith.

"The Registrar has suggested that I should say something about what the future of the Gujarat Vidyapith and its national college is going to be and in what direction they should now be led. Any suggestion in these matters passes my comprehension. I do not know the shape of things to come in India during the year. Of course, I cherish high hopes. I am an optimist and am going to remain so till the end of my days. But this is not the right time to give out those hopes before you. All I may say just now to you students, is that you should keep yourselves free from worry over the question of the future of the Vidyapith. You must take it as indubitable that is right for you to be in the Vidyapith, that it is wrong for you to join a Government school or college, and that under the present situation you will not get there that education which you ought to get. You may continue to stay in the Vidyapith only so long as you feel that India has not got, and will never get, through Government schools what it really needs. If you think that Government institutions do provide for India's needs, the only right course for you is to rejoin those institutions. And then you need not concern yourselves as to what the future of the Vidyapith is going to be. What is required and expected from you is to be seized with a feeling of intense *vairagya* (aversion or disillusionment) for Government schools. Once you are possessed of that *vairagya*, you are certain to have an aversion, and not a fascination, for Government schools. So long as there is even a trace of that fascination, you will continue to compare the Vidyapith with those schools and, every time you do so, your mind will tell you, "O, there are these numerous conveniences there, and they are lacking here." Vidyapith's excellence lies in the very fact that it is bereft of conveniences. If we create them here, we shall cease to learn the valuable lesson of how to overcome difficulties. Or say, the conveniences



provided here are of a different kind. There has got to be some exceptional merit in this institution. (Otherwise it need not exist). It is bad in principle to make a mental comparison of this institution's schools with those of the Government. If only you are convinced at heart of the truth of the above principle, how can you feel any worry over the future of the Vidyapith? It is enough for you if you can proudly affirm, 'We have given the fullest help to the fight for Swaraj by answering the call of our country.' Neither you nor I have any right to know anything beyond this. All I know is this: The Vidyapith will last so long as it continues to be helpful in the fight for Swaraj. On the day when it ceases to be helpful, it will be destroyed. And what is wrong if it meets with destruction then? That is the only desirable end for it. The future of India's Swaraj is the future of the Vidyapith.

"What is pleasant to us is not always beneficial to us. I have grown old and yet even now I feel that all that is pleasant to me is not necessarily good for me. That is why it is good and necessary to take the advice of our elders in many matters. And that is why there is with us the hoary tradition of seeking a *guru* and taking refuge at his feet. We are asked to accept him as our stay and support and, putting our head on his lap, tell him, "Make me your instrument. Instil into my mind whatever you think is good for me." At present, you find nowhere a *guru* worth his name and hence the question of total surrender and self-dedication does not arise. What is only required here in this Vidyapith is our faith that our teachers are leading us to the right path and not to the wrong. I ask you to swallow many a bitter draught under the faith that there are many things that are bitter in taste at first but are sweet like nectar in the end². That is my advice as well as my humble request to you.

"I wish to revert to the oath you have taken. I hope you have paid attention to the prayer also which was read by prof. Athavale. Both of them are very simple and common. But we fail to discern the power that the most common things possess. We raise to the skies a very ordinary picture drawn by an artist and lying cooped up within the walls of a room, as that has been our rooted habit. But nobody cares to appreciate the sublime but ever-new pictures always drawn in the sky above our heads.

"That boundless sky with the brilliant stars and the moon within it or with the glorious colours of sunrise and sunset! What deep and innate joy it can give us! Which human artist is able to draw a picture like that? And yet we never pay any attention to it, as we have eyes only to see the things of the earth below. That is why we are enamoured of the worthless pictures of a painter that provide only superficial pleasure, and that



is a tragic situation. That is why it is possible that you may not have been able to understand the worth and essence of the prayer you heard and of the oath which the Registrar made you take. You should, therefore, meditate upon the prayer repeatedly and be ever watchful to keep your oath. You get spiritual nourishment from the sublime *mantras* included in that prayer, which you can never get from speeches and articles. It is a food as natural as mother's milk. If a mother does not suckle her baby and if some other woman gives it various other foods, what would be the result? Not a single baby would be alive today. It is these very common things that nourish us like nectar. Let us, therefore,

think deeply over our ancestral heritage, assimilate these sayings and live our life accordingly. Only then is our life worthwhile. You may forget my speech. You may forget everything else, but if you do not forget the *mantras* of that prayer and the oath you have taken, your time and mine have not been wasted."

After performing the opening ceremony of the Pictures' Exhibition Gandhiji said : "I said something about pictures, but that does not apply to these pictures. Nobody will ever say that every picture, as such, is useless. All that I want to say is that the performance of an opening ceremony is unnecessary."

Kaka Kalelkar³ : "The art of painting stands by itself. To have a flair for the pictorial art is an extraordinary gift. We may not cherish what is just common. But this art in its real sense develops the art of expressing our inner self. Let us hope that the art of bringing out what surges within us develops in us.

1. The Gujarat Vidyapith's motto is सा विद्या या विमुक्तये='That is learning which leads to freedom.' The original words refer, of course, to the redemption of the soul, but the Vidyapith meant political freedom also.

2. Ref: to Gita XVIII—37. "That happiness is *sattvika* (of the best kind) which in its inception is as poison, but in the end as nectar, born of the serene realization of the true nature of *Atman* (Self) "—"Gita According to Gandhi" by Mahadev Desai.

3. Kaka Kalelkar, the then Principal of the Gujarat Vidyapith, has made his name not only as one of Gandhiji's earliest colleagues and jail-goers but as a doyen of Gujarati literature, though he is a Maharashtrian by birth. He is, besides, a well-known connoisseur of art.



Pranajivan Residential College

Opening the building whose entire cost, two hundred and fifty thousand rupees, was donated by Dr. Pranajivandas Mehta. Gandhiji gave vent to some apposite sentiments with regard to him. He advised the students to draw out and develop, from the adventurous and philanthropic life of Dr. Pranajivandas, their own prana (life-breath) their jivan (life) giving an idea of Dr. Mehta's life he said:

"We are childhood-friends. The doctor has seen much of life. He has always been an enterprising spirit and a philanthropist. It is entirely wrong to think that it was owing to his desire for fame that he wanted this building to be known after his name. I refuse to believe that he has done anything in life in order to get into the public eye. But it was the friends who thought that if his name was associated with this building, it

would provide a model for the people to follow. He is, at present, lying in a sick-bed. It is my prayer that he may live long, so that he can render even greater service to the country. Dr. Mehta's is a personality which deserves to be widely known. He joined a medical college where he secured a gold medal. He then proceeded to England for further studies. He became both a doctor and a barrister there. And now—which perhaps you do not know—he is a diamond merchant. He had once been even the Dewan of an Indian State and had also taken to the profession of ship-building. I say all this to you simply in order to impress upon you the truth of the maxim: Man can do what he wills. He never had any fascination either for the medical or for the legal profession. He has earned his wealth by honest means and has spent a large part of it for the country's cause. I am talking to you about his enterprises, and the name he has earned, in the hope that many of you may become Dr. Mehtas in future and use your learning and your wealth for the good of the country."

After the end of this Convocation, Gandhiji started on the 15th (January 1925) for the Farmers' Conference of Petlad Taluka (division of a district). Five days from the 15th to the 20th, were allotted to Sojitra, Petlad and Bardoli Talukas.



Practice vs. Precept

Viewed from the standpoint of the people's enthusiasm, one can say that it was by no means less warm than in 1921. One could not but feel that life was still throbbing in the people. But even here we found the people having hold of the wrong end of the stick, a thing which they have been doing since 1921 and owing to which we have come to our present condition Khadi caps were fairly in evidence but Khadi coats fewer and Khadi dhoties (sheets used to cover the lower half of the body) fewer still.

But the anti-climax was reached at Pij, near Nadiad, on 14-1-1925. The popular song:

'Swaraj is so easy to win, dear brick'

was sung by some little girls. When they came to:

'Discard foreign clothing and wear Khadi thick'

'Swaraj is then easy to win, dear brick.'

people were splitting their sides with laughter, as not a single one of the girls was wearing Khadi! And yet, the poor little innocents had no idea of the cause of this laughter and were singing the song in all seriousness! But the scoffers too might have no idea how very serious the tragedy of the situation was. It was difficult to assess which ignorance was deeper—that of the girl-singers about the ludicrousness of the situation or of those who brought Khadi into derision by dismissing the occasion as one providing excusable and innocent merriment. As I think they are of public interest and benefit, I quote here Gandhiji's sentiments on this contradiction:

"Nobody can correctly assess my fitness for the praises you have showered upon me in your address. But how good would it be if we all try to acquire and follow in practice the virtues that have been attributed to me! The lesson, however, which the song of those girls has provided us is the exact opposite of the lesson we should learn. May it be, I wonder, the same case with the eulogies in this address? From my tours over the country, I have found that we have got the bad habit of laying it on thick in our compliments. Not that it is a piece of deliberate chicanery, but we hold the comfortable view that our duty ends when we are lavish in our praises. I am Khadi-mad, I am rentia-mad, as everybody knows, and I would never like to go to a place where the spinning wheel is not honoured. But I see that, in fact, the spinning wheel is looked down upon here. It is not possible for these innocent little girls to cherish any carping attitude. But the fault lies with those who arranged the programme of making



these girls sing that song. We had, therefore, better spent our time in doing our duty than in giving addresses. Push on this activity of the spinning wheel, if we can't do anything else—that is now the first and the most essential thing with me. The result is bound to be so marvellous that we shall be able to prove true the saying, 'Swaraj will come prancing on the thread of yarn.' The wheel, besides, is a uniting factor. Have you thought over the plight of the helpless and miserable masses? Should we open *sadavrats* (a popular institution in India where people are supplied free food materials, sometimes even prepared food) for them? Lady Pattani is a thoughtful woman. She asked me, "What do you say to opening *sadavrats*?" I categorically answered, "It is harmful to open them because a free supply of food makes able-bodied men idlers." It is a sin, and no virtue, to give some coins in charity to men who are physically fit. But the spinning wheel can definitely come to such people's aid and provide them maintenance as well as full employment. Looking at it from the angle of both individual and social economics, we shall find that the introduction of the spinning wheel means the performance of a holy sacrifice by the whole society. There are these so many wise men and women present here. If you want to serve the country, if you have any love for me, you must make it a point to spin for half an hour and contribute your yarn to the nation. Even if you be rich or even if you have no time for it, spare half an hour for the wheel. If your Dewan tells you (Pij was then under the State of Baroda) that spinning centres can't be opened here, let him. But nobody will stop you from sending your yarn individually to me."

Then speaking on untouchability, he addressed the Patidar brothers (a high-class peasant community) specially:

"Don't forget that your present high position is due to the *antyaja* brothers. Do listen to their complaints. My experience of Kaira District in this matter is painful. It is the system of untouchability that is at the root of their plight. Don't oppress the untouchables. I do not say you should dine with them."

Gandhiji inquired, "Is there any *antyaja* here?" "There they are! Away, at the far corner," said Pandiyaji.¹ Gandhiji asked the Patidars to distribute the green and dried fruits, offered him in a big tray, among those untouchable children, saying, 'They are not to be distributed as gifts from me, but as a mark of your love and good behaviour towards them.' "May I not get some of it as *prasad*?² I am your disciple," somebody begged. Gandhiji replied, "You may take away the flowers, but the fruits are all for the *antyajas* only." Just then Pandiyaji led the *antyaja* children from their ostracised place,



right through the meeting, to Gandhiji. There was a little stir in the meeting and I heard some old men complaining, 'Now, I am sure, the Iron Age has invaded the village.' "O, yes, it has." All the same nobody openly raised any objection and did anything regrettable in the midst of the general exultation felt by all for this visit of Gandhiji. He said finally, "Not that there are no Hindu-Muslim quarrels here, but I wish that they disappear."

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1. Mohanlal K. Pandya, an erstwhile revolutionary, became a prominent Satyagrahi during the Kaira Satyagraha in 1918. He earned the honorific 'Onion thief' for 'stealing' onions from his own farm which the British Government had confiscated. The struggle ended in Gandhiji's third victory in India.
 2. 'Prasad' may be translated as 'grace in a concrete form.' Devotees offer fruits (and even costly things) to their adored Gods or holy men who, taste a little of it (or use it) and then the remaining is distributed among the people as the God's or the saint's prasada.



Qualities of a Volunteer

The Farmers' Conference which was held at Sojitra in Petlad Taluka on 15-1-1925, showed clearly that the organisers had worked very hard for it. The attendance also was very large. Dr. Sumant Mehta¹ was the president. This is not the place to write much about his speech. Though he read some of its portions he stopped abruptly and declared that as the days of speechifying had passed and those of solid work arrived, he would continue as President only if his condition of agreeing to do something tangible was accepted, as if that condition itself were the sum and substance of his whole speech. It is also Gandhiji's favourite maxim that a public worker should serve the people only on his own terms, and that he should not give up his principles to placate the people. He, therefore, hailed Dr. Sumant's condition for service and focused the whole work of the Conference on the procurement of the 40 volunteers which Dr. Sumant had demanded. The call for this number of volunteers, therefore, took up a major part of Gandhiji's speech. In relation with this call Gandhiji gave a long exposition on all that was expected from a volunteer.

"I would think the Conference to be of no utility whatsoever, if the worthy President's appeal is not given a fitting response. Were his demand too ambitious for your capacity, there was no need to support it. But, if from this Conference even 40 persons do not offer themselves as volunteers, it would be a matter of shame for you all—as much for you as for me, since my contact with the Patidars began in South Africa, long ago, when I was there and not after I came here and started work. I base my hope on the ground of that contact. The least that this big gathering can do is to provide 40 volunteers and it *must* provide them; and there must be not only men but women among them. If women have no place in this fight, the work we shall do will be only half of what we can.

"It is true in a sense that volunteers should not draw any salary. He is not a volunteer, who does his work with an eye for payment. At the same time the public that takes work from a volunteer is bound to provide for his maintenance. 40 volunteers are not enough for our work here and India requires as many as 40 lakhs (4 millions) of volunteers. Even for the work we have taken on hand today, we should require, at least, five to seven thousand volunteers and, in this our very poor country, it is impossible for so many men to do their work without taking any payment for it. God has not produced us in order that we may simply eat and do no work. It is because we have broken Nature's universal law of justice, the law of equity, that there are men



who take their food, but do not work for getting it. That is why, while there are some who can spend away thousands of rupees, there are thousands of others who have to starve for want of food. An English writer of Indian History, Mr. Hunter, says that 10 crores in India get only one meal a day and that too of nothing but *rotlo* (thick unleavened bread) and salt. Even the Congress has resolved that it should not want for recruitment only unpaid volunteers and that leaders should accept payment in order to set an example. If I find it necessary, I too should accept a subsistence wage—Vallabhbhai also should do the same—though I get countless things for my own self from my friends. At present, perhaps neither Vallabhbhai nor I have any need for payment for our services, but if that time comes, both of us will join the Volunteer Corps as recruits.

Take even the examples of Tilak Maharaj² and Gokhaleji³. In order to give their services to the cause of education, both of them had taken the sacred pledge to satisfy themselves with a pittance of Rs. 40 per month for their services as professors in the Fergusson College when it was started. Tilak Maharaj left the institution later on for several reasons, but so long as he was there, he regarded it as an honour to draw that salary. But Gokhaleji completed the full span of 20 years. He was besides a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, used to work on many of its Committees, and got something too from all that work. All the same he never ceased to draw his monthly salary from the Fergusson College. Even when he grew into a 'great man' and was in a position to draw a salary of 10,000 rupees, he regarded this 75 rupees (to which his salary of 40 had grown by then) as more valuable than the big sums he was given for his other work. He even accepted with great delight and respect a very small amount which he was given as a pension.

"Volunteers need not think of the censure of the world. 'Satan always finds some mischief for idle hands to do' and so if do-nothings censure them, volunteers need not be upset or frightened. They should rather take slander as nourishing food. He who cannot bear public criticism need not be a volunteer. He must be as thick-skinned as an elephant. He should go on doing his work silently and with concentration, without allowing his mind to be distracted by scenes roundabout. He must be a Yogi absorbed in himself and minding his own business and nothing else. That volunteer who regards himself as 'sold' to the nation, should have no other dreams except those pertaining to his work and should have no inhibition about taking enough amount for his livelihood—not, of course, enough for a sumptuous table, but



for his frugal fare. Such seasoned workers should at once recruit themselves as volunteers and relieve our worthy president's worry on that score. If you want to 'imprison' him here—tie him down to the work here—you must come out and enroll yourselves. You will hardly find any other president who would be satisfied with such a small demand."

A call for enrolment was immediately made and the names of volunteers enlisted.

"16 names have been enrolled in response to my appeal. There were already 15 others. So there is still a shortage of 9 names. I hope, I trust, you will not send me disappointed. There are still 10 minutes to go before I finish. Please, therefore, give me 9 names within these 10 minutes. It should not be necessary to 'thank' those who have given their names. If it is, let me be told so. He who enlists himself discharges his duty. I do not know what work is awaiting you. I have not made a study of the local problems.

"It is impossible not to say anything about the biggest and the most widespread activity that is going on in India at present—I mean that of Khadi or the spinning wheel. Everytime somebody opposes the movement, my faith in it grows all the stronger. But don't interpret that faith as that of a stubborn fool who sticks like a leech to a thing he does not understand. I put before India the thing I am talking of only four or five years ago, but I had pleaded for it in 'Hind Swaraj' (in 1908). long before I had even had my first *darshan* of the spinning wheel. And the more it is opposed, the more I find that there is want of thought and experience behind the opposition, while there is deep thinking and experience in my arguments. I think I am an honest man. I consider it my *dharma* to admit my error. I have an aversion to dirt of any sort. It is a disease to retain any dirt, in body, mind or heart. Hence, refusal to admit one's fault is also a disease. The man who does not confess his lapses to God—though God sees everything, He is also a Robin Good-fellow and may throw us into delusion, the man, I say, who does not confess his lapses before God, that is before the public, will be attacked with corrosion, he will suffer from spiritual consumption. That spiritual disease is more harmful than the physical, for, while the latter destroys only the body, the former destroys the soul. The soul is immortal and incorruptible; and in reality it is not the soul that is destroyed, but we are affected with the delusion of its destruction. Hence, when a man imagines the destruction of the soul that is immortal, he suffers from a double disease. I have, therefore, no hesitation whatsoever in admitting my error, if I



find one. It would not affect me if, as a result of that admission, all the spinning wheels would stop working and I became the world's object of derision as a mad man. But I know that that time has not arrived. I have such deep faith in the spinning wheel that, even if my wife gives it up, my sons and my colleagues who are more to me than even my sons, give it up, I shall go it alone, chant the mantra of the wheel and keep on plying it.

"India is suffering from the terrible disease of idleness. It is not natural with us, certainly not with the peasant, whose agriculture would go to the dogs, if it were. This idleness came to us as a result of the destruction of the spinning wheel. Crores of Indians became unemployed. Now, even many units of different industries, cannot absorb these so many crores. If some say, they will make baskets, some others locks, then others match-boxes, and others again soap, these industries cannot employ crores of men and if they do, nobody would use their goods as there would be over-production. If we go in for such industries, we may form individual groups, but not a nationwide, organisation. Such piece-meal activities cannot uplift us. That is exactly why I say India needs a supplementary industry. There may be very few villages in the Kaira District which I may not have visited and very few persons I have not seen. A large majority of them have a lot of time in which they do nothing. If I suggest that the way to put that spare time to good use is to ply the spinning-wheel, not all of them like the advice. Hence, there are some who commit thefts, some who run into debts, and some others who simply starve. A nation fallen into that plight, a nation forcibly made idle, can meet with only one end, its destruction. If it does not awaken itself and awaken others, the only result would be its doom. That is a law of sociology. That is a law not of science dealing with an individual, but with society itself. Crores of men cannot earn their living from the spinning wheel, but it has not at all been suggested as a means of livelihood. It has been described as *Annapurna* (supplementary feeder). *Annapurna* gives ghee (clarified butter) and milk. Countless poor men have to go without milk or ghee, they cannot add a drop of milk or ghee to their wheat porridge. That is an alarming state. The one remedy for it is the spinning wheel. If every individual adds one rupee to his income by work, the addition is not appreciable, but if this town, Vaso, with a population of 7000, increases its income by 7000 rupees, the result can be noticed.

"The constant practice of spinning automatically develops some attendant good qualities. You imbibe simple habits of life, guilelessness, and regularity. And discipline



in one thing brings you discipline in your whole life, just as if we set right one slanted angle of a rectangular frame, all the three others will become automatically right angles. That is but an inviolable law of Geometry. Do one thing regularly and all others will be done the same way. If you do not accept the spinning wheel today, you will remember me later on with regret. As long as the flow of the water is not powerful, you may make an embankment and conserve the water for future use in your fields. But the man who makes an embankment when the water is about to rush in a torrent, loses both the water and the embankment itself. "That is why I tell you, take time by the forelock. Wake up. Don't make a selfish *bania's* (merchant-class) calculations. Instead of asking yourselves what income will accrue to you from the spinning wheel, think of the increase in the national income. When I showed them, by figures and calculation, what amount a small village like Trapaj can earn, the people were amazed. Kathiawad's is not a fertile soil. The region produces only dry sticks for fuel and stones from its rocks and the land is so barren that people are idle, not for 6 months but for 8, and waste away their time in gossip, as they sit at the village square and, what is worse, take even opium if they have a craving for it. I explained to the people of Trapaj how they could easily save 2000 rupees. For turning one pound of cotton into cloth, the biggest item of expense is only spinning, not weaving. If you yourselves clean the cotton which you produce in your own farms and spin it, you will have to bear only the weaving expense. And if we have to undergo only the weaving expense, we can compete with the cotton mills of the world, because in mills also the weaving expense is nearly as great as in hand-loom weaving. The people of India knew this key to prosperity and hence they had made the spinning wheel as much a household business as the oven. With the wheel's departure from the home, our lives became sinful and atheistic and we ceased to fear God. If you want to acquire faith in God, if you wish to be pious, if you desire to protect the honour of your sisters, you should accept the spinning wheel. National awakening, Hindu-Muslim unity, giving the go-by to the country's poverty, and the uplift of the Indian peasantry—all come in the wake of the spinning wheel. On it depends the maintenance of the principles of Hindu society. On Khadi depends the proper covering of the body and hence the maintenance of decency. Please understand that it is no onerous task to give half an hour to spinning. It is nothing to you, but that way I shall be able to manufacture Khadi as a substitute for foreign cloth. And remember, you must use the yarn you produce. Even the Indian mill-made cloth has got to be tabooed. Khadi must become as easily available as the two-pice postage stamp. It should make such a headway that every customer can get



Khadi suitable to his taste and purse. Citizens of Solitra! Regard boycott of foreign cloth as nothing but a child's play.

"I have heard that you, Patidars, do not treat *antyajas* well. If you regard yourselves as Kshatriyas⁴, you cannot coerce them, cannot belabour them, cannot follow the diabolical practice of exacting too much work for too little payment. Gitaji (Bhagwadgita) asks us to keep the Devas (Gods) pleased : "If you please the Devas they will give you good rains." These Devas do not dwell in the sky above. Your Devas are these *antyajas*, your Devas are your *vasvayans* (men of lower castes, whom land-owners brought from outside to settle in their village for taking different services from them) India's Gods are the submerged classes of India. A *dharma* bereft of *daya-dharma* (*daya* = mercy) is not a *dharma*, but a fraud. Pity or compassion is the bedrock of *dharma*⁵ and he who gives up *daya*, denies God Himself. The man who keeps the poor away, keeps every good thing away. If we do not make the *antyajas* and the poor our kith and kin our destruction is a certainty.

"It is not necessary to say much about the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. I really miss Mohammad Ali's presence here. He had to go to Muradabad and he went there, but he is sorry that he could not come. If Hindus and Muslims are not united, if they do not become brave and embrace each other as such, anything like Swaraj is an impossibility."

Gandhiji visited Manikrao's gymnasium in the evening. Though he was terribly tired, he remarked, "How can I disappoint Manikrao? I have given him a promise."

1. Dr. Sumant Mehta had held the high post of Personal Physician to H . H. The Gaekwar of Baroda, but much before his time for retirement, he gave up the post in order to devote himself to the service of the people and continued to serve them till his old age.

2. B. G. Tilak, given the popular title of '*Lokamanya*' (beloved of the people), was one of the most popular leaders of India and suffered incarceration thrice, the earliest in 1896, when few dared to earn that privilege. He was besides, a scholar of repute—his most popular big volume being '*Geeta-rahasya*' (The Essence of Bhagwadgita) which he wrote during his long jail-cum-exile term of 6 years in Burma.

3. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Gandhiji called his political Guru, is perhaps best known as an expert in economics. His budget speeches so impressed even the bureaucracy that on his death he was given by a member on the Government bench the tribute that the Council discussions without the presence of Mr. Gokhale were like playing Hamlet with the prince left out. He is the founder of the



Servants of India Society whose members take a pledge to serve the country all their life on only a very modest salary.

4. The word Kshatriya has been etymologically given the meaning, 'One who *saves* others from wounds, (not one who inflicts them)', by the poet Kalidas. Gandhiji suggests that it is the duty of Patidars, as Kshatriyas, to protect, not oppress. antyajas.

5. Allusion to the well-known couplet in Tulsidas' Ramayan, which means: "The root of dharma is *daya*, that of sin is pride; never give up *daya*, says Tulsi, so long as life throbs in the tabernacle. Tulsidas was a mediaeval Hindi poet.



16-1-1925

When the topic of goraksha (cow-protection) came up in his talk with Abbas Saheb (a cultured Muslim colleague) Gandhiji said: It is better to kill a cow than to drive it out to fend for itself when it grows old. Instead of thus starving it to death, it should be killed mercifully. If I have money and if my cow is fed till its death, if it remains cheerful and lows lovingly, I would certainly keep it and would let it die its death as peacefully as the fall of a dry leaf from a tree. I have made a suggestion that our *pinjrapoles* (pens maintained from charitable funds, where old and decrepit animals, cows specially, are kept and fed) should also be dairies, where milk may be sold and the breed of cows improved. If everyone in India drives out of his upkeep aged animals, I would frankly tell you that killing them is a good way of their disposal. There are very few *pinjrapoles* which drive out animals.

"Mussalmans regard the cow as Hindus regard vegetables. You (Hindus) never show any resentment against those who take eggs. It is not an easy thing to seek true religion. One has to dig into one's inner self as deep and strenuously as one does in a mine to find out a diamond. A true lover of the cow should say to Abbas (any Muslim) 'Better kill me first and then kill the cow,' but that nobody says. All that the Shrawak (Jain) does is to burst out, 'May lightning fall upon the man who slaughters a cow!'

Abbas: "Well, I (a Muslim) do kill a cow for food, but why do you (Hindus), ill-treat and beat the antyaja? When he becomes Joseph, Abdullah, or Hussein, you respect him, but is he unfit for your circle just because he remains 'Hirio' (a Hindu, a corruption of 'Hiro' i. e. a diamond, to denote the caste Hindu's contempt for the man)?"

Gandhiji: And what torture we inflict upon the bullock! All honour to the Englishman, I should say, who adores his horse, keeps him in the pink of health. Abdur Rehman (a Muslim, cow-lover) gives even sweets to his animals. Let us (Hindus) first be good protectors of the cow ourselves and then talk of cow-protection by others. While we ourselves do not protect our animals and drive them out to starve in the streets, we frown upon the man who kills them!"

"Hindus have raised this hoax '(of cow-protection) as a handle to fight with Muslims. The state of the cow is nowhere more wretched than in the land of 'cow-protection'! "If they used bullock-carts, Englishmen would not fail to find out a better substitute than our *zunsari* (yoke), so that the bullock's burden



would be lightened. Man has the right to commit sin. God gives him that right, but He says at the same time, "Don't commit sin." Right is itself a power. As a man, a *brahmachari* had indeed the right to satisfy his sex-urge, but he gave up that right and became a *brahmachari*. In that sense the Muslim has the right to slaughter a cow."

Memorable Moments

Sunav is about 4 or 5 miles from Sojitra. As Gandhiji might not have the time to go to Sunav he was not called there, but the teachers and 130 students of its national school got up very early, finished their bath etc. before starting at 4 a. m., and reached Sojitra at 7, for Gandhiji's *darshan* on 16.1.1925. The time spent with these children was one of unalloyed happiness and bliss. Everyone among the teachers and the students had brought, as a present from them to Gandhiji, a lot of yarn, the cotton for which they had carded, made into slivers, and then spun into yarn, all by themselves. They send their yarn to the Congress of course; but they spun this yarn during out-of-school hours to offer it at Gandhiji's feet. Hanks of two hundred thousand yards of yarn, excellently spun and packed, were thus placed before Gandhiji. What could he have to say when he found here all the characteristics of an ideal school? He had no lecture to give. He expressed his feelings only by saying how glad he was. But the students wanted to hear something from him, He, therefore, started the dialogue:

"Now tell me, dear brothers, why you spin so much."

One boy got up and said, "You gave us the impetus and we started spinning. You awakened us."

"That is true, but why do you spin?—just because I ask you to or you gain something by it?"

Immediately the answer came: "We were dependent formerly, but now we have become independent."

"How independent?"

"We get our clothes made from yarn spun by ourselves and does not that mean we have become independent to that extent?"

"All right. So you get clothes also woven here?"



A teacher explained: "Many of these boys are wearing clothes made from yarn spun by themselves."

Gandhiji: "How many of you are wearing such clothes?" Several hands were raised.

Gandhiji then said, "Well then, so many are independent. How many are 'dependent'?" The 'dependents' raised their hands as they laughed. Gandhiji told them, "But henceforth, I suppose, you will spin enough to get your clothes from your own yarn?"

One boy stood up at once and said: "We have to send some yarn to the Congress. We find it difficult to spin extra yarn for our clothes."

"Where is the difficulty?"

He explained in reply that his village was far away and he had to walk a long distance, to and fro, to attend the school. He did not get enough time even for his lessons and had often to spin his quota at night.

Gandhiji tickled them and said, "Don't think this excites any pity in my mind. In South Africa, I used to make the Ashram boys start at 4 a. m. and walk 21 miles. Then they would take some refreshment. Then again in the evening they would walk 21 miles to get back, making 42 miles in all. That is why I am not moved to pity for you. Go on walking that much, doing your work and also straightening the 'thaid's' of your teachers."

This very parochial expression raised a loud laugh among the students. Gandhiji renewed his lesson. "Do you know what 'straightening the thaid's' means?"

The question set the boys thinking. Gandhiji asked "Where do you find a 'thaid'?"

A boy: "On a spindle."

"What then does 'straightening a thaid' mean?"

Two or three spoke up at once. "That means straightening the unevenness of a spindle and making it give good service."

"That's right. So how can the teachers be straightened and made serviceable? By harassing them?"

"No; by putting questions again and again."



"Exactly. Do you know anything of Gitaji? In that book there is the injunction:

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया |

Just as Arjuna had straightened the 'thaid' of Sri Krishna "through humble homage and service and by repeated questioning" ("The Geeta According To Gandhi" by Mahadev Desai, IV-4), you also may straighten your teachers' 'thaid's."

Then he asked:

"And now you have given me all this yarn and shown me what excellent work you do. Shall I thank you for it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"That is but our duty. It is the duty of everyone to spin not only for himself but also for the poor. Where is the question of thanks for it?"

of everyone to spin

"And do you know, for another reason also I need not thank you? You may not regard me as your parent as you do your teachers—but am I not your elder? Can I, as an elder, thank you?"¹

1. A service rendered to an elder is considered as but due to him in India and the elder does not thank the junior for it.



Women's Conference

I have already referred to the excellent efficiency of the organisers of the Farmers' Conference. A special arrangement was made for those who gave an entrance fee, in yarn, not in money. Is there any wonder then, if women flocked to the Conference? They had come in their thousands. I remember to have seen a very big gathering of women in Poona, but the number of women present here had no parallel. And yet silence was kept up fairly well.

Referring to them Gandhiji said: "I talk of Ramarajya¹ before women. Ramarajya surpasses even Swarajya. So I will speak of what Ramarajya means, not Swarajya. Ramarajya can exist only where the birth of Sita is possible. Some of us, Hindus, recite Sanskrit *sholkas*, one of which gives the names of *satis* (holy women) who are to be remembered with reverence in the morning, at the start of our day's work. And who are these women? They are those the utterance of whose names purifies both men and women. Sita's name is a must in this recounting of the names of holy women. We do not say "Rama-Sita," but "Sita-Rama," not "Krishna-Radha" but "Radha-Krishna" (girl-companion of Krishna in His childhood. The word 'Radha' also means devotion and 'Krishna,' One who draws or attracts). We make even our parrots say their names in that order. We say Sita first and then Rama, because so long as women are not holy, men never can be. The child will take after its mother, not father. It is the mother who holds the reins of the child's future life. The father has to remain a long while out of the home for his business and that is why I have been saying that India's resurgence is not possible so long as Indian women do not play their part in public life. Only that person may take a part in public life, who is pure in mind and body. Ramarajya or Swaraj is impossible so long as women, both whose mind and body go along one and the same channel, and that the right and pure one, do not purify the public life of India; or if Swaraj is at all possible, for me that Swaraj is useless and has no meaning in which women have not had their fullest share. We should always pay our humble obeisance by prostration at the feet of such a woman with a pure mind and heart.

I want such women to take part in public life.

"Whom shall we call such a holy woman? A *sati* can be made out from her face; but then, shall we regard all the prostitutes in India as *satis*, because their profession requires them to adorn their bodies? No, that is not what I mean. The thing that matters is the purity of the heart. That woman whose heart and mind are pure deserves our prostration at her feet. But our inner nature will depict itself in our outer



appearance—that is nature's law. If we are dirty within, we shall look dirty. The eyes and the voice are the outward indications of the soul. He who has the power of perception will find out the worth of a man from his voice.

"What then is purity? What is its distinguishing feature? I consider Khadi as a symbol of purity, but, there is no reason to believe from that statement that those who wear Khadi have already become purified.

"I say you (women) should take part in public life. What do I mean by it? I do not say that women should be necessarily present in public meetings, but they should wear Khadi, which is the symbol of purity, and serves the men and women of India. What need can there be for us to serve our princes and potentates ? If we go to their palaces, the door-keepers will perhaps let us not even approach Their Highnesses. Nor need we serve the millionaires of India. Service of India means service of the poor in India. As God is invisible, it is enough for us if we serve the visible. Our public life means nothing more and nothing less than service of God the visible, i. e., the poor. If you want to serve them, go into the midst of the poor, with God's name on your lips, and turn the spinning wheel.

"Taking part in public life means serving your miserably poor sisters. Theirs is a very wretched condition. My wife and I once met these poor sisters on that bank of the Ganga and at that place where King Janak and Sitaji once lived. It was a pitiable sight they presented. They had not even enough clothes to cover their bodies with. But at that time I could not give them the sari, because I had not then discovered the spinning wheel. Indian women are naked even though they may have clothes on them, because, so long as a single Indian woman has to remain naked for want of clothes, one can legitimately say that all the women of the country are naked. A woman with an impure soul is also naked, though she bedeck herself with all the 16 kinds of ornaments we know of. We have to think out how to make these sisters spin, and how to get their yarn woven, so that they can have clothes to wear.

As things stand, when a public servant goes to villages, the residents feel as disgusted as they would, if a revenue collector had come to rock-rent them. Why do they feel so? You (volunteers) must understand that you go to the villages to give and not to take.

"Was our mother mad that she used to spin? When today I ask you to spin, I may appear mad to you, but it is not Gandhi who is mad, but you. You have no feeling



for the poor and no knowledge about them. And yet you persuade yourselves that India has become prosperous and sing the glories of that prosperity. If you want to lead a public life, you should spin and wear Khadi. If both your mind and body are pure, you will become Swadeshi (belonging to the country) in the real sense. Spin in the name of God. Spinning to help your poor sisters is itself taking God's name, because anything given in charity to the poor is the same as giving it to God, and that is real charity which makes the poor happy. If you give alms indiscriminately to any beggar that stands at your door, your action may be said to be self-willed and wanting in wisdom. One can even say with justice that you have made it your business to make people wretched and dependent, if you give alms to a beggar whom God has given good health and strong hands and feet. Do not give anything to a Brahmin, just because he happens to be a Brahmin. Make him spin and then give him a handful of jowar (a local cereal) or rice. The first sign of purity of the mind is to go into the midst of such poor people and do Khadi work.

The second sign is to serve the *antyaja*. The Brahmins and preceptors of today persuade us into the belief that it is a sin to touch *antyajas*. I say it is not only not a sin but our *dharma* to do so. I do not ask you to dine with them, but I appeal to you that you should touch them in order to serve them. It is our dharma to serve an untouchable boy lying in sick-bed, as he deserves our nursing. An *antyaja* eats and drinks, sits and walks, and everyone else does the same. His acts are intrinsically neither pure nor impure. My mother herself used to become an *antyaja* at times and she would not let anyone touch her then. My wife likewise has become an *antyaja* on such occasions and was an untouchable then. Let our Bhangis (scavengers) also become untouchables when they are doing such work; there is nothing wrong if you refuse to touch them then, i. e., before they take their bath. But if you do not touch them even after they have their bath and are clean, what can induce them to have a bath and be clean? They may think that even God has forsaken them. They believe that as others, with eyes and ears quite like their own, despise them, their life has no hope to offer them and is one continuous drudgery. But just think: Did Ramachandraji hold the *antyaja* in contempt? That Shabari² whose tasted berries he had eaten with relish and that Nishadraj³ whom he had embraced were both *antyajas*. That should convince you that there is no untouchability whatsoever in Hindu dharma.



"The third thing is to cultivate friendship with Muslims. If somebody tells you, 'O, he is a Miya (a Muslim) and there can be no concord between Miya and Mahadev (Hindu God),' you may reply, 'There can be no enmity with such a man.'

"If you do these three things, it means you have taken your full part in public life. And when you do them, you will become worthy of reverent remembrance in the morning prayers. People will look up to you as saviours of India. May you rise to that height, is my prayer to God."

1. Ramarajya (Lord Rama's rule) has been proverbially regarded as an ideal government, because the criticism of even a low-class washerman was heeded to by Rama and his Queen Consort Sita was banished.

2. In his search for His abducted queen, Sita, Rama came up with His brother Laxmana to the hermitage of Shabari, an aged untouchable recluse. Innocent of cultured manners, but full of devotion, Shabari first tasted the berries she gave to Rama to be sure that only the sweet ones were given. This was defilement, but Rama saw only her love and devotion and ate them cheerfully, according to the story as popularly told.

3. Nishada is the name of an aboriginal tribe. Their king was a boatman. He was willing and eager to ferry over the Ganga the exiled trio of Rama, Sita and Laxmana, but said to Rama, "Others may enter the boat, not You, unless You let me wash Your holy feet. Their dust has previously turned a stone into a woman and if it does so with my boat, I would lose my means of livelihood!" At this manifestation of devotion, Rama let him wash His feet and then embraced him.



Kshatriya Baria Parisbad

A Conference of Dharalas (Barias) was held. On their own initiative, they passed resolution to abstain from alcohol, from accepting money for giving their daughters in marriage, and from abducting other women. The sponsors as well as the supporters of the resolution were all Dharalas. These resolutions were passed so summarily that Gandhiji had to dilate very much upon their importance. Dharalas regard their designation as Dharalas derogatory to them and call themselves Kshatriyas. Gandhiji, therefore, explained to them the characteristics of a Kshatriya, viz., (1) *apalayan* (refusal to flee from a battlefield), (2) protection of women, the poor and those who seek it and (3) observance of a pledge once taken.

Gandhiji said:

"Brothers, I am sorry that the work of this Conference has to be finished in 10 minutes, since at 4 p. m. *antyaja* brothers have been called. You people passed three resolutions. All the three of them are of the greatest usefulness. It is a good thing that you have resolved to abstain from alcohol. It is true that this habit is not the monopoly of your community. There are others also which have it. You have also passed a resolution to refrain from selling your daughter in marriage and from kidnapping women. These two are good resolutions. You are no other than Kshatriyas and you believe you possess the virtues of a Kshatriya. If we read our scriptures, we shall find that a true Kshatriya is one who never retreats from a step he once takes. He protects others besides. You are Kshatriyas when you do something on your own initiative, on the strength of your own belief, and not because I ask you to do it. And now, owing to your own firm conviction, you must never go back on your resolve. To pass a resolution is to give a solemn promise. In whatever you resolve to do, keep God as your witness. You have taken the vow of abstaining from alcohol, from selling your daughter in marriage and from abduction of a woman or a girl. If you do not now keep your word, you will have sinned against the world. All the four *varnas* (castes) also must never fail to keep a resolve once made.

"To break one's word is to make a retreat. You will, therefore, cease to be Kshatriyas, if you raise up your hands to support a resolution and then forget it. It would cast a slur not only on you but on me also, and it will be difficult for me to bear it. What will Ravishankar¹, who is working amongst you; do, if you continue to commit theft even after promising him not to do so? The Government's method is to make you suffer, but Ravishankar's is to undergo suffering himself by going on a fast and by



that action to tell you, 'Better kill me than break your plighted word.' In the presence of such a steel-hearted Ravishankar you have taken a vow not to commit a theft. If you then recede from your promise, you will do a thing which will compel Ravishankar to undertake a fast. I too belong to Ravishankar's 'caste'. I know how to follow in his footsteps. I do not know how to kill, but I know how to die. And take it from me that Ravishankar is not the only person of his kind. There is going to be a rich crop of men like Ravishankar. After this plain warning, I ask you "Do you agree to abide by the promise you have given? ' This is not a theatrical play. I am not a play-actor and no community has raised itself by bolstering up hollow shows. It is we, educated men, who have spoiled you by making empty gestures before you. So you may still think over the matter and then raise your hands. That age has passed, when people thought that they could keep their word by merely raising their hands in favour of a resolution. So much for your resolves.

"Now the next two things. One of them is that you should wear Khadi. You should not think that your native land means nothing more than the territory between the Narmada and the Sabarmati rivers. Your motherland is a very big one, 1,900 miles in length and 1,500 in breadth. It would take you 190 days to walk from the Northern to the Southern tip of your country. All the inhabitants of this vast country are your sisters and brothers. It is necessary that you should spin for them. And you have to give that yarn to the Congress. There is no other way to cheapen the price of Khadi. Spin for half an hour daily. If crores of men do that much, Khadi would become a commodity free of cost.

"The second thing is to make the *antyajas* your own brothers. A Kshatriya means one who protects the cow and the Brahmin. 'The Cow' does not mean merely the animal with two horns called by that name. It means any creature in distress. The *antyaja* is a community in distress. If the Kshatriya cuts off the *antyaja*, he himself ceases to be a Kshatriya. Nobody is going to regard those persons as Kshatriyas who claim to be such, though they keep the *antyajas* away from them.

"Let me pray to God that He may help you in keeping your vow. If you wish to do so, please listen to this humble self. He who wants to keep his vow, should take Ram-nam (chant Rama's, i. e. God's name) immediately after getting up in the morning and just before going to bed in the evening, and pray to God, 'O Rama! Come to my help. Give me the strength to keep my vows.'" It you do that, your mind will not succumb to temptation at the sight of wine or woman. And your daughter, poor girl,



is helpless like a cow. If you accept my suggestion and pray daily, you will hate yourself at the very thought of selling her in marriage."

1. Ravishankar Maharaj ('Maharaj' is a term of respect, also applied to a Brahmin) is given the popular title of 'mook sevak,' (silent servant) and 'Gor (preceptor) of Dharalas, because, shunning lime-light, he chose to work among them, sometimes at great risk to his own life, visiting even the dens and rendezvous of dacoits in order to wean them (and successfully) from their criminal acts. He served the famine-stricken in Behar and in 1968, at his advanced age of four score years, he is actively working for the rehabilitation of the flood-stricken in South Gujarat. For his saintly character, he was chosen as the fittest person to open the first Assembly session of the Gujarat State.



Antyaja Conference

Gandhiji first congratulated those persons who organised the Conference, as well as those caste-Hindus who attended it, for their boldness in doing so and thus for keeping to their *dharma*. Then he got those men and women among the *antyajas* who were smokers to raise their hands. In his speech Gandhiji said:

"We should not hide the dirt in us or feel ashamed of owning it. If even women use the *hookah*, the thing becomes almost insufferable. Their mouths would reek of tobacco. It is equally bad to be an alcoholic. I know to what wretched plight an alcoholic is reduced. I have had an experience of taking *bhang* (an indigenous intoxicant) also. Alcohol and *bhang* are cousins. I wish you will give up all these addictions. If you accept my advice, you should completely give up eating flesh.

'Those who do not touch the untouchables raise many objections to justify themselves. When I plead with them, they say, "*Antyajas* are dirty. They are drunkards and flesh-eaters." I tell them in reply, "There are some Brahmins. Banias and others also who do the same and yet their children go to school and enter temples. Why then this invidious discrimination against the *antyajas* alone?" But while I argue with them in this strain, to you I will definitely say, "Save yourselves from the accusations laid against you, in order to take the wind out of the objectors' sails." You must never fail to take a bath everyday after finishing your work. I have done the work of scavenging quite often myself, my sons have done it and so has your Ravjibhai.¹ No stigma attaches to the work at all. It is, on the contrary, a sacred work. The man who removes dirt performs a sacred duty. Those also who treat hides should take their bath after their work is over. Cultured people brush their teeth, wash their mouths and keep their bodies clean by a daily bath. You should do the same and then take a rosary and chant Ramnam. If you haven't got a rosary with you, you may chant Ramnam and do the counting on the tips of your fingers. This incantation of Ramnam will free you from addictions and make you clean and everyone will adore you. Your whole day will pass happily and your nights be free from bad dreams, if you take Ramnam after you get up in the morning and before you go to sleep at night. In order to remain clean, do not accept in alms the remains of a sweetmeat or any other dish, however tasteful, do not take rotten food, and eat only rotlas (unleavened bread) prepared by your own hands. You are not born to live on the refuse of other people's dishes. You have eyes, ears and a nose just as others have and you are full human beings. You should learn to preserve your dignity as such.



“Many persons will come to you and say, 'Your Hindu *dharma* is rotten, you are not allowed to join the schools or enter the temples of caste-Hindus.' Tell them who say so, "We shall settle our account with our Hindu brothers ourselves. Just as no outsider intervenes in quarrels between father and son, or brother and brother, you need not meddle in our affairs." Give them that answer and stick loyally to your own religion. I am an outcaste myself², and there are many others like me who have been banished from their castes, but should I on that account give up my Hindu *dharma*? Many Christian friends tell me, "Be a Christian." To them I say, "There is nothing wrong with my religion. Why then should I give it up?" If I am pure and clean, what wrong is there in being an outcaste? If some Hindus persecute me for mixing with *antyajas*, am I ever going to cease to be a Hindu on that account? Hinduism has a bearing on my individual self, on my soul. Tell all these things to both Christians and Muslims and remain firm in your Hindu Dharma. *Antyajas* are not pawns in the game of chess, that anybody, with an axe to grind, can move them as he likes. In coming to meet you as my kith and kin, I have my own interest to serve and that is to wipe off the sin that my ancestors committed against you. But it is I who have committed the sin and I who have to wash it. How does it affect you? Why should *you* give up your religion, when the reparation of my sin is only my concern. Why should you on that account give up Ramnam? It is Rama's very way to go on inflicting pain on that man specially who is His servant, His devotee, in order to test and purify him. I only wish you pass through that test.

“And finally I request you to have pity (for your opponents), because we all live upon the world's love for us. And this last word: You should all ply the spinning wheel, use that yarn for your handlooms and wear nothing but Khadi.”

1. Ravjibhai Patel was Gandhiji's colleague even in South Africa, where he too had gone to jail. After his return to India also, he was an enthusiastic Gandhian and served the Congress as long as he could. He has written a book on Gujratati on Gandhiji's life in South Africa.

2. Gandhiji's caste drove him out for the sin of going to England. He remained an outcaste all his life, but refused to do any penance to get himself re-admitted.



In Bardoli Taluka

17-1-1925

The first village visited in this Taluka was Varaad. The local teacher gave us a great surprise. He presented in himself a model of industry and firm adherence to principle. In anticipation of Gandhiji's visit he had spun for 9 hours daily during the preceding 20 days, over and above the 6 hours spent in school, and kept ready seventy thousand yards of yarn to give to Gandhiji. From such a teacher the boys were bound to catch his enthusiasm for Khadi. The untouchability question had created a schism in the school, but the leaders of the village met in Gandhiji's presence and resolved to close up their ranks the very next day.

When preparations for offering mass civil disobedience were made in Bardoli Taluka, I was in jail. I cannot, therefore, compare the people's enthusiasm then and now, but it seemed that it was very great even today and I cannot imagine that the warmth, specially of women, could be greater in 1921 than at present. They had streamed from nearly all the houses of the village to give Gandhiji their gifts of rupees, or smaller coins, hanks of yarn, and coconuts. No spectator could fail to be amazed at the sight of this flow of women continuing for hours and hours. We had another experience equally wonderful. The discussion on the disruption of the local school on the question of untouchability took place in the very house in which we were lodged. The reformist party was present in company with a Bhangi (an untouchable scavenger) brother. When this Bhangi brother presented himself before Gandhiji, everyone in the meeting kept to his seat quite cheerfully. This same sight met our eyes in Vankaner too. Both these events show the progress that has been made in the removal of untouchability, while, the split in the school on this same question betrays the people's want of courage. The physical contact with an *antyaja* in Gandhiji's presence could be tolerated, but they were afraid lest, after Gandhiji's departure, the castemen might raise a commotion.

After a personal experience of all this, Gandhiji came to Bardoli (the centre of the Taluka). There was no life in the meeting. Gandhiji poured out his heart's agony there:

"O, the difference between that memorable day of January 22, 1922, and this one of January 17, 1925! Mass civil-disobedience which had been resolved upon on



that day was suspended on February, 11, 1922. The Mukhi (head of the village or town) of Bardoli had come to me at that time and we had conferred together.

"I want to remind you of an occasion preceding it. We were at that time fully bent upon offering Satyagraha. But then came Chauri Chaura.¹

Had it not come, many people of Bardoli Taluka would have gone to jail. I had thought that imprisonment of the Bardoli people *en masse* would break the chains of India's slavery. But before finally resolving upon that Satyagraha, an occasion had arisen, when I refused firmly to send the letter to the Viceroy, which was afterwards sent to him, because I had come to know that some of the conditions for offering Satyagraha had not been fulfilled. It was then that some 25 to 50 men of Bardoli and I sat under the tree over there. I told them, 'You have not kept up your promise.' Their faces fell. They pleaded, "We will keep the pledge, but please do not drop Satyagraha." Hence, I started Satyagraha.²

"But God is gracious and He saves the man who chants His name. Our welfare lies in admitting our error and looking at a slight error on our part as a big one. India was saved because of the halt of Satyagraha in Bardoli. All things considered, it was a good thing that our brothers went mad at Chauri Chaura. For, we would, otherwise, have had to leave things half-done and if we had been compelled to do that, we would have had to suffer much. There are other reasons also to make us feel that we were saved by our withdrawal.³

"But now I see that Bardoli itself was certainly not prepared for the fight. Where have those people who had taken the preparatory vow essential for Satyagraha gone away? At that time they had pledged themselves to produce within 6 months ample quantity of yarn, to spin, import weavers, learn up weaving and get all the cloth needed by the Taluka woven in Bardoli itself. Where has that thing been done? We seem to think that 'Khadi dress' means nothing more than a white Khadi cap. We have not come to wear Khadi *dhoties* at all. Khadi dhoties of sufficient width are not yet produced in Gujarat. We are not entitled to import Khadi dhoties from outside i. e., from outside Gujarat. Our *dharma*, at present, lies in wearing Khadi (made in Gujarat) however thick it be. Bardoli should not import even yarn from outside the Taluka. We have not observed even 50% of our Swadeshi vow. I see that the women here are not wearing Khadi. When people gave me small coins only during the Tilak Swaraj Fund collection (in 1921), I used to say, "Well, that is something." But now, when I get rupees in place



of small coins, though I do accept the gifts, I don't feel as happy as before. But our real defect lies in the paucity of true men. Only a very few have not left us.⁴

"You have not driven out untouchability. Vankaner is still filled with that rubbish. Some of its men had agreed to do away with it and it was under yonder tree that the resolve to be clean and get *antyajas* admitted into the many national schools of the Taluka was made.

"I am now coming from Varaad. Excellent school, and excellent teachers, but after the resolution of the Gujarat Vidyapith to open its institutions to the entry of untouchables, some parents withdrew their children from the school. This shows nothing else but the fact that the Taluka was not really fit and prepared for civil disobedience. It is meet that I should tell you at the same time that Varaad has again promised to let the *antyaja* children enter their school. I have been told that the sponsors of the local school opened after closing of the national school have no connection with those of the closed school, and that both the school will now be amalgamated. But how can it help us, if thus we become conscious of our duty at one moment and forget it on the next? We had hoped (in 1921) that untouchability would be destroyed at least partially in Bardoli Taluka. You may reply that it was a conditional agreement, made in the hope that Satyagraha would be launched. But we were not, playing at removal of untouchability in 1921 on the condition of being allowed to go to jail. We had the faith that so long as untouchability was not removed, there would be no Swaraj for us, or, if we did get it, it was useless.

"And suppose we had thought of the Khadi item only as our *dharma* and, by following it, we had won Swaraj. What then? That Taluka which took the first rank in the whole country was expected to adhere to all its resolves, even if the whole world went astray. And why that expectation? Because Bardoli was full of faith, and it was hoped that Bardoli's faith would infect the whole of India. But, I find, we are weak even in Bardoli.

We too would have meekly accepted the humiliating crawling order, as they did in Amritsar. We are the same people there and here. If an occasion for the neetl of courage arises, even a coward is sometimes fired with it. But that is not enough. I feel that Bardoli did not possess innate courage. Innate courage is that courage which would inspire a very small number, say only 25, to go to jail on their own account and with the full consciousness of the hardships of jail-life. I think now that Bardoli did not possess even that much of courage.



"I cannot say anything on the relationship between Hindus and Muslims here. There was no disunity here and hence, no question of dispute between us. But there is another thing. During this period (1921 to 1924) you had shown quiet courage and valour to this extent: You did not do any violence while picketing wine shops, but suffered the belabouring yourselves. It was, therefore, hoped that not a single alcoholic would be left unweaned in at least Sardoli. We had hoped that prohibition would be a complete success.

"And the fourth thing, the Dublas (a community of serfs). What atrocities have been committed on them! You yourselves invited them to Bardoli and they came. I never invited them myself. I will not say how badly they were treated. I only wish that Bardoli repairs even now the fault it has committed. I, for one, am never going to give up my hope for Bardoli. When I have the *darshan* of women here, I see in their eyes the very same lustre and love that I used to see. Nobody had asked them to bring money, coconuts, and yarn, and yet they brought them all, just because I was to come. Sisters would like to play their part even now, but the brothers have lost their strength. At Varaad they are quarrelling among themselves.

"I have come here to say to Vallabhbhai also that, if he wills it he can, by his power and influence, retrieve Bardoli 's glory even still. Sri Raichura has sung that Gujarat saved the honour of the Punjab and Bengal, but I must say it has not, as yet. It has still the chance, however, to do so. I am not asking people today to go to jail. We shall go to jail in future, but at present I will not say anything about it. It is for the time being only a vision cherished by me. I am now talking only of prohibition, uplift of Dublas and Kaliparaj⁵, of Khadi etc. But what is demanded in these matters is total implementation and not partial. Every human being, old or young, is endowed with the capacity to follow in the footsteps of others. If the Mukhi asks them to do something, the villagers will do it. If, therefore, Bardoli makes a start in these things, others will follow. The reason is that Bardoli is well-off. It has no need to oppress the Kaliparaj. In South Africa I came in contact with the Bardoli people. I found them a very loving class of men. Many people from the Surat District have gone abroad.

"You had brought leaders to this place. Das⁶, Nehru⁷ Hakim Saheb⁸ all had come here. All resources, monetary and others, were available here and used. If, with such rich resources, you do not do the paltry things I have suggested, how can India win Swaraj? Is it any great achievement to reclaim alcoholics? And is it a Herculean task to wear Khadi? I am asking you to spin also, which you should regard as your *dharma*.



You have ample time to spare. Put it to good use, so that the wretched can appease their gnawing hunger. I have not asked for money from you. I only say, Give your money to your own people, to your own children.' I am not asking you to contribute anything for people outside the Taluka. How is it very difficult to take *antyaja* children under your wings? To win Swaraj is to convince the opponent of our power of unity and organisation. It is because we have the power to feed them, that our families continue to live. If in the same way, we regard the whole nation as our family, all our difficulties about these items will vanish.

"It is not zest that has rushed me over here. I thought it my *dharma* and I came. I do not even know what I should say to you. I am not disappointed, but have definitely grown cool. The resurgence of our movement is as much in your hands as in those of the volunteers of Bardoli Taluka, of the whole Surat District, in fact. All the power of Surat, must be concentrated in the Surat District itself. Even today I repeat that it would be excellent if we devoted all our energy at one place, rather than frittered it away in many. But today we have lost our confidence for doing the smallest thing. It is really our own weakness, and not any extraneous cause, that causes all this delay in the acquisition of our birth-right. But let me impress upon you once more that I am not asking you to prepare yourselves for going to jail. All that I talk of, at present, is Khadi, untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity. These things have an intrinsic value and have to be done for their own sakes. The other items were intended for an extraneous but definite object. Boycotts of law-courts, of titles etc., were things of temporary value and meant for getting Swaraj. I have cancelled them. But even after Swaraj we shall require the implementation of these three—Khadi, removal of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity. After Swaraj, all the shackles of the Dublas shall have to be rent as under. It is because we have not sufficient moral strength, that we cannot do the things that are but natural, and make for self-purification. These things are not the means to reach a goal, but the goal itself. They are not temporary programmes, because these things have to be done always. It is these things of permanent value, that I ask you to do now. Whether we get Swaraj or not, we have got to be free from the sin of untouchability, otherwise our religion is doomed. Whether we get Swaraj or not, unless we have Khadi to sustain as, such terrific starvation is going to stalk the land, that crows and dogs will eat up our corpses. If we do not do all these things, there is no sense in our meeting here today. But if some tangible result comes out of this talk, my coming here will have been worthwhile. May God grant to Bar doli the power to bring those results."



At this meeting also Vallabhbhai called for the names of persons entitled to be Congress members under the spinning franchise. About 50 hands were raised.

1. A police station was located at Chauri Chaura, a village in U.P. After the above resolution and before the actual launching of Satyagraha, sporadic violence broke out there, owing of course to grave police persecution and provocation. The police station was burnt and with it some policemen. Gandhiji saw the finger of God in the event warning him of more such outbursts, if he offered mass civil disobedience even in Bardoli which was far-off from it and he suspended Satyagraha.

2. In fact, Gandhiji sent only that letter to the Viceroy which was at once a request to heed the people's demands and an ultimatum to launch Satyagraha in case of failure. The movement was not actually started but withdrawn before being launched owing to the Chauri Chaura outrage.

3. It is necessary to note here that Gandhiji's views on withdrawal of Satyagraha for the above reason were radically changed later on. Sri Narayanbhai (son of Sri Mahadevbhai, the writer of these Diaries) quotes in his Gujarati book 'Santa Sevatan Sukrut Vadhe' (p 192), Gandhiji's remark made to him in 1943, when both of them were in the Aga Khan Palace as prisoners. It is translated below: "You must understand clearly that there has been a development in my views on non-violence. A time was when I believed that no experiment in non-violent Satyagraha could be carried out when violence was taking place somewhere in the country. But now I believe that even a little flame of real non-violence is so powerful that it can withstand the wind-storms of violence all around and continue to burn."

There has also been a recent attestation of the near-success of the movement halted at Bardoli. In his speech at the unveiling ceremony of the statue of Gandhiji in London last year (1968), Mr. John Tilney M.P., who represented the Conservative Party leader, Mr. Edward Heath, said:

"To help the poor was for him (Gandhiji) more important than constitution. Salt, opium, cottage industries were more vital than the careers of Ministers. Though the spinning-wheel may have been uneconomic, it supplemented the income of the unemployed and the under-employed and, above all, threatened Lancashire, from which you, Mr. Prime Minister, and I both come.

"In that attack the united India and it may well have been that should Britain, at the time of the Khilafat agitation have granted independence, India, as a subcontinent, would have been united now. But she remains a secular state, the third biggest Muslim power in the world."—'Britain' May 1968.

4. 'The stigma, attached to Bardoli for the withdrawal of mass civil disobedience by the "Bardoli resolution" of the Working Committee on February 11, 1922, was entirely wiped out in 1928, when these same peasants offered Satyagraha against the enhancement of their land revenue and won the fight—thus raising the morale of the whole country which had sunk to its nadir since 1922.



5. 'Black races' whose name Gandhiji turned into 'Raniparaj' (forest-dwellers) in order to remove the colour stigma and raise their status.

6. C. R. Das, the undisputed leader of Bengal till his death in 1925, made his name by his staggering sacrifices in the freedom struggle, when he renounced his legal practice, going up to 5 digits, in 1921, and went to jail.

7. Pandit Motilal Nehru, father of Jawaharlal. He too gave up his equally thriving practice and princely way of life to support the struggle and go to jail.

8. Hakim Ajmal Khan, a Unani physician, well-known in Delhi as a staunch believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and as a fearless nationalist leader and Gandhiji 's colleague. All the three—Das, Nehru and Hakim Saheb—came to Bardoli as members of the Congress High Command.



18-1-1925

As if to be the witnesses of a situation more depressing than even at Bardoli we went to Bhuvasan. A whole contingent of seasoned workers, Messrs. Narhari and Jugatram, Dr. Tribhuvandas and others, had gone there and even opened an Ashram for their permanent stay, with a view to carry out the Bardoli programme. (Immediately after the withdrawal of mass civil disobedience, Gandhiji had given a constructive programme for the country). Their work proceeded satisfactorily in the beginning. People of Bhuvasan and the neighbouring villages started spinning in right earnest, learnt up carding, and laid by a sufficient quantity of cotton with them to turn it into slivers when necessary. But in the end they could not put up with a very small incident which aimed at their self-purification.

The meeting was attended by 5 to 7 hundred men. Out of so many, Vallabhbhai's usual question was answered by only three. When Vallabhbhai put it, only three persons raised their hands as Congress members slowly and one after another. Gandhiji looked on at all this apparently like a passive witness. He then addressed this assembly in the most loving and moving tone in the manner of appeasing dear ones against him in a fit of pique.

"What a contrast between what a man hopes to do and what he really achieves! I do not wish to bring back to my mind the anguish you and I have felt. We had nursed high hopes of doing immense work for India through the Bardoli Taluka. But nobody knows how many desires a man cherishes and how many from them God fulfills. He makes us dance to His tune like puppets.

"Let me refer only to a few important things. You used to spin quite a lot of yarn. You had taken interest even in carding. Shankarlal Banker¹ used to live in your midst. As I was having my meal today, I asked him, 'How did you fare when you were staying here?' He replied that all of you used to tell him, 'Whatever be our performance in other items, we have understood at least the Khadi *mantra*. We sow the best quality of cotton-seeds and produce excellent cotton. We have both the knowledge and the time. Why should we not then produce our own cloth?'

"This is a good thing. I go even further and wish that just as Bardoli Taluka is self-sufficient in food, it should be so in cloth, and that all men, women and children should become engaged in work instead of idly wasting away their time." It is not true that only those can take up a profession, whom God grants sufficient means. It would be



good, if all those who are not physically weak have some occupation or other for their minds and bodies. The saying 'Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do,' is quite true. We can improve our economic state by spinning and weaving and drive out starvation from the land. People like you may not know what hunger means, but the Kaliparaj or the Dubla knows it. These people are leading almost a beastly life, except for those of them who own some land. But from their teeth and eyes, I can say that the condition of those who get nothing except food for their service of the fairer classes is anything but good. I saw many such lack-lustre Dublas in one village.

"I don't say to anybody now that he should go to jail. I, Dayalji (A leader of Surat, well-known for his fiery oratory) and Vallabhbhai do want to go, but not just now. The policy propagated in 1921 was that of deliberately seeking imprisonment. At present the times are quite unsuitable for that programme.

"Quite a different situation can warrant jail going now. The masses in India have not imbibed those qualities which fit them for it. I feel, therefore, that it is enough if stray individuals go to jail. I cherish the high hope that such stray individuals may gather from among you and may go to jail by and by, but the time for even that is not ripe. My present hope is different.

"What you were doing till recently, was a really good thing. We all had hopes that if we could do nothing else we should be able to produce Khadi. And you too had realized that it would be a feather in your cap if you did that work. But today you have forgotten all that. Where has your faith (in Khadi) gone away? If a man like myself comes to you and starts without due deliberation some work which you do not like, does his action entitle you to give up even the good things you were doing?

"But that was what you did. You founded the Ashram. A Parsi gentleman gave the money for it. That Parsi was a veritable Hatim Tai. You cannot find his match in generosity. He was as large-hearted as King Bali, or that great man of Persia. This Parsi, Rustomji² by name, has become immortal. As long as Sarbhon exists, his name will live. In a way he had nothing to do with you. But he never made any distinction between man and man on the ground of his religion. When he heard that the Bardoli people were brave and were going to offer sacrifices for Swaraj, he sent money in support. From that amount two workers were sent to you for the two Ashrams you founded.

"The pick of Gujarat's workers were among those who came to stay in the Ashrams. One of them was Narhari. But he committed a crime against you! If my son,



on whom I would have conferred my *gadi* (throne) if I had one, commits a crime, it is I who do it, but not, of course, if my son is a scamp. It was I myself who had installed Narhari on the *gadi* here. He is my colleague in the (Sabarmati) Ashram and I have full trust in him. Money was brought from outside and poured into Bardoli. Its name was made famous throughout the world. India sang the glory of Bardoli. Under the idea that it would be bad if the name of that Bardoli is tarnished, the workers decided to make Bardoli their field of work. Narhari was one of those who came. And the 'crime' he committed against you was no other than that of starting to teach the alphabets to Dublas and to serve them. I say if he has committed a crime, it is one which he ought to have.

"Hindu *Dharma* teaches us that we should eat only after serving the most wretched. Our religion asks us even to feed weak animals. They cannot be killed, even if they are reduced to skin and bones. We are expected to put flour near even ant-holes. We are enjoined to have pity for every living creature under the sun. That religion which teaches us pity of such subtlest kind cannot ask us to treat a being, no less human than we are, as if he were a beast. It teaches us nothing but mercy for the poor. We must treat them as our kith and kin. Among many traditional families old servants are treated not as servants but almost as heads of the family. Why should we not give food to the servants, children who are just like ours?

"Who am I? And who is Narhari? Compulsion is out of the question with us. Narhari, Jugatram and the others had not come to you to force you to do something. But what should they do if they are pained at some action by you? If a husband is bad and beats his wife. what will the wife do? She would cry and would not take her meal. If the husband is angry with her to that extent whose is the fault, God's or the husband's ? Let me give you a bit of my experience. I am a married man and am living a family life. If a difference arises between the husband and his wife, the woman bursts either into abuses or tears. Narhari acted like a woman. He stopped taking food (Sri Narharibhai Parikh, the first editor of these Diaries, had gone on a fast for a week from d. 14. 2. 1924). You took it as an act of coercion on you. But that is not true. He offered *Satyagraha*. The man ready to offer Satyagraha against the Government offered it against you. But a fast against Government is never justifiable. You have seen that I have never fasted against it. I did go on a fast in Bombay³ but that was against our own people, Congressmen and Khilafatists. But your answer to Narhari's fast was almost like stabbing me to death. If we inflict pain on someone else, if we repeat the deeds of



the people at Chauri Chaura, it is anything but Satyagraha against the Government. The only idea underlying that Satyagraha was that of going to jail. There was no idea of awakening the sympathy of anybody by starving our ourselves. We never claimed friendship with the Government. We were avowed enemies. But Narhari possessed the claim of friendship with you, the claim of love and service. His heart was moved to its depths and that piqued you. Had you killed him, that would have been nothing. But why did you vent your spleen against him by harming *yourselves*? Why did you give up Khadi? Did you think Narahari wanted to quarrel with you? You could then have told him that you were not going to do anything for (the uplift of) the Dublas. But to give up Khadi! Give up carding! That is the limit. What terrible injustice! and how suicidal!

"That is why I want to tell you, 'Take to Khadi again and expiate for your neglect to such an extent that you may now regard it as your *dharma* to give up mill-cloth altogether and restart spinning forthwith.' Narhari had asked me, 'Shall we leave Sarbhon?' I said, 'No. It is an act of cowardice. That will irritate the people all the more. You cannot forsake them and run away like that. You must not desert your post of duty. You must stay right there and convince them that you wish them no ill. That you can do only by serving them, not by running away. Stick firmly to your place and go on doing your work. If even then nobody is willing to accept your service, you should still continue your stay and merely card, spin and weave.' That was what I told him. I do not know whether my reply gave him any peace of mind. It would be a different story, if he cannot bear the trouble his compliance brings, but it is undoubtedly his *dharma* to teach the Dublas and the untouchables, if they request him to do so. At the same time let me put you at ease and assure you that these people have no intention to quarrel with you.

"I beg of you to give me an assurance in return. Because one of your arms is cross with you, you should not let your other arm also get cross. If you let it, it is neither justice nor sense, neither discrimination nor foresight. It means behavior that leads only to repentance afterwards. I was listening to the questions that were put to you. It is not at all difficult for you the people of Sarbhon and the surrounding villages, to take to spinning and carding. What a shame that, despite your favourable circumstances, you do not contribute 2000 yards a month! That Bardoli which was talking of bravery is afraid of this small thing! All the boys in the national school at Varaad are spinning. Their literary education also is going on excellently. They all spin



at Sunav too. The teacher at Varaad worked for 15 hours daily for 20 days and spun 70000 yards of yarn. That Varaad happens to be in this same Bardoli Taluka.

"You are afraid that we all are going to lead you to a dreadful harm. Drive out that fear if you have it. Has there been a single instance of any of us playing false with you? After all this, what more can I say to you?

"Sister! You put before me coconuts and yarn and coins, but that does not satisfy me. I cherish high hopes from the women of Bardoli. I wish you gave no quarter to foreign cloth. How nice would it be if you wore clothes made of self-spun yarn? It was through your support that I wanted the establishment of Ramarajya here. What a fine thing, if you emulate Sita's example! Your children should learn what their *dharma* is and act upon it.

"Some of your people earn money in South Africa by sinful ways and send it to you, but a weaver (on a handloom) earns Rs. 40/- (p. m honestly). If your children learn up this profession, they will be happy. Love the *antyaja* also. If a woman looks down upon him, she ceases to be a *sati*. If there are Dublas working for you, have pity for them and love them. Put some ghee on the *rotlas* you give them. Those who treat their servants well, become prosperous. See what happens to those who earn by fraud! Millionaires have died childless and their family-lines have been effaced! May God give you such innocent hearts and minds, as will teach you the true meaning and not any misinterpretation of the prayer you have heard!"

1. One of the Secretaries of the Home Rule League, Bombay, he enthusiastically supported Gandhiji's conversion of it in 1919 into 'Swaraj Sabha' and has ever since been a loyal Gandhian. He was for a time a labour leader also. As Publisher of 'Young India' he had the distinction of being sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment along with Gandhiji who was awarded 6 years' in March 1922.

2. Rustomji J. Ghorkhadoo, a Parsi colleague of Gandhiji in his South African Satyagraha and a munificent donor.

3. Gandhiji had gone on a fast in Bombay in November 1921 to quell the fury of violence by the people in protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales who was brought to India to raise the tottering British prestige there. Both Congressmen and Khilafatists were involved in the riot.



Vankaner

Antyaja children came forward and garlanded Gandhiji. The teacher, Khushalbhai, says that the *antyajas* here are eager to learn. Gandhiji said: "The sight of Vankaner's present condition pained me. The teacher opted for the *antyaja* children. He cured the eye that was almost lost. On his part he performed only his duty, but why, on that account should the people of Vankaner have descended to such bad conduct? What is the cause? In January 1922, we were strangers to untouchability. And did it ever exist in South Africa?"

Vedchhi Kaliparaj Conference

The people were mad with joy and enthusiasm. Numbers of carts and unyoked bullocks could be seen on one dry bed of the river. The scene looked like a big caravan's camping. On the other dry bed, which was shaded from the sun, there was an exhibition. It was only boys and girls and old men of the Kaliparaj communities itself, who were demonstrating all the processes for producing yarn, from the separation of cotton from its pods to the spinning of slivers. There were one or two women also. Gandhiji asked them, "Is your *sari* made of Khadi?" Pat came the answer, "Certainly, I spun the yarn myself and got it coloured right here." A respectable heap of cotton was laid before Gandhiji also. When he knew of Gandhiji's impending visit, one Kaliparaj boy started spinning night and day, then wove the yarn himself, and presented the cloth to Gandhiji. And what shall I say of the perfect innocence of the women there? An eye equally sinless can alone appreciate that purity. An aged woman put her self-spun yarn and one rupee before Gandhiji and exclaimed in her typical dialect 'Oh my! I had never seen Bapu¹ before!' Gandhiji also burst out into a laugh. As his eyes beheld the mammoth gathering that stretched before him, he remarked, "What can I have to say to this (enthusiastic) meeting? ' An aged Chaudhara (a Kaliparaj community), Jivan Patel, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. How sweet was the language that flowed from his lips, even in its corrupt forms! He said:

"I beg your permission to say a word. Please listen to it attentively. You have become *bhaktas* (devotees of God). The path of *bhakti* has fascinated you and that is an excellent thing. The World-Teacher, the Lord, Mahatma Gandhi has graciously fulfilled our heart's desire by coming over here. That shows, we must have worshipped God formerly (in previous births). There is not going to be any other God in future who



will teach us greater wisdom. If you do not give up wine and toddy (an indigenous intoxicant), you will have to shed bitter tears."

Gandhiji's speech:

"Bhai Jivanbhai, Kaliparaj sisters and brothers and those of other communities!

I have seen many a Conference. If 50 persons meet together, they would call it a Congress, and if 5, a Conference. I have also seen several Conferences exclusively of the so-called low castes. And I have seen many Conferences as simple and unimposing as this one. I have seen them not only in India, but also in Africa and Europe. But never before have I seen a Conference, so beautiful, so charming. My congratulations to the Reception Committee and the volunteers for it. It is just in the fitness of things that the least possible expense has been incurred after this Conference. That is the only thing that becomes a poor country like ours. Attached to the Conference, you have organised an excellent exhibition, a model of its kind, also. I would simply pity the Indian leader who sees this Exhibition and still retains his want of faith in spinning. The sight of this exhibition would not fail to convince any visitor that spinning and carding are indispensable for the country. All of you should feel that we cannot do without them, if we want to remove the stark poverty of India.

Mohammad Ali has sent a telegram begging to be excused for his absence. Perhaps you do not know that he was once a high Government officer. You may be knowing the later history of his career. During his Government service, he had tried to share the joys and sorrows of Kalaparaj brothers and sisters. He had cherished the desire of having their *darshan* once again and of renewing their contact. But then he fell ill. He has, besides, to conduct two magazines. He has wired me to say that, on his behalf, I should offer you an apology for his absence.

This Conference is held annually for the last 3 years and an exhibition like this one has also been held with it every time. I have read the resolutions of these Conferences. Resolutions have not been drafted this time, but after my consultation for about 5 minutes, I have learnt that they are going to draft and pass them here also.

"Kaliparaj—Kalipraja (praja-race) does not mean black in colour. 'Kali' means backward classes, i. e. those who have to earn their livelihood by physical labour. Such people have no need to hold Conferences where empty speeches are made. The present is the age of the working classes. That man who does not recognise the dignity



of labour is himself going to cease to be a 'gentleman.' There will be no classes of high and low in the age to come.

"But today money is G d. But can money always retain this high position in this world? Does Satan always hold a high position? Those who walk in the fear of the Lord have certainly never accepted the idea. Satan and money are bad fellows serving each other's interests. And some scriptures even say that money creates many enemies. I do not mean to say that you should not have money. You also do require it. But everything has its place in life and looks well only there. There should be no room in society for a man who does not do any productive work. But we have fallen from our estate and have forgotten to assign the right value to money. And when we degrade the soul and put money in its place, we fall from our path. It only creates trouble for us, when we give to money a value greater than it deserves.

"Let nobody think from this talk that I disregard the rich, condemn them, or wish them ill. The rich also are equally our brothers. I wish to take their help also for the national work. We would call it a good order of society, if the rich know their place in it and keep to it contentedly. You belong to the working class, and hence, deserve our respect and adoration. That country where a labourer is not held in respect, is disregarded and ignored, becomes degenerated itself. In this country also the labourer does not command respect.

"But this is an era of transition. There are now lots of people who realise that labour has an honourable place in society. India cannot live without the labouring classes. It is, therefore, wrong to decry anybody as a 'kaliparaj' or a 'coolie.' Such people should be lifted up. Some people have made it their business to exploit labourers and serve their vested interests through them. They have done no good to the worker. But some others do physical labour themselves and enjoy it. These have begun to be happy. These men come in contact with you. I think that no human being ever falls from his state without his own fault. We, therefore, fall still lower, when we are blind to our faults and condemn others for our plight. I think you are doing something like that. You believe it is not you, but some others, who are responsible for your condition. But, in fact, no others are to blame for it. Ever since I have come to India, I have been telling everybody that it is our own bad deeds that degrade, and our own good deeds that raise us. The question with you is not how to earn your bread. To a labourer, the question does not arise. He has strong hands and feet and is a free man. Who then is the cause of his misery?



“There are two causes for it. You are addicted to wine and toddy. You provide a glaring example of the plight to which a man falls from his drink habit. Sisters and brothers of Kaliparaj, quite a queer association has moreover now sprung up, which wants to teach you that it is a sin to abstain from alcohol. They delight in whispering to you, " If you give up drinking, the habit will wear off and with it your physical stamina; that will lead to the loss of your employment." Never be caught in that snare. You had all taken a vow two years ago to abstain from alcohol. I remind you of it. Stick to that resolve. Don't listen to that physician who tells you, you will die unless you resume the habit. The body is certain to die soon or late, but one's honour, one's word, is immortal. If, therefore, your body is reduced on account of your vow of abstinence, may that be acceptable to you, but on no account should you retrace your step after once renouncing drinks. Countless men fall into various temptations and commit sins. If we want to be free from them, we must not let a single loophole exist in a principle which makes our life unexceptionable. Just as, if we allow a hole to exist in a wall, insects and other creatures as well as thieves may steal into our house, so, if we allow a single hole to remain in the wall of our firm vow, floods of sin will inundate our being through it; and that will bring us sorrow and repentance. Hence, you must always keep away from alcohol. It is in complete abstinence that your good lies.

"I do not mean illiteracy, your inability to read and write, when I say you suffer from abysmal ignorance. Many of you cannot read a single line, but they have the wisdom of experience. You are credulous, guileless people and you are easily led away. It is good to be guileless and trustful. Simplicity and trustfulness are divine virtues. If the most guileless and trustful person has been once taught some truth, nobody can shake him from his belief afterwards. But in your credulousness you believe in ghosts and goblins. You even vow a gift to me as to a God. I want to tell you that that is not good. Nobody is ever going to gain anything by vowing a gift to me. Even simply worshipping me will do you no good. Somebody may, if you are that simple, tempt you tomorrow to worship someone else. Somebody may say, "Take to alcohol again." Or may ask you, as a message from me, to give up the spinning wheel. I tremble to think what may then happen to you. You should, therefore take the pledge of abstinence with the knowledge that your welfare lies in taking it and not because of my advice. Some people think I should take advantage of your superstitious tendency to make you tee-totallers. But in this land of countless superstitions, I don't want to add one more. It does not matter that you cannot be dissuaded from drinking, unless a new superstition is brought in vogue. What I want to emphasise is that as long as you do



not give up drinking on the basis of your own appreciation of the harm it does, your attempt to be free from alcohol will not succeed. I would wish you and the people around you and even the whole world to give up wine and flesh, but not under the impetus of some superstition. Your abstinence will not continue for long when a superstition impels you to abstain. You cannot correct one sin by committing another. As I came here, I thought I must remove this superstition (about me) from your mind and persuade you to give up drinking because it is good to do so and not because it is I who ask you to give it up. It is in your credulousness that your ignorance lies. In order to save you from it, I have asked the volunteers of community to be patient with you. Today also I ask them to do their work with patience and forbearance. I ask them to take a step forward only after due deliberation and induce you to take it in the same thoughtful manner.

"You have complained against Parsi brothers. I am a devout lover of the community. Though very small in number, it has attained great prestige and fame. It possesses numerous good qualities, but also some bad ones. But today many Parsi brothers and sisters are giving up alcohol. Of course, there are many others also who continue to take it. Parsis are vendors of alcohol. They commit sins and even atrocities for carrying on their profession. But what shall I say to them? They offer you temptations and prizes and even bribes. What shall I say of these practices? I might do the same myself if I secured a licence. It is the urge of getting a livelihood that impels a man to commit the worst sin. As we say, 'Pet karaave Veth', 'Pet vajan vagadave' (The belly makes you undergo forced labour. It makes you dance to its tune). It is for 'pet' (for providing you food) that I am delivering this speech. It is being written down and it will have to be revised also. I wish you to be fired with a new spirit.

"Just as there is a complaint against Parsis, so there is one against you also. There is an association of your people which tells you 'He who does not drink, commits a sin.' You will stand against their propaganda not by fighting with them but by remaining true to your vow. You may tell your Parsi vendor, 'we have given up wine and you must now close up your business.' I have many Parsi friends. There are engineers, lawyers, doctors, and even businessmen among them. One of them was a generous and intelligent businessman. He had given large amounts to me for good causes. He had got an Ashram also built from his donation. Suppose I am able to persuade the Parsi community to give up their profession. But then others will step in. Christians, Mussalmans, Jews, Hindus, any or all, may then come in and tempt you



to drink. How can I dissuade all of them? The right way for me is to approach you yourselves and you yourselves must understand the harm of taking alcohol.

"I appeal to the Gaekwar and Bansda States to close up the liquor shops under their jurisdiction. But it is difficult to make a king change his ways. All the same I will try to do so. But they are in the same position as the Parsis and it is difficult to make them listen to my advice. They too have a vested interest in that business and get a large amount of excise revenue. But you are their subjects, you are called their children. My experience tells me that children are easy, and parents hard, to convince. It is you, therefore, on whom I pin my faith.

"How many are the things that can help one in giving up alcohol? Spinning is the chief among them. I have sacrificed my all in that work. India is going to rise again but that rise will not come except from spinning wheel. I was so glad to see your little children spinning at the exhibition! My faith in spinning has gone deeper at the sight. It goes deeper as each day passes. Your means of livelihood is agriculture, but you are poor and it is hard for you to appease your hunger. Under these circumstances the spinning wheel is at once your stay and solace in life. Whenever you have a craving for drink, sit down to spin. The habit will gradually wear off as you go on spinning. It will do, if you do this spinning work simply in order to listen to my advice. If the rains fail, the crops burn up, but the spinning wheel is always fertile. If you take it up in right earnest, it will prove itself to be your *annapurna* (feeder).

"Among the resolutions to be passed here I want you to take an oath to give up wine. If you think it desirable to give it up, you must bind yourselves with this vow: "With God as our Guide and Witness, we take this oath to abstain from wine and toddy ourselves and to gently coax our sisters and brothers to do the same."

"And now a second thing. I want you to raise up your hands only after explaining to you everything. If you have understood the good of hand-weaving, I ask you, sisters and brothers, to resolve to wear only hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi. It is dangerous to wear foreign cloth. If you continue to wear it even after your return from here, you will put the witnesses of your oath in a sad predicament.

"Sisters and brothers, I made you take these two vows. We have made God as our witness in the act. I wish that these vows are kept. It is not an easy thing to keep a vow, but let me show you the way. That method is the stay and support of the sorrowful. A large number of men have been redeemed thereby. I showed it also to



the *antyajas* and dharalas at Sojitra: Get up early in the morning, brush your teeth, wash your face and eyes, and begin chanting Ramnam. Rama means God. Ram-ram means everything. You should pray to Him, "O Rama! let me not lapse from virtue; help me in keeping the vow I have taken at Vedchhi." Even if you are tired and feel terribly sleepy, chant Rama's name for a minute before going to sleep and tell Him. "You have helped me so much in keeping to my vow today. I thank you heartily for it. At night also let me not think wistfully of wine or dream of it—and not of foreign cloth either." Do that much and then you will find you have nothing to do with ghosts and spirits. Rama does not expect a coconut from you to propitiate Him. What He yearns for is the love of your heart. He is sitting in the heart of everyone. Try to know Him. This clock here is ticking. But Rama has no need to advertise His existence. May Rama lead you all to your good! "

Immediately after the Conference was over in the evening, the Dharalas packed up and in a trice rows of bullock-carts began rattling along tracks going in various directions. Gandhiji then called a meeting of the workers, i. e., of the Chaudhara workers. Names of those willing to work for the community were enlisted. Who would not be induced to work with such persons as Sri Chunilal and his wife—who, too, is a skillful weaver and had the distinction of presenting to Gandhiji a self-spun and self-woven piece, made during only the last one month and Sri Jugatram? There were women also in the workers' list. It is impossible to forget the unaffected, child-like smile that played upon the lips of one woman in particular. "Well, do you wish to work?" "Yes, I too am so eager!" she said in her own tongue. Immediately then another woman got her name enlisted and everyone of them resolved to secure five recruits as assistants. This army will work for prohibition and Khadi throughout the area of the Kaliparaj population. And Gandhiji himself has written highly of an old venerable man. The members of this Kaliparaj community are still so hot that what is needed is only to blow off the ash covering them. Once that is done, the burning pieces of charcoal are certain to give great warmth to the man also who blows it off.

Sri Chunibhai's daughter also presented some Khadi to Gandhiji at Vedchhi.

Spent the night at Siyadla. Bapu remarked, "Whoever selected this place for the venue must have a keen sense of natural beauty."

1. Bapu—father. Besides being the 'Mahatma', Gandhiji was also 'Bapu' to the millions of India.



24-1-1925

During the discussions at the Unity Committee¹ held in Delhi under the Presidentship of Gandhiji:

Jinnah : Lucknow² Pact was never intended to be permanent.

*Lajpat Rai: Communal representation is a negation of nationality.

We must further the interests of India as one united nation. The question before you is how to further the interests of Swaraj. We have not only to win our liberty, but to retain it after we have won.

Mrs. Besant (a very passionate speech):

*Swaraj is the only solution to the problem of poverty and starvation. 'Shall India live or die?' is the question, not trifling quarrels. To me that is the vital thing. I think of it day and night. The Bill³ has not come out of my brain only.

1. In November 1924 an All-Parties' Conference was held at Bombay. The Conference appointed this Committee to draft a constitution for India acceptable to all political parties.

2. The Congress and the Muslim League had come to a concordat and jointly submitted a 'Congress-League Scheme of Reforms at Lucknow in 1916. The Government squashed the concordat by offering even greater safeguards and privileges to Muslim. Mr. M. A. Jinnah whose stand against the proposed 'Memorial' to Lord Willingdon was gratefully appreciated by the people in the commemoration of the "Jinnah Hall" in Bombay, was receding from nationalism and communal unity since 1919. The above expression is typical of his growing alienation.

3. Mrs. Besant had sponsored a 'Commonwealth of India Bill' at that time. She had sought as wide a support as possible, including Gandhiji's. But Gandhiji refused to sign the Memorial because though he agreed with the object and even the scheme, no effective sanction was thought of in case Britain rejected the Bill.



25-1-1925

At the Sub-Committee appointed by the above Committee:

*Col. Gidney (an Anglo-Indian): I must think as an Indian. We must have communal representation. We have a right to ask you to value us not quantitatively, but qualitatively.

*Mudaliar ('Justice Party' of Non-Brahmins): It is a part of my party's creed that Swaraj would have no meaning without minority rights being safeguarded by communal representation. Nationalism itself cannot evolve without separate electorates. (A question: separate or joint electorates?). We asked for separate electorates, but we are not going to insist on it. It is a question to be decided entirely (by Muslims) where they are in a minority. You want Mussalmans because you want Mussalman view—aggressively Mussalman view—to be represented. Separate electorates is what the Madras Mussalmans want. But if they be satisfied with joint electorates, I shall congratulate them. I would give separate electorates to every group that wanted it (including those of Vaishyas and Shudras).

*C. R. Reddy: Nationalism is not a sum of communal interests. Communalism will lead to a reactionary and anti-national movement. Why should I call myself a nationalist, if I want communalism? How are you going to reconcile the unity you want, whilst you emphasise the communal interests? Have a bicameral system—one composed in the national way and the other in the communal way. Take the Malabar instance. No Mussalman stood up for them. It was a Malabar Brahmin and another Hindu. Mussalmans were too terribly cowed down.

*C. Y. Chintamani (a Moderate): Nothing in my head with which I can assist your deliberations.

*Joshi (a Moderate): I am in favour of joint electorates with a special number of seats.

*Gokarna Misra: I am for joint electorates.

(Sri Mahadevbhai has given the following picture of the attitudes of the members in his article in 'Navajivan' d. 8-2-1925).

After our arrival here on the 23rd, the Unity Committee held its session for four or five days. After a short discussion on the first day, Gandhiji suggested that instead



of having one Committee with such a large number of members, they might split up into two Sub-committees, one for political differences between Hindus and Muslims and the other for a Swaraj scheme. That suggestion was accepted and then the sessions of both the Sub-committees were held, separately, till the day before yesterday. The Unity Conference held earlier in Delhi during Gandhiji's fast had been called to tackle the situation arisen out of the riots and the consequent fast of Gandhiji. As the riots were supposed to have sprung up out of religious quarrels, that Conference at Delhi held five months earlier had discussed the communal differences on only religious grounds. The All Parties' Unity Conference held at Bombay put forth the question of an agreed Swaraj Scheme, and the Committee it appointed included in its purview the question of the political rights of all the communities of India. There was a party which affirmed that the only question worth tackling was that of Swaraj and that since all other problems would be more easily resolved after Swaraj, they should not be discussed at the present time. True, that was the situation once, for example, in 1921. But this view ignored the fact that, at present at least, even for threshing out a Swaraj scheme, it was first necessary to have a concord between Hindus and Muslims.

In the end a separate Committee was appointed for each of these two questions. The Swaraj Committee is still holding its session. At the second (Communal) Committee there was a long discussion on the proportion of representation which each community should have and the discussion continues. Those opposed to communal representation argue that fighters for Swaraj are not out for communal rule in any shape or form and the future Swaraj government will not look after the interests of any single community—Hindu or Muslim—but after those of the whole nation. Those who demanded communal representation argued that the principle of communal representation had been already accepted at the Lucknow Congress in 1916 and that it was after that acceptance that the Congress had appointed a Committee to bring about the Pact. Now, therefore, the Congress could not back out of communal representation.¹ But the question is, if minority communities deserve special representation, what is the definition of a minority community? The Muslim, besides, is not the only minority community, there are many others. Should all of them be given special representation? And is 'religion' the only consideration for calling a community, major or minor, or there are others also? Some say that representation may be proportional under a joint electorate scheme, so that Hindus may elect Muslims and vice versa. But ultra-Muslims and ultra-Hindus are opposed to this view.



They want their own electorates and a special weightage where they are in a very small number.

It is not wrong to say that the whole root of the trouble is distrust of each other. So long as we have not got Swaraj, those who want an improvement in the present situation have got to get the changes made only by the Government; and when the third party is made the judge to decide an internal issue between two communities or requested to pass a law on representation, how can we hope to get Swaraj? How can all these parties relish Gandhiji's advice of complete trust? This is his stand:

'Don't give up any principle; for the rest, let the opposite party demand any number of rights, and they should be granted. Communal representation is a vicious thing. Even if you want to accept it, do it only after a mutual and complete agreement.' But this view finds favour with hardly any.

*In a letter to a German, Gandhiji wrote: "The one condition of fighting for liberty is to acquire self-restraint. To do that it is necessary to give up the pleasures of the world."

1. It is interesting to recall here how special electorates for Muslims were first introduced. Lord Minto instigated a section of Muslim ultra-loyalists to bring to him a 'Muslim' Deputation demanding separate electorates and special representation which, he said, would be granted them. The Deputation, thus engineered, presented those demands and they were incorporated in the Morley-Minto Reforms Act of 1909. But this was the thin end of the wedge. Separate electorates and special representation were extended to Municipal and Local Boards elections in 1910, even though, U. P., for example, with 1/7th Muslim population had elected 189 Muslims and 445 Hindus in Local Boards and 310 Muslims and 562 Hindus in Municipalities and the Lt. Governor U. P. Sir John Hewett himself was opposed to separate electorates. (History of the Congress by B. Pattabhi Sitaramaiyya—p. p. 70).

The Congress was thus forced to accept the principle of separate electorates, if it ever wanted to present any agreed scheme for Swaraj. Even Lord Morley wrote to Lord Minto "You started the Muslim here." (re. the Muslim deputation demanding separate electorates) . Maulana Mohammad Ali called it a 'command performance' (in 1923).



26-1-1925

Gandhiji began today's session with the words, "Hakimji is seriously ill and he cannot attend. We must, therefore, go to him."

Just at that moment Hakimji came in.

Gandhiji gave quite a novel form to today's session. It turned practically into a 'Confessionnel Generale'. He himself declared, "It has been alleged against me that I am partial, that I am filled with a natural prejudice in favour of Muslims. A complaint has come to me that some of the highest Muslim leaders are in collusion with the Afghans. I, therefore, wish that free vent should be given today to feelings pent-up in our hearts against one another and that the mists be thus rolled away.

Everyone then expressed himself without reserve. The talks were more downright than even what had taken place 5 months before. Many speeches were delivered.

Dr. Munje (Hindu Mahasabha leader) delivered an excellent speech. He said: "When Muslims came and settled in India hundreds of years ago, they were not afraid of the Hindu majority. There is no reason why they should feel afraid now. We too must not be afraid of Muslims. I am not. Hatred is not the monopoly of any community. We want to, we have got to, live together, no matter what difficulties befall us. I will, therefore, compel Muslims to live with us amicably and Muslims have got to compel us to live with them likewise."

In the end Jayakar (an eminent lawyer, and Moderate) delivered a sermon to a 'noted journalist' (M. Mohammad Ali). Some of his statements were not true to facts and infuriated Mohammad Ali, who then used some hard words and unparliamentary language.

Kelkar (Lokamanya Tilak's follower and editor of the "Maratha") advocated responsive co-operation.

It was in the end decided to hold an informal meeting at Hakimji's house.



Cow-protection

The Cow-Protection Conference held at Belgaum had appointed a Committee. The sittings of that Committee were very remarkable and useful. Many schemes as well as methods for cow-protection were discussed. Lalaji (L. Lajpatrai), Swami Shraddhanandji, Kelkar, Dr. Munje, Chaunde Maharaj, Dhanpatrai of the Punjab, Lala Bhagwandas and Dadasaheb Karandikar, all of them, took a keen interest in questions like prevention of cruelty to animals, supply of good nourishment to our live-stock, improvement of their breeds, reasons for the increasing paucity of grazing grounds, and prevention of the sale of cows to butchers. Lala Dhanpatrai is a noteworthy personality. He claims to make dry cows prolific by yoking them to his ploughs and making them undergo other physical labour. The one thing he delighted to speak of to everybody was: “It is no use selling a cow. Dry cows can be fecundated and can be made use of till they die.” He was a lawyer, but now in his old age he has devoted himself to cow-protection work. When this Committee there meets next, in March, he is going to bring his fertilized dry cow with its calf. And Dada Saheb Karandikar had taken pains to bring a whole chapter on cow protection from Kautilya’s ‘Arthashastra’ (Economics).

Referring to the speech Bapu delivered at this Conference I told him, “The speech is excellent, but it seems you have done some injustice to Gujarat.” Bapu (owing to his silence) wrote in reply: “There is indeed some cow-protection going on in Gujarat, but Kathiawar is a happy exception. All the same when there is a famine, the animals are driven out even there. There is hardly any place which has given me satisfaction with regard to our treatment of domestic animals. As against this fact here, in Europe you will hardly find anything to complain in this matter. In Arabia, the horse is an object almost of worship and is looked after with that care. I wonder why we here are so heartless in our treatment of the cow. In Europe, our eyes are fixed in silent amazement on the animals there.”

Gandhiji had little time to stay at home owing to his attendance at all these sessions, and yet there was no end to the string of visitors. There is quite an invasion on India by American tourists these days, and specially on Delhi, now that the Assembly session is going on. But among those who saw Gandhiji, there were not only Americans, but one or two Australians, four or five Englishmen (among whom were a Labour M.P. and Lord Curzon’s son-in-law) and one Russian. Why should they not see



Gandhiji, when they could do so by a happy coincidence? Mr. Morley spoke of the bright chances of the Labour party and its sympathy for India. But Gandhiji told him, “India is not going to pin its hope on the Labour Party; and the fact is that when the Labour Party forms the Government, it may be more concerned with law to remain on the saddle than with doing any good to India.” In reply to the question, “What have you to say to the Labour Party’s ideal of removing class distinctions?” Gandhiji said:

“I cannot imagine a state of society in which all differences will be dissolved and there will be complete equality between man and man. Such equality, besides, may have no life in it. What I am aiming at is fraternity in inequality and variety. Not that if equality is brought about, I am averse to it, but I think the idea to be too fanciful. That is why, I, for one, wish that there should be love between the capitalist and the labourer, between the rich and the poor, between the prince and his subjects. What I hate is not wealth, but its abuse, not power, but its malpractices. I am striving to make the peasant and the proletariat conscious of his freedom and power.”

In answer to the question, “Does not the Hindu-Muslim question worry you?,” he said, “Not in the least. We may not succeed today, but, I have no doubt, we shall solve the problem.”

“Does not Britain help the cause of unity?”

“Unwittingly, not consciously.”

“Shall we not then be able to expiate for the wrongs we have done to India”

“That you will—but not at present. And even there, we shall have to help you. You are not so pliant as to accept our mere appeal to do us justice. We shall have to prove our strength and fitness, and in such a convincing way as to catch your eye. Are there any fighters for justice living in England now? There is no Bright or Bradlaw among you at present. It is we, therefore, who have to fight it out.”

Some women also had come but, as it was then Gandhiji’s silence day, they could not talk with him. There was, however, a very amusing interview with another woman, a representative of ‘Sunday Review.’ She felt that the quarrels between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins and between Caste-Hindus and Untouchables would never end.

“Will these squabbels and untouchability ever come to an end?”



“Why not? I have no doubt that they will.”

“If the British left India—and Indians want Swaraj of the parliamentary form but they are not keen about the army—and if the British army also left India, will you be able to raise an army to prevent foreign attacks?”

“Both your assumptions are wrong. Indians care very much for the army and there is no doubt they can also raise an army. But, as matters stand, do we ever get a single responsible post?”

“They (Indians) don’t come forward.”

“They are never given any really high post. Can an Indian become a Commander-in-Chief today? A stray Indian may rise at the most to the position of a Captain. Let alone the Army. Have a look even at the Civil Services. How many hidebound restrictions even there are for Indians!

“Don’t Indians become High Court Judges?”

“They do; but a High Court Judge has much less power and responsibility than a District Collector, who has all the powers of the Government over the District he rules. What power does that Judge possess?”

But the lady began to defend the Government strongly. “The British are ‘sober’”, she said, “but Indians are like the French, easily excited, and they must not be given high posts in the army,” and so on. Gandhiji laughed out her 211ecogni explanations. She then put a still more silly question:

“Will not India after Swaraj revert to infanticide and Sati?”

“Better continue your old question than put this ridiculous one. You can ask me, “Will you be able to defend yourselves”?”

“Yes, Yes. That question stands. How will you maintain peace on the Frontier?”

“We shall keep peace on the Frontier as well as in the Interior. ‘The Frontier trouble’ is faked up. Frontier skirmishes are all engineered and invited. This is not my view, but of an efficient British officer. He has even proved that there is no moral defence for a single Frontier invasion. Those scuffles and invasions are brewed in order to keep British soldiers in fighting trim.”

“That is difficult to believe. It is the Frontier tribes that always indulge in loot.”



“But ‘the Frontier scuffles’ are not meant to end the plundering. If we had the power, if we were allowed to settle our problems ourselves, the first thing we would do would be to make peace with them. And what can they do at the worst? Those tribes have no desire to rule over us.”

“Why, did not the Moguls found an Empire? Others may swoop upon you from the north in the same way. Northern hill-tribes have always a lure of the plains to settle there.”

“Nothing of the kind. And suppose they have. What then? And suppose we are defeated and people like the Moguls decide to stay. So what? We were not worse off under the Moguls than we are now. The Mogul never penetrated into our homes, into our villages. They never destroyed our spinning-wheel, had never morally degraded us by the traffic in wine and opium.”

“Was not Jahangir an opium-eater?”

“All right. But that did not matter. Wine and opium were never made by the Moguls articles of commerce and no revenue earned out of it. Now-a-days everything goes on perfectly, in the most systematic manner. Statistical charts, maps of licenced shops, figures of the sale of wine and all such materials harnessed with the sole object of increasing this ‘business.’ Not that the Moguls did not possess the power of recognizing it, they did; but when that power works hand and glove with forces of destruction, could there be any other result than total annihilation? That is our state today. Nor had the Moguls any love for us and any concern for our welfare, but their harassment was nothing before that of the British.”

“But why should India not trade in opium, when other countries will step in, if India doesn’t?”

“Should India earn money by Immoral acts, because the world may do so otherwise?”

“But they say opium traffic is of old standing?”

“The habit may be old, but not the traffic. The British may not have inculcated the drug habit in us, but they have systematized its use. But why go so far? I feel a constraint in talking of that other thing to you. They have given legal status even to prostitution! Regular engagement of prostitutes for the army! What more disgraceful than that?”



But that lady started to defend even that practice! Diseases would spread and the army deteriorate, if no provision was made for the satisfaction of the soldier's lust, she said. But let me not say a word more about her arguments, if for nothing else, for decency's sake at least. Gandhiji was stunned.

"I am to find a woman, coming forward to defend an intolerable tyranny inflicted on her sex. The thing should give you the creeps."

"No. I am only putting one side of the case."

"One side of the case! When your blood should boil, you are talking of putting one side of the case! Degrading men into animals and then providing them with the means to satisfy their beastliness! It passes my comprehension why for the so-called defence of the country, its young men are kept mentally lazy and then encouraged to increase only the strength of the body. There is no parallel in the world to the enormity of this moral crime. As a woman, you should resist it with all your might, but you are defending it! I am amazed."

"(A little put out of countenance) I am not defending it, I am giving you my explanation."

It is difficult to do full justice to the gentlemanliness of Dr. Ansari. At Raysena (a Delhi locality) there was only one car left and that his. Shaukat (his son) and I had already got into it. The Doctor Saheb and many others were still out, looking for a conveyance. There was a tonga (horse-carriage) standing by. Brijkrishan and I tried to get into it, but the Doctor would not hear of it. He himself took the tonga and sat there with his friend. Mohammad Ali once told me that the Doctor's sense of forgiveness was as generous as Bapu's. The Begum Saheba (Mrs. Ansari) had a serious accident one day. The Doctor Saheb rushed to Delhi, but he did not get angry either with his son or his chauffeur. He only said, "Oh, dear! What have you done!"



1-2-1925

Gandhiji's speech at the Depressed Classes' Conference held in Delhi which he was invited to attend:

“Please do not expect any long speech from me. My silence will begin at 6 p. m. and that is the chief reason. It is difficult to put in words what I feel for you. And what may I say to those who regard ‘untouchables’ as worthy of suppression? Just as I say that this Empire is filled with Satanism, so I affirm that there is one kind of Satanism in Hinduism and that is untouchability. My heart is swelling up at this injustice. It passes my imagination how any human being can be branded ‘always—untouchable’ because of his birth. I know that there is room for untouchability in society. I cherish the memory of my mother with deep reverence. I used to prostrate at her feet every morning. She used to take a bath, when she swept off her child’s excreta. I was born in a Vaishnava sect. That sect and others enjoin a bath after doing some unclean work. Every mother does a scavenger’s work. In the same way you (Hindus) may rightly say that when Bhangi brothers are cleaning latrines, they become untouchables. A nurse too who attends on patients becomes an untouchable. And yet we have nothing but respect for nurses, though I am not sure that all nurses take a bath after their duty. I can understand a man who says he would touch a tanner only after he bathes when he finishes his work. That is allowable practice. It may even be said that that is for the preservation of one’s health. But to say that that a man has got to remain untouchable all his life is nothing better than Satanic. How can you get Swaraj so long as untouchability of this type is not uprooted? We (caste-Hindus) must expiate for our sin. So long as we have not done it, it is we who are really untouchables—not these people. In fact, we all are none other than untouchables at present. Some American visitors came to meet me once and just then Lala Sultansingh happened to come up. They were telling me that their’s was a democratic country and that nobody there was treated badly. Lalaji asked them, “Why then did my cook become an untouchable in your land? I could not keep him with me till I had given a deposit for him and wired to the authorities for permission.” And what do we find in South Africa? We are simply reaping what we have sown. It is owing to our own sins that we have become untouchables all the world over. Wherever we go, we are made to live in separate quarters, which means in ‘ghettos’ or quarters for untouchables. What should we do then? We must welcome our untouchable brothers’ entry in our schools and temples.



“The suppressed classes also have their duties to perform. From mere outward appearance, nobody can make out Chamars or Bhangis from others—even if they are sitting with Brahmins. But some bad habits have crept into their lives. The fault even there lies solely with us (Caste-Hindus). That is why I appeal to the *antyajas*, ‘Help us a little in the atonement of our sins. Give up wine and flesh-eating and become clean in your habits of life.’

“In the Bhagwat, it has been said that nobody dare blame the strong. Compared with *antyajas* we are strong but with Englishmen we are slaves. I pray to God to grant us power to save Hindu Society and help *antyajas*, so that untouchability is destroyed root and branch.



5-2-1925

Speaking before the Hindu refugees who had come to 'Rawalpindi in the wake of the Hindu-Muslim riot at Kohat¹, Gandhiji said:

"I had presented myself before you in December last and had had a passing talk. I had told you then that in order to have further consultations with you, I would come to you once again if you had not gone back to Kohat before I could come. I had also stated that if Muslim brothers came here from Kohat when I came, I would make some inquiry into the riot.

"Some Muslim brothers have come from Kohat and I have also talked with them. It has become impossible for me, as a result of these talks, to advise you to return to Kohat. I had hoped for some good result from my talks with them. Though I have not despaired, there is nothing in the horizon today to induce me to advise you to return. I think I should rather give you just the opposite advice of not going there. It is possible that I may fail in my talks with Muslim brothers. Those Muslims, moreover, whose influence has begun to count these days have not come here. They have even sent a wire to the effect: "Peace has been established here. Hindus are returning to Kohat. Why then call us and throw us all into confusion again?" That means that Shaukat Ali and I need not meddle in this their affair. When, moreover, during my talk with those Muslims who have come here, I asked them, "Do you take the responsibility of taking Hindus back to Kohat?" One of them plainly said, "If the Hindus wish to return they may; but we cannot take any responsibility. We cannot even invite them as those Hindus who are there at present are detested." I cannot, therefore, advise you to return to Kohat.

There is another thing. If you wish to go back by relying upon the power of the Government and if, from your talks with it you have some faith in its assurances of safety, you may, if you like, go back. I am however firmly of opinion that in the final result, we are not going to gain anything by approaching the Government for help and returning to Kohat through that agency. And that is why I don't advise you to go there on the strength and backing of the Government. You have to rely upon your own strength wherever you stay.

"If it is essential to confer with anybody for making your return to Kohat possible and safe, it is the Muslims, not the Government. In the first place, they are in an overwhelming majority. But even if we were equal in number, since we have fled from



Kohat out of fear, we don't stand to gain anything by going there without coming to terms with Muslims. But if a man wants to go there for preserving his wealth or his life at the cost of his honour—that is a different thing. In my view, it is better to die than live in such a humiliating manner.

The extremely painful thing that I came to know yesterday was the fact that some of you embraced Islam simply in order to save your skin and then came here. In my view the converts have not become genuine Muslims, but have accepted Islam only out of fear and only with a view to save their lives. Were it not so, why should they say, 'Cut off the tuft of hair on my head (Hindus used to wear a tuft of hair on the head. The practice is fast disappearing.) or say, "Make me recite the *Kalama*". If we do that, there is no meaning in our chanting Gayatri mantra everyday and our Hinduism is only a farce, no matter whether the man who does so is a Sikh or an Arya-samajist (a militant reforming sect in Hinduism). What I want to emphasise is that we should never give up our religious beliefs, even if we have to die for them. Our real wealth is not money, in cash or kind. These possessions are liable to be robbed. Our true and imperishable wealth is our Dharma. When we are prepared to lose that, we may be rightly said to be robbing our own house. Ever since I heard these stories of conversion, I have been feeling that you don't stand to gain anything at all by going back to that place. You are losing your most valuable possession, if you yield to the temptation of saving your money or your life at any cost.

"Muslims, moreover, abduct even the wife of a Hindu and make her accept Islam. I cannot imagine how such a Hindu woman becomes a Muslim. She does not know a word of the *Quran*. She does not know what the thing called *Kalama* is. She knows very little even of her own religion. It is entirely beyond me to understand how such a woman can become a Muslim. If somebody abducted my wife and she recited the *Kalama*, it would become impossible for me to live any longer on this earth. Or I may ask for the help of other Hindus for recovering her and bringing her back into Hinduism. If I do not do so, I am a coward. I cannot then claim to be her husband. If you are human being and wish to remain in the species, you must all declare on oath that you would not go back to Kohat till this situation is changed.

"I have been told that if Kohati Hindus do not go back to Kohat, there would be a panic among other Hindus and a mass exodus from the Frontier. If that happens, I think it would be all to the good. My advice is clear and definite. If you stay at Kohat, you may do so either on the basis of your own strength or on that of friendship with



Muslims. I do not wish Hindus to be cowards. I wish to make both Hindus and Muslims brave. I want the strength of both to increase side by side. It is impossible for me to put up with the idea that Hindu strength may grow by crushing that of Muslims or vice versa. Hindu Dharma never teaches us that it should destroy other faiths.

“I cannot accept the contention made yesterday that it is right to convert a Hindu woman into Islam in the way I have described. I want to talk with Muslim brothers in greater detail to know what they mean. Is it possible that Islam teaches the Muslim to abduct my wife? My wife may have absolutely no idea of what Islam is, what Christianity is. She has been born into a Hindu family, she takes Ramnam (Remembers Rama as her God) and is fully content with her reading of Ramayana and Mahabharata. She has not embraced Islam through intellectual conviction. She has all the while clung to her religion, and that with the deepest faith and tenacity. If I am told that such a woman has accepted Islam, what should I make of it? She has not deliberately and willingly accepted Islam and hence is adverse to be called a Muslim woman. I want to confer with Muslim brothers and question them, ‘Does your religion ask you to carry off somebody’s wife and make her a Muslim?’ Any physical force exerted on a Hindu woman living in the Frontier is impossible for me to put up with. If I am told that she has accepted Islam, I am not prepared to believe it. That is why I want to tell you, if you have any love for your religion, do not go back to Kohat. Don’t go there, so long as the Mussalmans of that place do not tell you, “Come back. We guarantee the preservation of your whole family’s honour.” If you go there and gain money, but lose your religion, it is nothing but filthy lucre in my eyes.

“You have not died of starvation till now. I had told you one other thing also in December. I am against the idea of an able-bodied man living upon charity. That is beggary. I would be committing a sin, if I advised you to live on doles. Today also I am as firm as before in that view. And that is why I have not asked for a single pice from the public for Kohat refugees. Only after I know the reason why a fund is required, I appeal to the public for it. I have not prepared any donors’ list. Yes, it is true indeed, if somebody sends me an amount, I send it here. But if you follow my advice, and if those who are not physically handicapped earn their livelihood by labour, I repeat my assurance to help you to the fullest extent.

“I am even prepared to take you to my Ashram at Sabarmati. I will give you there as much as you want in food and raiment. I will give you what I eat myself. I will make it a point to feed you first and then have my meal. But I will take from you 8 hours’



daily work. If you are ready to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, I am prepared to help you in every way. But if some of you tell me, 'We are lawyers, give us cases, I cannot satisfy them. I cannot provide a brief to ...', by provoking a quarrel between two parties. In the same way, if businessmen ask for a grant of a million rupees or two, or even ten thousand, it is impossible for me to comply with that request. All I would do would be to provide without fail some work or other to every one. It is from that view, that I have been repeatedly asking the people of India to spin for half an hour. The spinning wheel is a symbol of physical labour. He who plies the wheel will be willing to do some other physical work also. I cannot give you any agricultural work. But I have plenty of spinning, weaving and carding work to give and that to such an extent that hundreds of thousands of people can earn their daily bread from it. I read recently in a paper that even H. H. The Maharaja Saheb of Mysore had begun to spin. If those among you who are craftsmen, goldsmiths, for instance, want implements to set up their business I shall consider it my duty to provide them with the implements. I take it also as my business to make arrangements to rehabilitate different persons in their respective professions. I am prepared to beg for all that. That is why I ask you again today to make a profession-wise list that can tell me how many among you are professionals and how many persons each has in his family as his assistants. Even if anybody is ill or weak, he or she also can do some work at least. I first take work even from my sister, who is a widow, and only then give her food. She argues, 'We are Diwan's children' but I don't listen to her. We are only manual labourers for India. I can, therefore, do nothing else than exact work from the person to whom I provide food. That is how I square up with both my wife and my sister, and I will do the same with those who are widows here.

"Some reports made me hang the head from deep shame. I have heard that some of the Kohati Hindus are gamblers. Some demand their rations a second time, even though they have been given it already, and kick up a row if they are refused. Some ask for another quilt, because they make money by selling off the one they are given. All this is a matter of deep pain to me. I can put up with what happened at Kohat, but this I cannot, if it is true. If that is the way you want to live here, better go back to Kohat and hang your religion. Religion, in my view, does not mean that a man is a Hindu, just because he recites the *Gayatri*. He alone is a Hindu to my mind in whose heart the *Gayatri* is engraved. A man does not become a Sikh by orally repeating extracts from the Grantha Saheb². He is a true Sikh who preserves in his heart the sayings of the Grantha Saheb in their right spirit. Just because a man can perfectly



intone the mantras of the Vedas, he is not an Arya-samajist. An Arya-samajist is one who lives his life in consonance with their teaching. To the Mussalmans also I shall ask, ‘Can I become a Mussalman merely by conning the *Kalama*?’ I feel, therefore, very ill at ease, ever since I heard this story of your conversions.

“This is the *Kaliyuga* (the Dark Age) and it is due to incidents like these that there is this degeneration among us. I pray, ‘Please don’t put a man like me to shame by such behaviour on your part. If that is how you want to act, better ask me to part from you altogether, for I can’t serve you in that case.’

“Malaviyaji³ Maharaj concurs with me that you should not return to Kohat in the present situation. I didn’t put him to the trouble of coming over here, because the Bengal Ordinance is being discussed in the Imperial Legislative Assembly and he is busy. He was ready to come, but I told him I could do without him this time. Lalaji⁴ also came to the town today. He had phoned me from Lahore. I called him here but, unfortunately, he has fallen ill and cannot be present at this meeting. I invited him here in Rawalpindi in order to come to an agreement with him, so that you may not feel puzzled at divided counsels from us. All the three of us hold one and the same view. These two do not know what I told you about Islam, and yet with regard to the occurrence at Kohat they have set their seal of approval to my view that it is *adharma* (irreligion) for you to go back to Kohat under the present situation. What I added as my own advice was the statement that it was *adharma* for you to go back to Kohat unless and until there was an honourable understanding between you and the Muslims there.

“I am also against the present practice of free rations given to you. The Gita says that the man who eats his food without undergoing any sacrifice for getting it, eats only stolen food. The word ‘sacrifice’ has many meanings, but one of it is physical labour. It is, therefore, a sin to eat anything without earning it by self-exertion. I have come here to have a frank talk with you. You can ask me anything else you like. I for one would like you to tell the workers here right tomorrow, ‘Write down the names of those of us who are taking free rations here. We shall pay for whatever we take from you through our manual labour.’ You all should find out some employment for your livelihood. If you come with me to Sabarmati, I am prepared to provide you such work. Much as I would like to stay here and put in manual labour shoulder to shoulder with you, I cannot do so, as other work also has got to be done by me. I cannot, therefore, stay with you. You may now confer among yourselves and if you accept my view, rent



a building, dig a pit, and start weaving on a handloom. I am ready to procure money for that work and there is no shame in asking me for money on that account.

“And this last word. I have made you the appeal I wanted to; and I am here still, ready to answer any question you put me. You may also frankly tell me that the stories I have heard about you are false, if they are really so. It is good for those also who have given you shelter that you should start doing some work.”

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1. See App: II
 2. The Revered Book. The last Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Govindsingh, declared that none was to succeed him to his Gadi and that the Holy Book was to be installed as the Guru of the Sikhs.
 3. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, President of the Congress in 1919, and a staunch Hindu nationalist leader. Gandhiji called him his elder brother out of love and reverence for his character.
 4. Lala Lajpat Rai, an ex-convict and an ex-exile, was also like Malaviyaji a staunch Hindu nationalist. He also was President of the Congress in 1920 (Special Congress). He died of Lathi blows given him by the police at a demonstration against the ‘All-White’ Simon Commission of Inquiry for further Reforms in 1928.



KOHAT

A Shocking Disclosure

10-2-1925

On the 3rd we left Delhi for Rawalpindi and reached there on the 4th. Dr. Parasram and Sri Jairamdas accompanied us. Among the Mussalmans who had come to Rawalpindi were Peer Kamaal and Maulvi Ahmad Gul (Secretary of the Khilafat Committee). Gandhiji had long talks with both of them on the causes and the course of the riots. Bapu¹ had pin-pointed his whole investigation and cross-examination on two issues.

1. It was impossible that the pamphlet alone could be the cause of the riot and the terrible bloodshed and havoc it produced. What then was the other cause?
2. Were the widespread arson and plunder an accidental outburst of fury or a planned scheme for revenge?

Neither the Maulvi nor the Peer could catch the significance of these issues and they unconsciously gave revealing but truthful answers. Gandhiji drew from them his conclusion about the real cause of the riots. After the inquiry ended, Bapu remarked in the evening, “I have done the most valuable work in the year.” The answers given by both of them were noted down in great detail. Referring to the two witnesses’ answers drawn out by him he said, “I made such a closely searching cross-examination after many long years.”

“Not even during the inquiry of the Punjab riots?” I asked.

“No, no,” he replied, “that was nothing. Even at Champaran, there was very little need for a scrutiny because Slay, the President, was sympathetic. But this time I feel as if I used all my art of cross-examination, so that the witnesses might not even feel that they were being under it.”

Gandhiji began to tell Shaukat Ali what his findings were the next day. The latter had pre-warned the Peer and all others: “Whatever be your internal differences, you must not betray them in your evidences this time.” But can Peer Kamaal forget the opposing Muslim leaders’ animosity and fail to pay them back? He said : “There is no place in Kohat today for any honest man. What is the use of my asking the Hindus to



return? There is now nobody at Kohat who cares to listen to me. And if they came and were subjected to harassment, ridicule, jeering and insult, how could I stop it?"

He disclosed one shocking but usual occurrence in his evidence. "Every year the figure of converts to Islam goes up to 150. There are sure to be a few of them on every Friday. Even married women are converted. But the difficult question then arises as to whose wife a converted woman should be. According to the Shariat she cannot be allowed to go back to her husband."

Referring to this last statement Gandhiji remarked to me and Jairamdas, "Didn't you mark it? In what a casual and nonchalant manner he was talking! As if there was nothing wrong in it!" And then he adjured Shaukat Ali²: "You must now give your own candid view on this matter (of conversions of married women). It is really a shocking affair. It is preposterous if a man like you, too, go to an Ulema (a Muslim divine) for the interpretation of the Koran's and the Shariat's texts." Shaukat Ali said, "As for Hadis, it is beyond me. I don't know Arabic. I have, therefore but to know its meaning from someone else." "That you may, of course. But how is it possible to support an action against which both our reason and our heart revolt?"³ And he said many other prodding things besides this. Shaukat Ali gave evasive and halting replies.

As I was massaging him with oil, I reopened the subject at 12 midnight.

"Don't you think, Bapu, that conversion itself is a wicked thing?"

"Of course, I do."

"But you don't say so plainly! You had even defended the Maulana and declared that they (Muslims) had the right to convert others! That would only encourage these people. So you mean by 'right' nothing more than the 'right' one has to be a profligate?"

"Yes, I mean only that. That 'right' apart, all conversions as such are tainted. And that is why I regard Hinduism superior to Islam or Christianity."

Left Rawalpindi on the 7th. During the journey Gandhiji again earnestly pleaded with Shaukat Ali re. the enormity of the wrong of conversions through abductions. The latter squirmed and kept silent. Arriving in Delhi on the 8th he talked of the Kohat outrages to all, to Pandit Motilalji, to Malaviyaji, to Hakimji and others. The 9th was his silence day, the whole of which he used up in writing. Kohat and other articles were all written out in the train as we were returning to Ahmedabad. We got down from



the train at 9 and went to the Ashram in a car in company with Vallabhbhai. On the way Vallabhbhai asked him: “How did things go at Kohat?”

“It was very good that I went there. I learnt much that was quite new to me. An invaluable work has been done. Very rarely in my life I have made such a close cross-examination. I remember to have cross-examined a Muslim once at Jamnagar in the same way. A veritable fire was raging within me. And Pandit Motilalji also was deeply grieved. Hakimji too was hard put to it. But (Dr.) Ansari saw my point clearly.”

“That proves that you were right in doing a heavy penance (fast for 21 days) for Kohat and other disturbances?”

“I wish I could wind up all outer work and tie myself down to the Ashram. How long can a man live in this filthy political atmosphere? It seems politics is not for a man like myself.”

“What shall we do then ?”asked Vallabhbhai.

“What else? The same thing, of course, which we have been doing. There can be no change there. We have got to do what we must.”

Gandhiji delivered a very heart-stirring discourse on the 10th morning.

Earlier when going to Belgaum (to preside over the Congress session) he had given a very meaningful simile: “My state is like that of an *arja* (a Jain nun). Before she is initiated, she is taken out in a gala procession and adorned with the costliest attire and jewels—but because she is to leave the world as a recluse. My Presidentship also seems to be a step to turn me out of political life.”

With an equally apposite simile, he began his speech today. “I am now in the position of a man who is shocked to find a snake under his quilt and gives it a thorough shaking and sweeps his whole room clean. I came to learn amazing things about Kohat which I had never known before. I am disclosing this to you because it is a question of one’s religion. We all have to beware. That does not mean we have anything specially new to do, but we have to make mental and spiritual preparations to be a match for any untoward event. We have to make ourselves purer.”

Then he talked of the conversions going on in Kohat and the high figure they reached annually. “That figure may perhaps be regarded as small elsewhere, but it is alarming in a province where the Muslim population is hardly 15,000. The Hindus woke



up to this sad fact. The Muslims could not tolerate this awakening and, to the party that was in the look-out for vengeance, that pamphlet proved a handy opportunity. Were the pamphlet the only reason, they (Muslims) 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 reason for this wholesale persecution was bound to be deeper. That reason I found out accidentally. The Muslims I questioned told me everything about their conversion activity in a casual manner, as if it were a matter of no moment. But that activity has touched me to the quick. If all the 30 crores of Hindus turned Muslims after a full knowledge of the Muslim scriptures or their own intellectual conviction, I would not feel the loss so much. I would then be content to be the only Hindu on earth and would shed lustre on Hinduism by my way of living; or become thereby a living witness to the indestructibility of Hinduism; I would then proclaim, “All these others became Muslims, because their eyes could not bear the fierce light of truth that Hinduism sheds. But it passes my endurance, when people are made Muslims by bribery or coercion, as was the case there. I am talking all this to you in order to make you unbending in your resolves, to make you firmer in your loyalty to your religion. All the same there is not going to be any change in my non-violence, in my love, and in my attitude towards Muslims. I will, on the contrary, serve them all the more in all matters in which I find them weak. My love for them will remain the same, but its language will change. It has become and will still become stronger, just as it is growing stronger as regards Englishmen. But that is all. My only object is to wake you up, to alert you today in the holy early hours of the morning. And that I do, because it is possible that you may have to face a similar situation some day. If a child, a boy or a girl, is kidnapped from the Ashram, you should not interpret my principle (of non-violence) crudely and sit silent as spectators. The resolve itself to become pure has innate power. The man with a pure and untainted heart has no need to make an effort to gain physical strength. His body grows strong in the natural course and then his resolve works its way. It is my resolve to take Ramnam before I go to bed. Sleep, therefore, becomes impossible for me, so long as I do not take Ramnam; if by chance, it does come, the resolve urges me to call out Ramnam when I turn my side in sleep and I am sure to see my Rama standing by my side. The same thing holds good for every resolve.”

He gave another beautiful simile in the same discourse. “Let not even a child of the Ashram feel helpless and afraid, if he is beset with danger. If he has not sufficient soul force, he has at least his nails. When dirt gets into our nails, we pare them. If they



grow large, they become harmful to health and hence, we do so . In the same way. We must drive out all poisonous substances from the body one after another.”

Jamnālājī⁴ asked him, “What was the effect on Shaukat Ali’s mind (on the disclosures about Kohat)?”

Gandhiji: “He has not given out his reactions. But it may be said that he was pained. Because I was. He is silent and uneasy.”

Wrote a noteworthy letter to “ You have been charged with licentiousness, in a letter to me. When we were at we also heard the same story, but I did not believe it. I cannot however dismiss, as a slanderer the man who has told me that same story now. Can it be true? Your courage, unaffectedness etc. had fascinated me, but, if the charge is true, I leave it there.”

The addressee sent a remarkable reply. He said, “There were lapses in my early youth. But I don’t remember to have done anything of the kind thereafter, anything to sully the character of anybody. You ask me to destroy your letter. But why? It is my secretary. Mr , who opens my letters and I dictate even this letter to him. My wife also has read your letter.”

Gandhiji wrote in reply:

“I returned from Rawalpindi last night and got your reply today. I was waiting for it. Please don’t get angry with the writer of the accusing letter. I shall try to give you even his name. I have grown prouder of mankind from your statement in your letter that you keep no letter private from others. I have been humbled. I had thought that I was the only person of that type. But you have beaten me, inasmuch as you are in an atmosphere in which it may be difficult to make one’s private life an open book. Were the writer of the (defamatory) letter a rogue or a scoundrel, I would not have written anything to you or allowed my mind to be affected at all. But he is a gentleman, a man of discernment and self-restraint, and a scholar. It is most unlikely that he cherishes any ill-will against you. But I can now understand that he was mistaken. I am sending a copy of your letter to him. That will only do him good. He is such a purehearted man that I should not be surprised, if he saw you and begged your pardon. But I am not sorry for writing that letter to you. You remind yourself of your transgressions. Who can have kept himself free from them? I myself have been saved from such falls thrice, and that too, not by my own effort. The credit goes all to my illiterate mother. She kept her son to the right path with the invisible pulling strings of



solemn oaths and he was saved. I am leaving for . . . on the 15th. Shall we meet there or anywhere else?’’

1. The Inquiry Committee appointed by the Congress was made up of only two members, Gandhiji and Shaukat Ali. Vide App. 1V-2 and IV-3 for their separate findings, which should be read first to understand what follows in the text.
2. It is necessary to remind the reader that both M. Shaukat Ali and Gandhiji were members of the Kohat Inquiry Committee appointed by the Belgaum Congress. M. Shaukat Ali was, therefore, in the position of a judge and not of an advocate.
3. Vide Shaukat Ali’s Statement App. IV-3.
4. Jamnalal Bajaj, whom Gandhiji called his fifth son, loyally supported the national cause with munificent donations as well as all other kinds of sacrifice. It was at his invitation that Gandhiji went to Wardha and then founded Sevagram, the whole area of which was Sri Jamnalalji’s gift to Gandhiji.



Vasad-Anklav

Kaira Dist.

11-2-1925

From a speech at Anklav:

“That is Swaraj under which the poorest and the most miserable can live happily. It is we, those of us who have never suffered the pangs of hunger, who are responsible for the chronic starvation in the country. Those women who were living in this village a century ago used to spin regularly, and the men also would engage themselves either in spinning or in weaving.”

The Dharalas are affected with certain bad habits. They take alcohol and commit thefts. So long as all these things continue, it is impossible for them to keep their faith. Unfortunately, the hearts of Hindus and Mohammedans are continuously at loggerheads. Everyone must love his religion dearly, but if untouchability is an integral part of Hinduism, it is worse than useless to me. It is a sin to regard a man untouchable even if he takes a bath after getting dirty in his professional work. The people of India are themselves the Dheds and Bhangis of the world. Man reaps what he sows. The blame for our slavery does not lie at the Englishman’s door. The noxious tree of slavery has grown out of the sinful seed of untouchability among us which we have sown ourselves.

At Borsad

Gandhiji had already visited Borsad last year to celebrate the victory¹ of the Satyagraha offered there. There were no such mammoth gatherings this time as we saw then. Since, moreover, the workers had decided to hold the big public meeting of Borsad specifically in a Dharala locality, nobody was invited from outside. But even taking into account only the population of the town, the attendance was very thin. Gandhiji could not see in the meeting any sign of the victorious Borsad of last year. In his speech he gave a comparative exposition of a Satyagraha struggle with an armed fight:

“The Kaira Satyagraha² has made till now a record in history ever since it was fought. Compared with it this Borsad struggle seems to be smaller; never the less, I cannot sufficiently congratulate you on your glorious success. That fight has made



Borsad a place of pilgrimage. But I wonder whether, that wonderful Borsad of last year has not gone the way of other pilgrim-centres in India which have ceased to be really such. The fight you had fought and the victory you won were, by no means, ordinary. But it is one thing to wage a fight and quite another to end it in the right manner, i.e., get some constructive work done thereafter. It often happens that even a successful struggle gets atrophied and it becomes a difficult thing to reap a rich and lasting reward. A healthy change at the end of a fight is quite as difficult as tapering a long fast in the proper way. We saw this even after the Kaira Satyagraha, we find it now after this struggle and we had seen the same thing in Europe after the war fought there on a much larger scale. England and Germany fought a deadly war, and stupendous sacrifices were made. We had hoped that the situation in Europe would be altogether changed and that Europe would grow purer, more God-fearing, more watchful of its true interests and more moral. But the same fraud goes on there now as before. And those who had undergone heavy sacrifices are in a pitiable condition. We are entitled to hope that the same difference that exists between that violent war and this peaceful one should show itself even in the results that follow them. The former was a war of destruction. In a satyagraha struggle no party is destroyed and both stand to gain at the end of it. And yet how is it that even after the end of such a holy satyagraha struggle, we don't find the results we can legitimately expect? There is only one reason. In both the methods of fighting, there has been one common feature—that of hectic excitement of rush and bustle. We should be able to maintain mental peace and patience, but that we can't do. It seems, therefore, that we fritter away the gains of victory. But, as for this place, the Darbar Saheb³ had already warned me that he would not be able to show me Borsad as a Khadi-clad town, and that the people had not fully recognized the greatness of Khadi as a result of the Borsad satyagrah. And that is why I am not highly disappointed either.

“There are weavers here. Why should they weave only millyarn? They complain that hand-spun yarn is not strong enough for weaving. It is true that the art of spinning has not yet developed to the extent of turning out well-twisted and strong yarn. But just as a mother pours all the love of her heart on her children, however ugly and diseased they be, so should our weavers lovingly use the yarn whatever be its quality, because it is spun by their own brothers and sisters. It seems that the women I see here may not have taken any part in the Borsad struggle, but definitely these men must have. Why then do I see such an overwhelming majority of them—about 95%—



without Khadi? I, for one, think that they too may not have taken such a leading part in the struggle as to make them understand the potency of the charm of Khadi.

“Somebody may question, ‘What possible connection is there between a satyagraha fight and Khadi? Why should this man, Gandhi, regard them as inseparable?’ This is my answer, ‘The Borsad satyagraha was a fight for purification, for the deliverance of Dharalas from their woes.’ Ravishankar (Maharaj) knows how to relieve their distress. That man, Ravishankar, is a remarkable man, as he reforms Dharalas by undergoing a fast himself. Stealing, heavy drinking and abduction of women are common things with them. Service to them cannot end only by a fight against the Government. Only when they can be taught to stand on their own legs, we can say we have served them. Let them possess some lands, but that is not enough. They may be reaping harvests, but even that is not sufficient. Many among you (Patidars, the richer farmers) will say that Dharalas get all they need from their farms. You are mistaken. They do not possess several advantages which you have and owing to which you earn your living from agriculture. That farmer who has to borrow money for buying manure and other implements cannot earn his livelihood from agriculture alone. Supplementing his income from Khadi and spinning is a must for him.

“Bombay cannot have any idea of India’s poverty because Bombay sucks every drop of the villagers’ blood. In the same way you (townsmen) suck the whole Taluka dry. And that is why there is this lustre on your face. But how long will that last? I tell you, you have taken the wrong road. It is certain to lead you to destruction. You must understand the meaning of the satyagraha fight. It was not a fight against the Government. It was a fight for relieving the poor from their sufferings. That can be done by reforming them and introducing Khadi among them.

“You have with you an excellent couple – The Darbar Saheb and his queen consort. They had no wants that were beyond their means. But they renounced their kingdom and became ascetics. They gave up a small state to win in return a large empire (of the people’s hearts). The man whom I had seen in princely attire, I now see wearing a single shirt. He has made a great sacrifice. What will *you* do? You are not required to make such a heavy sacrifice.

“They say Khadi grates on the skin. It is beyond me to understand how it does. I wonder, I cannot imagine, what makes you feel uneasy at wearing Khadi. It is in your hands to make Khadi as charming as you want it to be. As matters stand there is no



end to the number of hours we waste, but we are entirely unconscious of the wastage. Why not make use of all that time in spinning?

“Have a look at the condition of the *antyajas*. They are a part and parcel of our society. As with a diseased limb of our body, a rotten part of a society corrodes the whole society in the long run. The situation is like a malignant tumour on the body. What right have we to speak of Swaraj, without first bringing about unity between Hindus and Muslims? If we want to chant the *Gayatri mantra*⁴, we must first resort to a clean place, divert ourselves of distracting thoughts and be in tune with God. In the same way some definite preparation is essential for chanting the mantra of Swaraj. I often wish I had better continued to remain in jail. But that is by the way. All I want at present is to speak to you on the spinning wheel, Khadi, eradication of untouchability and cleanliness in mind, speech, and body. We want Swaraj not for lording it over the people but for serving them more efficiently. Lucre is filthy and so is power. If we have accepted the *seva dharma* (the religion of service) in the right spirit power will fall into our hands like a ripe fruit and dance to our tune. I pray to God that Borsad may accept the ‘religion of service’ and become a holy place of pilgrimage.

“You are thinking of affiliating the local national school with the Government. I ask you, “Do you want to give up self-reliance and become dependent? You can’t say you have not sufficient money to conduct the school independently. I respectfully appeal to the managers of the school, ‘No matter whether you be co-operators, lawyers, or Government servants, please be good enough to conserve something that is good, if for no one else, at least for your children; take at least some exertion for them, so that they can gain some vitality.’ (Gandhiji always regarded the education given by the Government as enervating).

“Even the management of a school requires great spirit and ability. The maxim **यथा पिंडे तथा ब्रह्मांडे** (As with a unit, so with the universe) holds true in all matters. If I can conduct the Satyagrahashram quite well, I can easily hold the responsible position of Lord Reading (the Viceroy) with equal success. I do not have to face as many difficulties, give as much thought, and solve as many problems even for this all-India fight for Swaraj, as I have to do for the management of the little Satyagrahashram. What, after all, has one to do in waging a fight? I have to draft a programme of work and ask you to carry it out and there all my business ends. I have thus only to use my tongue. But to manage an Ashram is a more difficult thing. To be a Viceroy some day has never been my ambition in life. The only desire I have always cherished is to



become a servant of India in the truest and purest sense. But what I want to drive at is this. The Viceroy has to wear away his life in his work, but the manager of the Satyagrahashram has to do so in even a greater degree. I wish that you also may strain yourself to the utmost you can for conducting the National High School, since the greater the soul is squeezed and strained, the purer it grows.”

Vallabhbhai: “I run to the help of Borsad in the hour of its Peril, because I have eaten its salt. When you were cowering with fear and keeping yourselves within closed doors, I rushed to your town with my colleagues. I told you then, ‘I have not come because I want to ask you not to pay the two-and-a-half rupees (of the punitive poll-tax), but because I could not bear to see you so helpless.’ There has been a reduction, at present, in the number of crimes, but that is not due to the fact that we (the higher classes) have reformed ourselves or that the Police Department of the Government has grown more conscientious. The real reason lies in the fact that a few pure souls have made friendship with the habitual criminals among Dharalas and succeeded in reforming them. All that we did was to save ourselves from the punitive tax and then cease to care a damn for the poor. But to live in the midst of a people suffering from starvation is to live in a jungle infested with wolves and tigers.”

1. Fought in 1923, it resisted the imposition of a stigma on the whole Taluka (county) of Borsad of reeking with crime, since a punitive poll tax was to be collected from the Taluka. The struggle ended in complete victory in a month. It is therefore, that Gandhiji, when still a patient and prisoner in Poona Hospital, accosts Vallabhbhai as ‘King of Borsad’ (Day-to-Day With Gandhi—Vol: III—p: 299).
2. This struggle was waged in 1918, to secure the suspension of land revenue in the whole district, since it was a famine or scarcity year. Vol : I of Day-to-Day With Gandhi gives a good picture of the struggle.
3. Durbar Sabab Gopaldas Desai’s principality was confiscated by the British Government for his refusal to obey its ukase. He then became a satyagrahi leader during the 1921 movement and then during the Borsad poll-tax fight of 1923.
4. A Vedic mantra of prime sanctity, meaning in effect: “We meditate upon the most desirable (or the best) radiance of that Sun (or Creator) which may impel our intellect.”



At Bhadran

Left Borsad and spent the night at Bhadran. As various roads lead to the Dharalas' villages which lie along the coast (of the Gulf of Cambay), the town is a resting place for those villagers. It is besides one of the model towns of H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda. Articles have been written on it even in such a leading magazine of India as "The Modern Review." It happens to be one of the biggest strongholds of the Patidar community also. One can, naturally, expect that at least this eminent town of that Baroda State which has been making strenuous efforts for the removal of untouchability would be free from that taint. The Mahal Panchayat (County Council) and The Vishishta Panchayat (The Town Council) gave addresses of welcome to Gandhiji. He said in reply:

"I do not think you expect a long speech from me here. I thank you all for your appreciative remarks. I pray to God that I may acquire all the good qualities which you attribute to me in your addresses; and I hope you too will pray that I may gain them. I am certainly trying to imbibe them."

A public meeting was held at 8. 30 p. m. There was perfect order in the meeting, but the way in which the audience was divided into separate groups was bound to give a serious shock to Gandhiji. One can understand a special separate block for those caste-Hindus who believe in retaining untouchability. But here the untouchables themselves were kept apart. A barrier made of bamboos separated them specially from all other blocks. The sight was an eye-sore to Gandhiji and the question of Untouchability occupied the first and the chief part of his speech.

That exhortation gives so many ideas of Gandhiji, clarifies his methods so well, and contains such a revealing analysis of the essence of Hinduism, that I request those who feel they are now fed up with Gandhiji's repeated 'sermons' to carefully read at least this exposition on untouchability—if they have still kept their minds open to some new thinking—and to try to change their attitude towards the question.

Three Principles of Hinduism

"Before I thank you for your love and your welcome address. I have one request to make. It gives me real pleasure to find you gathered here in such large numbers at this rather late hour of the night. If I did not say so, I would be guilty of ingratitude. I do not know whether this arrangement for seating the people has been made deliberately or accidentally. But everybody who attends my meeting is by now aware



of my predispositions. Owing to one of them the sight of a segregated section for untouchables at a public meeting gives me a serious shock and it becomes extremely difficult for me to say a word to that gathering. But as you have already remarked—and others also say the same thing—non-violence is a most cherished principle of my life. I am always trying to weave it into the very texture of my being. If that is true, it is impossible for me to wish to hurt your feelings. Then, again, I can neither want you to do anything in blind obedience nor can I get angry to get it done. If I want you to do a particular thing, all I can do is to induce you to do it gladly by winning your head and heart. Hence, I simply pray to you that if you regard untouchability as a stain on Hinduism, you will agree with me in wishing for the destruction of that (bamboo) barrier which keeps away from us our *antyaja* brothers.”

Hardly had these words dropped from Gandhiji’s lips, when some men quietly got up from their seats and began to remove the fence which was separating the *antyajas* from others. Gandhiji, therefore, said:

“I do not wish to say that you should break down the dividing line right now or thereby do something that creates a commotion in the meeting. I should like first to know your mind. Do you wish that the barrier I see need not be there and that our *antyaja* brothers may sit among us? (A forest of hands sprang up. Only one hand was raised in dissent. The fencing was removed and all members of the meeting sat together). It is really only now that you have given me a welcome address. The decorated address that you may give me written on paper or Khadi cloth and encased in a nice frame may have no value for me or it may have only as much value as you can give to it by your actual practice. But the honour you have conferred on me just now by removing the bamboo barrier will be engraved on my mind for ever. I want from my Hindu brothers and sisters addresses of exactly this type. The gift of some yarn or any number of assorted flowers, fruits, and sweets or even the selection of a little untouchable girl to put a vermilion mark on my forehead by way of welcome—as was done at the meeting here—cannot please me. These things I get from anywhere and everywhere. But the thing that you have given me just now requires the existence of a bond of love between us. And I desire nothing more than this abiding tie of love because love is a part of non-violence and non-violence is a part of love.

“Sanatani (orthodox) brothers, please don’t think that I wish to stab the Hindu world. I call myself a Sanatani Hindu. I know, very few brothers and sisters may be accepting my claim. My claim stands never the less and it is going to stand, and I have



repeated from a thousand platforms that Hindu society is certain to admit, if not today, at least tomorrow after my death, that I was a real Sanatani Hindu, ‘Sanatani’ means ‘ancient.’ My principles are as old as the hills, i. e., I find them enunciated in our oldest and most ancient holy books. And since I am always trying to live them in my life, I regard my claim to be a Sanatani Hindu perfectly valid. I will not call those persons ‘Sanatani Hindus’ who can read the *shastras* with excellent and flawless intonation. Only those are real Sanatanis whose every vein pulsates with Hinduism. Lord Shankaracharya¹ has given the quintessence of Hinduism in half a line of a couplet, viz., **ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या** (Brahma is the one real reality and the world is only an illusion). Another Rishi (‘Seer’; the rishis did not ‘think out’ the truths they declared, but their intimations came to them from intuitions or what Wordsworth calls ‘impulses’) has proclaimed: **सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः** (There is no dharma other than Truth) and a third has stated that Hinduism means *ahimsa* (non-violence) *par excellence*. Take any one of the three aphorisms and you will get at the heart of Hinduism. These three aphorisms constitute the essence and the quintessence of that Dharma. It is impossible that I, who belong to that religion and claim moreover to be a Sanatani, can ever wish to inflict pain on anybody.

“I want from you nothing more than giving up your aversion against physically touching an *antyaja*, because he is your fellow-human. I wish that you should serve him since he deserves your service. And why? Because he renders to society the service that every mother gives to her child. To consider him as unworthy of our touch and spurn him is only to become subhuman ourselves. India has sunk to the position of being the world’s untouchable, because it has considered crores of men, i. e., countless number of human beings, as untouchables. And even the Mussalmans have come down to the same position of being the world’s untouchables for keeping our company. What is the reason for this terrible fall? There is only one answer. ‘Reap what you sow,’ is God’s justice. God is dealing us stern justice through the world’s contempt for us. There is nothing incomprehensible in that treatment. It is nothing but the balanced and just decree of God.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

Lord Krishna says "In whatever way men resort to me, in that way I respond to them" (Gita IV-11). Hence, if you understand what I expect from you and why, you will not feel yourselves tormented. I am not baiting you. I am not asking from you anything



more than you can give. I have never asked you to introduce inter-dining and inter-marriage between you and them. That is a matter best left to your sweet will. But to regard a human being as an untouchable is not a matter of individual discretion. We have no right to regard a man as an untouchable though he deserves to be touched, and to consider another as a touchable, though he ought to be treated as an untouchable. If you turn a deaf ear to the woes of our untouchable brothers, how can you practise in life the great saying सर्व खलिवदं ब्रह्म? ('All this is 'Brahma'—the everlasting *age*—Chhandogya Upanishad 3-14-1). None of the Upanishad writers were sanctimonious humbugs. They have pronounced that the world and Brahma are one and the same. If, therefore, we do not feel the sorrows of untouchables as our very own, we are worse than beasts. "The life-principle that pervades us is the very same as the one that pervades the animal world"—so say our scriptures with the beat of drums. But today we have twisted that Dharma out of its pristine purity.

Akha² has even called untouchability 'an excrescence' of our society. You must remove it, cut it off. I want to destroy untouchability by no other means than by evoking in you a sense of pity, a feeling of love, a warmth of brotherhood, whatever you like to call it, for the untouchables. If we do that, the Hindu Dharma will shine brilliantly. In it lies the protection of the Hindu Dharma. My object in speaking of 'protection' is not the prevention of the conversions of untouchables into Islam or Christianity. No religion sustains itself on the strength of the heads it can claim as its adherents. There has never been a bigger hoax in the world than the belief that the strength of a religion rests upon the numerical strength of its followers. Hindu Dharma cannot be destroyed even if only one Hindu is left in the world, provided he lives the Hindu life in its real sense. But if crores of Hindus practise a fraud upon Hinduism then that Hinduism is not safe, then destruction is its inevitable destiny. What I, therefore, mean by stating that Hinduism will be well-protected, if it throws out untouchability, is this. We shall then have expiated for our sin, paid off an enormous debt accumulating since ages past, and thus freed ourselves from bankruptcy.

"It is beyond doubt that hatred and ill-will underlie the observance of untouchability. If anybody says, 'I believe in untouchability and yet I cherish love for the *antyajas*,' I refuse to accept his claim. I, for one, cannot see an iota of love in the custom. If there was any love, we would neither address them scornfully nor throw to them from a distance the refuse of our dishes. We would, if we had any love for them, adore them as we do our mothers, provide for them better wells and schools than for



ourselves, and warmly invite them to enter into our temples. These are all signs of love. Love has the dazzling brilliance of countless suns. When even this, our so very small sun cannot hide itself, how can that love remain concealed? Does any mother ever need to profess her love for her child? Even when the infant who is unable to utter a word sees its mother and the two pairs of eyes meet, we find that they are looking at each other with some mysterious and ethereal affinity.

"I hope nobody, after all this dissertation, will think that a nonconformist Hindu, freshly arrived from South Africa, wants to infiltrate his new-fangled reforms into the Dharma of Hinduism. I can honestly say, I do not cherish any desire to introduce reforms. I am but a selfish man, immersed in my own individual joy which wells up from within. What I want the elevation of my own individual soul to the Eversoul or Self. That is why I am sitting at ease with my inner self, as a person detached from the world. But I wish that you also gain the same joy that I am steeped in. And that is the only reason why I ask you to have the same supernal bliss that I enjoy from touching the untouchable and serving him."

1. Sri Shankaracharya was a spiritual prodigy who at the early age of 16 converted the most erudite theologians of India to his philosophy of 'adwaita.' Jawaharlal Nehru says that he succeeded in winning the whole of India back to Hinduism by the sheer power of his intellect and without recourse to any violence. This non-violent conversion is probably a record in history. Shri Shankaracharya compares the illusion which the world presents with a mirage, with a sea-shell that looks like silver, with a piece of rope that appears like a snake.

2. A mediaeval philosopher, saint of Gujarat. His 'lashes' against the customs of society have made him immortal. He was a realized soul who used the vehicle of poetry to expound the truths of the Vedanta. It is noteworthy that not a single mediaeval Indian saint has supported untouchability and some have suffered heavily for defying the ban.



Bhadran: a Model Town

The prefatory remarks thus became the lecture itself. All the same, after speaking so much about that Bhadran which belongs to the State that does so much for the removal of untouchability, he said something about Bhadran as a model town and about the Bhadran of the Patidars.

"A model town does not become so from its school, library or other institutions, but only from the ideal citizens living therein, and such ideal citizens never fail to strictly observe hygienic rules. If you want to make Bhadran an ideal town, you should not depend upon your *mahal* or your *panchayat* or the State-government. But every citizen—man or woman—must regard it his personal business to make it so. The town would attain that state when dust and refuse never meet the eye, when latrines are as clean as public libraries. If you want to assess the cultural value of any nation, you should inspect its latrines and gutters, or rather get them inspected by technical experts in sanitation. I am such a specialist in cleanliness and I am giving you today a few tips from my scrutiny. I observed that many of those present were coughing when they came here. Immediately I concluded that there must be a large quantity of dust on the roads. A dusty road is bad in many respects. Not only does it harm our lungs, but it means great hardship to the beasts of burden. The first law of cleanliness is, therefore, good and solidly-built roads. The town boasts of a cistern with water-taps but it cannot adorn the town without well-paved streets.

To the Patidars

"In the same way I wish to say a word about the harsh marriage customs among the Patidars. I had often heard of it before, but today my attention was specially drawn to the fact that the birth of a girl among the Patidars is an unwelcome event. It is said that it is better for a Patidar woman to remain childless, than be the mother of a girl baby. That is so because parents have to undergo very heavy expenses after a daughter's marriage. If they have not sufficient means to pay for the dowry demanded they have to incur even debts, which are handed down from father to son, till they are completely paid off. Such customs have got to be done away with even by force (the force of law). On inquiry, I was told that this custom prevails only among the Patidars. But the Patidars are a veritable limb of the body social. To win Swaraj is to develop every limb of that body and the Patidars are, by no means, a negligible limb. A marriage custom is besides an important ceremony. Is it necessary at all to show the evil results that accrue from such unproductive debts? The marriage ceremony should be made



not a costly but a holy event in life. We must understand the spirit behind the institution of marriage, namely, that of self-restraint. All we may do about the celebration is to honour the bride and the bridegroom with flower garlands. If the two are joined together by the bond of love, is there anything left to desire? When each of the couple gets a worthy life-mate, can one want anything more? He who demands anything more, has no right to marry. I wish that nobody becomes a slave to this odious custom in order to marry his daughter. A girl in such a hard predicament may remain unmarried and perform austerities like Uma¹ who took the vow of marrying Lord Shiva and none else. She is then sure to get her Shiva, if not in this birth, at least in the next. Such a woman will cover her whole community with glory. Marriage is not a convenient way of indulging in sense-pleasures. It is definitely only a way of self-restraint. I wish everyone sees this clearly."

In conclusion Gandhiji again thanked the meeting for putting down the bamboo fence and ended this serious discourse in the midst of the pinfall silence of the audience.

Bhadran Seva Samaj also gave him a welcome address on 12. 2. 1925. In that meeting he elucidated the meaning of *brahmacharya* at the special request of the young men of that Association. But first he spoke on 'Samaj-Seva' (social service). He said in substance: "Social service neither means service of anybody one takes a fancy to serve, nor of society in general. Social service is really the service of the weakest part of Society—after first finding out what that weakest part is. At present, the *antyajas* are the weakest part. Hence, social service in its true sense can begin only with the service of the untouchables. That service in which that weakest section is disregarded does not deserve to be called social service at all." Then he said:

"I have been asked to say something on *brahmacharya*. There are certain subjects on which I rarely deliver speeches, though I write occasionally in the 'Navajivan.' *Brahmacharya* is one of them. I rarely *speak* on it, because it is a subject that cannot be understood from the spoken word of anybody and because I know that it is a very difficult thing to practise. But the *brahmacharya* which you wish to hear of from me is *brahmacharya* (continence) in the ordinary sense, not the one whose expanded meaning is restraint over all the senses of the body². Even this ordinary *brahmacharya* has been stated in our scriptures as a very difficult business. I hope you will forgive my presumption when I say that that statement is 99% true, but 1% wrong. Control over that sense looks difficult, because we do not restrain our other senses.



The chief of them is the palate. He who controls his palate will find *brahmacharya* to be quite an easy matter.

"Biologists say that animals control their sex-impulses more than man does. And that is true. If we go into the cause of the difference, we shall find that animals have complete control of the palate, though instinctively and not intentionally. They live simply on vegetation and that too in a quantity just enough for their physical needs. They eat to live, and not live to eat.

"While we men, do just the contrary. Our mothers teach their babes to crave for a variety of tastes. They think that the provision of the greatest variety of tasty dishes is the best expression of their love. That indulgence, however, instead of making the dishes really more tasteful, makes them insipid. Real taste comes from real hunger. Even sweet-balls will not taste so nice to a man who is not hungry as a crust of dry bread will to one who is. What we do is to prepare numberless dishes and, in order to gorge our stomach as we can, add hot spices of various kinds and then wonder why we cannot practise *brahmacharya*. We spoil the divine gift of eyes and do not learn to see only what we should.

"Why should not our mothers learn Gayatri and teach it to their children? Even if the mother does not go into the deeper sense of the *mantra* and, think it to be only the *upasana* (lit. sitting near, i.e., adoration) of the sun, it is enough if she makes her child do that lower form of the Sun's *upasana* through the mantra.

"Both the Sanatanis and the Arya Samajists (a reformist sect) can very well perform at least the *upasana* of the Sun. The simplest sense in which the Gayatri mantra is understood is that it is an adoration of the Sun. What does that worship mean in the higher sense? With our necks craned upwards, we may have the *darshan* of the Lord in the form of the sun and purify our eyes. He who created that Gayatri mantra was a *rishi*, a seer. He says that you can never see as charming a panorama that opens up before your eyes, as entrancing a beauty that unfolds itself, as captivating a *lila* (God's play) that the Lord plays, as you can at sunrise. There is no stage director in the world who can stand comparison with God and no stage more attractive than the sky. But which mother ever points out the beauty of the morning sky to her child after washing its eyes? (And directs its life God-ward?). Only selfish worldly desires of various kinds impel the mother's attitude towards her children. The education that a boy gets in an imposing building now-a-days may perhaps make him



a big officer, but whoever cares to think of what the child assimilates from the education that it gets at home, consciously or unconsciously?

"Our parents fully cover up their children's bodies, smother them in fact with swaddling clothes. They try to make them look more charming, but do clothes really add a touch of beauty to the child? Clothes are meant for covering the body, not for dressing it up as a specimen in a shop-window. They are for the protection of the body from heat and cold. We should ask a child shivering with cold to sit beside the hearth, or run about in the street or send it to a farm for field work, instead of wrapping it up in clothes. Only then can the child's body become strong and hardy. He who has observed *brahmacharya* is certain to possess an iron constitution. But we only ruin the child's physique. The warmth we wish to provide our child with is of such a harmful kind that it can be compared with scabies or eczema. We have spoiled our body by pampering it, made it soft like a dish of cooked food.

"So much about a child's clothes. We create, moreover, bad impressions on its mind by our talks. We speak of providing it with a wife or a husband! The objects that meet its eyes are equally harmful. It seems to me a miracle that we have not yet become the most uncivilised creatures on earth, that decency is yet maintained in spite of the existence of a thousand ways by which we can violate it. God has made man such a creature that he is saved from a fall though he is often thrown into temptations. That shows what a consummate artist He is. If we remove the numerous obstacles that come in the way of *brahmacharya*, it is possible even easy, to observe it.

"In spite of this sad state we wish to cultivate such physical strength as would make us the world's equals. There are two ways of doing it, the divine and the anti-divine. The latter includes all means, good and bad, such as taking any kind of invigorating food, going in for athletic and other physical competitions, taking even beef and so on. A childhood friend of mine used to tell me that meat-eating was an unavoidable necessity for our people and that without it it would be impossible for us to have the tall and strong physique of the Englishman. Our poet, Narmadashankar, also has given us the same advice in a quatrain. When he says, 'The Englishman lords it over us and the native eats the humble pie because the former is five cubits tall³, he means the same thing. Narmadashankar⁴ had laid Gujarat under a deep debt of gratitude, but there were two periods in his life, the first of licence and the second of self-restraint. This poem belongs to the earlier period. When Japan also was faced with



the necessity of pitting itself against other powerful nations, it took to beef-eating as a means. Thus if we want to cultivate physical strength in the devilish way, we have but to resort to these means.

"But if we want to gain the same object by the divine method, there is only one remedy, that of *brahmacharya*. When I am applauded as a '*naishthik*' brahmachari (=a man rooted in *brahmacharya* in all its aspects ever since his childhood), I simply pity myself. In the address given to me I have been eulogised as such. That compels me to say that the friend who drafted the address does not know what *naishthik* brahmacharya means. I am surprised that even this simple idea did not strike him, viz., a married man—and a father of sons in addition—can never be a *naishthik* brahmachari. The *naishthik* brahmachari besides can never have any attack of fever, or headache, cough or appendicitis. The doctors, I know, say that if a lemon seed sticks into his intestines, the man is attacked with appendicitis. But the constitution of a man who is perfectly healthy, physically and mentally, will assuredly throw out the seed. Only when the intestines grow weak, they lose the capacity to push out substances that they ought to. My intestines too must have grown weak. That was the reason why I could not digest some such thing. Children often eat up things they should not, but does the mother care? She knows that the child's intestines, naturally possess strength enough to throw them out. I wish nobody made a travesty of truth by attributing *naishthik* brahmacharya to me. That brahmacharya invests a man with far greater prowess than there is in me. I am not an ideal brahmachari though it is true I wish to be one. I have given you just a few bits from my experiential knowledge to suggest what restraints the observance of brahmacharya demands. It does not mean that in order to remain a brahmachari, I must eschew all physical touch of the other sex, even of my sister. But that state is brahmacharya wherein I would be as free from any unhealthy psychic reaction when I touch a woman as when I touch a piece of paper. That should be our state of mind. That brahmacharya means nothing if because of it I shrink from nursing my ailing sister. We are brahmacharis when the touch of a most beautiful young woman keeps us as perfectly unruffled as the touch of a corpse. If you wish your children to attain to that state of brahmacharya, you cannot frame for them a course of education by yourselves. Only a brahmachari, however imperfect like myself, can draft it.

"The sannyasi's spirit is ingrained in a brahmachari⁵. Brahmacharyashram is superior to sannyasashram, but we have made it fall from its high estate. As a result,



both the other ashramas, the grihasthashram as well as the vanaprasthashram have become vitiated and as for sannyas, not the faintest shadow of it now remains. That is the state to which we have deteriorated.

"If we follow the anti-divine path shown above, we shall not succeed in being a match for the Pathans even after five centuries. If we follow the divine path today, we can be their equals right today, because by the divine path the necessary psychological transformation can be made in a moment, while the physical transformation needed in the other path demands the labour of ages and ages. We shall be able to follow this divine path, only if we have done good deeds in our past lives and if our parents provide the necessary equipment for the mental revolution."

After leaving Bhadran Gandhiji paid a flying visit to the villages of the Borsad Taluka that lay on the sea coast. Everywhere there was discussion on one and same theme; one and the same question had to be hulled, whether at Kathana which is a Dharala village, or at Sunav where Patidars predominate, or even at Nadiad which is almost a city. Seeing the *antyajas* sitting far away, Gandhiji asked for the approval of the public meeting at Kathana. No hand was actually raised in dissent but the feelings against the approval were depicted on every face. One or two old men at last protested loudly, "No, never. The Dheds cannot sit here with us." Gandhiji, therefore, started the discussion with them.

"Why can they not?"

"As for you, you are a holy man. Their deeds are different. It is the deeds of everyone that come in his way." (It is impossible to translate the graphic Dharala patois which is given in Gujarati).

"What are those deeds in particular?"

"Are they like ours? We don't sell our daughters. They even drag away from streets the corpses of dogs and buffaloes."

"Are you not unjust to them? How is it a disgrace for Dheds and Bhangis to carry away dead dogs? If a dog dies in front of my house, it is I who should drag it away. My house was once affected with plague and a diseased rat died nearabout. Who would dispose it off? I had no Dheds or Bhangis with me. And since I may clean even my latrine myself, I carried it away myself, poured kerosene oil on it, and burnt it. If this is a bad act, I am worse than a Bhangi, because I do such things on my own free will,



whereas the Bhangi has to do them under compulsion. I have swept off the excreta not only of my sons, but of others also. And does anybody know how many latrines that Raojibhai⁶ over there has cleaned?

"Who can blame you when you are God Himself? You fasted for 20 days. Ravishankar (Maharaj) fasted for 11. Can we do that?"

"Yes, you also can. All right; forget me. Do not your women sweep away the excreta of your children?"

"Of course, they do. It is but natural. But they never sweep that of others."

"But don't you know I do it?"

"Because you regard us all as your children." Loud laughter all around.

One of them said: "Our rishis laid down the varnashrama⁷ dharma. Should we not follow it? Why should that thing be ended which has come down to us since times immemorial?"

"That means, since your forbears used to commit theft, you should also do the same."

"But what on earth do we gain by touching them? Let things go on as they have been."

That old man, speaking from a distance, let the cat out of the bag at last: "We have to give our own and take others' daughters in marriage. Who will condescend to accept them or givz them to us⁸?"

"But here is this Vallabhbhai who touches *antyajas* and his son is going to marry."

"You are persons that count. Your children can marry, not ours. We too would agree to touch the *antyajas*, if others were prepared to accept our sons and daughters in marriage."

"Well, then. What will you do if I call these Dheds here?"

"In that case, we will, of course, keep to our seats." That irritated an old man who burst out: "Impossible. Can't be done. We must plainly tell the Mahatma that that's impossible."



"But you may take your bath after you return home. That is the utmost the scriptures may have enjoined. Nowhere is it written that you should never touch an *antyaja*."

"You may do as you please. You are your own master. You may call them to sit with you."

"But with you?"

"No, it can't be done."

"Why?"

"We won't argue. But that's impossible."

"If they come to sit with me, will you beat them?"

"We shall take a bath. And if they come to sit near us, we may even beat them."

"And suppose they do the same thing tomonow?"

"Let tomorrow take care of itself."

Gandhiji proceeded.

"So that is the end of one chapter. Let us open another.

I am glad at the reform that Thakardas, Dharalas, Baraiyyas and others (backward castes that claim their descent from Kshatriyas) have made. All that I may wish to say is that you have done a very good thing in giving up theft and robbery. Now stick to that good resolve. I congratulate you for giving up drinking and smoking and opium. I would congratulate that man also who confesses his theft. Our *dharma* (as Kshatriyas), on the contrary, insists that we cannot let anyone die or be miserable. We must help him.

"It was not just for fun that I spoke to you about the *antyaja* brothers. Though I seemed to be in a light mood, my heart was shedding tears. The reform regarding giving up theft has been achieved, but the other one of touching the *antyajas* remains to be brought about still. We need not sheepishly take the road that leads to destruction, just because our forefathers went that way. Only God is *anaadi* (without a beginning). Everything else is evanescent and has name and form (has, or appears to have, the outer perishable film of name and form). Pollution by touch, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Bania (Vaishya)—none of these are *anaadi* (They are names and as such are



certain to perish). That thing which has a beginning is sure to end one day.⁹ 'Untouchability' therefore, is bound to come to an end. I did not call the *antyajas* to my side, but my heart is burning and I ask myself 'What right have I then to sit with you?' I warn you. Remember my words. If things go on this way, Hinduism will be destroyed. Have a long talk with Ravishankar. There is no sin in touching the *antyaja*.

"We should wear Khadi. Prosperity dwells in the home where the spinning wheel hums. There should be as many spinning wheels as there are kitchen-stoves in India. Our lost lustre and power will come back to us only when that happens. For that achievement I should not drink alcohol nor take meat and should serve the *antyaja*. Why should not that man be touched who bathes and takes Ramnam daily? I have myself seen caste-Hindus getting drunk, eating flesh, and indulging in sexual vice. But, with all that, who refuses to touch such persons? Those who rule over us, besides, take even beef and yet we are proud to shake hands with them. We regard it as a piece of rare good luck, if we can even touch the chair on which they sit. Thus we touch them freely and regard their contact as an honour conferred on us, but we think it irreligious to touch those who render us service. Let me affirm, what I say is religious, not irreligious."

At the meeting at Veersad he said, "Behold the wonderful working of God! What a difference between the object for which I had intended to come here and the one for which I actually came! Kashibhai resolved to perform the wedding ceremony of his daughter, Yashoda, with Dahyabhai (Sardar Vallabhbhai's son) in a simple style. He has, therefore, incurred the wrath of his castemen. I hereby give a notice to the well-to-do that, if they do not know what to do with their excess money and wish to spend it after marriage ceremonies, they may better send it to me. I will put it to a good use. Expenditure for an exhibition of one's riches is not a good use of money. We have been carried away along the wrong path with the result that to be the father of a girl in the Patidar community is to suffer from mental torture. When Kashibhai said that he would not undergo the customary heavy expenses, we all gave our assent to the marriage. I want your approval also. You too may pray in your heart that God may grant you the strength to perform a wedding ceremony in your family with the same simplicity—restricting it to only religious rites.

"I need not thank you for your address as it is a superfluous formality. You have touched the subject of Khadi and the spinning wheel in it. You say Khadi is invested with divine power, the spinning wheel possesses the strength to win Swaraj and is a



veritable 'Sudarshanchakra.'¹⁰ Had you meant what you said, everyone of you would have already adopted Khadi. Without doing it, it is no use giving such addresses, raising Khadi and the spinning wheel to the skies, and making little girls sing Khadi's glories.

"Why are the *antyajas* sitting far behind in this meeting? They are the very objects of my worship. I am proud to call myself an *antyaja*. Countless times I have stated that if a second birth is destined for me, I wish to be born an *antyaja*. It is not service that I am doing them but the expiation of my own sin, the purification of my own self, through that so-called service. I say to the Hindu world, "Your boycott of *antyajas* has only one meaning—your boycott of me." Though I am a 'blue-blood' non-*antyaja* Hindu, I cannot claim the observance in mind, speech, and act of all the rules of moral conduct. But it is my prayer to God that if I get another birth, I may be born a perfect man and that too in an *antyaja* family. It is by no means the Kshatriya (Patidars come from Kshatriyas) *dharma* to make *antyajas* sit behind us all. You, Patidars, are a brave people. You have many virtues, but some vices also. But there is nobody on earth who is entirely without virtue or is altogether free from vice. None of us is Poorna Purushottama (Perfect and The Highest Self). In this Iron Age, it is impossible for a human being to be one. That is why, do what I may, it can never enter my brain to regard *antyajas* as low creatures. It is better for me to become an untouchable by living in their company than be a touchable in yours, since my object is to get a remission for my sins, when God calls me to His presence. If I don't identify myself with them, God will tell me, "Since you have considered these people untouchables, they shall slap you, because you have committed the sin of regarding your fellow beings as beasts." The Kshatriya never knows what retreat means. In keeping *antyajas* backward, the Kshatriya retreats from his duty. I, therefore, warn you, "Take care! Don't violate your *dharma* by keeping them away from you." I say so because an attempt has been made to hide that sacrilege.

"Patidars oppress the lower communities, beat them, and exact forced labour from them. I know it as a matter of fact. You should guard yourselves from such misdeeds. If you commit them, you will lose the spirit of bravery that you possess. The man who is happy should try to make others happy. It is our *dharma* to make the world happy through our own suffering. To appropriate happiness for ourselves and make others unhappy is a devilish attitude. I have no craving for your address. What I want is 'Be happy and make your *antyaja* brothers happy.'"



Giving a discourse at Palaj Gandhiji said:

"A fight, (a Satyagraha struggle) must instil bravery in us and a constructive programme, the power of organisation and capacity for solid work. If we do not gain this second power, we cannot preserve the independence we may win. If we can gain Swaraj by non-violence, it can be maintained by a self-less urge for service. If we gain it in order to acquire power, that Swaraj can be kept up only by violence. The power of non-violence deserves to be cultivated and self-seeking aggrandisement must be eschewed. And that is the reason for submitting the three point programme before the people.

"It may be excusable to perform an irreligious act under the mistaken impression that it is a religious one. But when we realise that a particular practice is irreligious, it cannot be allowed to continue. To my mind untouchability is even more irreligious than slavery. When the movement for the removal of untouchability was started here, the idea was mooted that Christians and others might also take part in it. But I opposed the move. A man so pure-hearted as Mr. George Joseph wanted to enter the movement that was started at Vaikom (in South India) for the removal of untouchability. But I objected. If we go out to the whole world for getting help in a movement that is aimed at our own purification, we only increase our responsibility for the sin."

From Palaj Gandhiji proceeded to Sunav. The leaders there had refused to hold a public meeting for him, as they were afraid that it would make a bad show if some member of the audience insulted Gandhiji. We all had, therefore, thought that there was no possibility of holding a meeting there and that Gandhiji would content himself with meeting the students of the local national school. But can anybody stem the surge of the people's feelings for Gandhiji ? So many people came up to the courtyard of the school itself, that quite a big meeting was held there accidentally. Gandhiji touched upon the same old question there. Then he saw the students at work. He even joined in the row of the boys who were drawing out water from the school's draw-well. Gandhiji's talk with these boys of Sunav, that had taken place earlier at Sojitra, has already been given in these columns. At the sight of those self-same boys spinning, carding, weaving, and even drawing out water from the well, Gandhiji could not contain his joy. Involuntarily the words, 'I am really sorry that I have to go away from the school so soon', came out of his lips. In spite of the row that the question of



untouchability has kicked up there, the teachers and their equally resolute students have kept their school going strong.

1. Uma was king Himalaya's daughter. Owing to her love for Lord Shiva in her past birth, she took a vow, when only a budding teenager, to perform severe penances to please Lord Shiva. Her mother tried to dissuade her, saying 'O! Don't' (u =o, ma =don't) because she became 'Aparna' (one who would not eat even leaves to sustain her life), but in vain. Lord Shiva Himself then comes to Her and marries Her.

2. " Besides the five senses which the Hindus call *jnanendriyas*, senses of knowledge, they admit five other senses which they call *karmendriyas*, senses of action, namely, the senses of speaking, grasping, moving, excretion and procreation. This is an idea peculiar to the Hindus, the former five being intended for action from without to within (*upalabdhi*) the latter for action from within to without (*karman*)"—*Rammohan to Ramakrishna* by F Max Muller, 1952, p. 149.

3. Gandhiji repeats here what he says in Chapter VI of his Autobiography: "The following song was popular among us, schoolboys, in those days:

'Behold the mighty Englishman
He rules the Indian small
Because, being a meat-eater,
He is five cubits tall.' "

Later inquiry makes another litterateur, Navalram, the author of these lines.

4. Narmadashankar has made his name immortal in Gujarati literature, by being not only the foremost poet of the age of revival in the mid—19th century period, but also a pioneer among patriots, the first lexico-grapher in Gujarati and finally the man who embraced penury owing to his resolve to earn his livelihood exclusively from his service to Gujarati literature. He was, at first, an enthusiastic social reformer, but also rather a free-thinker, in love. Later in his life he turned into an orthodox. The open avowal of his changed views brought on him the censure of social reformers. His biographer, Navalram, defends him by comparing this conversion to that of Cardinal Newman.

5. A Hindu's life was divided into four stages according to the law-giver Manu. They were called ashramas, and were (1) brahmacharyashram—the students' stage, when he was required to be strictly celibate; (2) grihasthashram—a householder's stage of married life when he was required to provide not only for his family, but for all those who belonged to the other three stages. (3) vanaprasthashram—a retired gentleman's life, when he would leave all day-to-day responsibilities and work to his grown-up sons, begin to meditate on God and give occasional advice, when asked for, in worldly matters. (4) sannyasashram—complete renunciation of the world, when he would stay in a forest for devoting his meditation exclusively to the Reality.



6. Gandhiji's biographer of his South African days and a staunch Satyagrahi in that struggle as well as in all others in India. As he was a leader of the Kaira District he was known to the audience.
7. Like 4 phases in life, the society was divided into 4 varnas (castes) Brahmin—priest; Kshatriya—warrior; Vaishya—industrialist and businessman and Shudra—servant.
8. Even rooted religious prejudices can perish without much trouble in India, provided it is some saint, some Mahatma, who urges the removal. It is the practical difficulty that really worries the old man.
9. It is noteworthy that Gandhiji addresses here an audience that is absolutely illiterate and even morally backward and yet uses expressions which are fit for a gathering of philosophers. But he knows that however depraved in actual living and however illiterate the Hindu is, he is so steeped in the yearning for the Eternal or God by the popular songs of Hindu saints and precepts of *puranis* (roving Brahmins who recount the tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata even in remote villages) that these ideas are a current coin to him. Illiterate but really pious men can still be found even in small villages. Gandhiji owes his phenomenal success in the political and social revolution he brought about to the fact that he was not a multi-millionaire, not an intellectual genius, not a statesman, but a saint; and India has traditionally a fascination for saints and for none else.
10. Lord Krishna's all-conquering disk. The old spinning-wheel had likewise only one big wheel.



15-2-1925

H. H. The Thakore Saheb of Rajkot had invited Gandhiji to visit Rajkot as early as when the Bhavanagar Political Conference was in session and Gandhiji had accepted it with the proviso, "If my begging bowl for Khadi is filled, I shall come." The Thakore Saheb's immense respect for Gandhiji, his eagerness to honour him right royally as often as possible etc., were things that could not but evoke great respect for him. He had arranged numerous functions to honour Gandhiji. The time for every one was previously fixed and the Thakore Saheb, like Gandhiji himself, kept the tight schedule with the precision of a watch. Even Gandhiji was surprised at this punctuality.

During the address given by the Rajkot People's Conference the Pandits blessed Gandhiji in the right Sanskrit style: 'O son of Putlibai! May you be victorious ever and ever!' **एषा भट्टस्य भारती** (that is the language of this Bhatta-Brahmin)."

The address was handed over to Gandhiji by the Thakore Saheb himself. As he did so he said: "I cannot put down in adequate language the joy, the exuberance, the pride, I feel on this occasion today. Your effort to cement Hindu-Muslim Unity, your far-sighted vision evident in the establishment of such an excellent institution as the Gujarat Vidyapith, your compassion that reveals itself in the creation of organisations for the protection of animals and your inspiration that is at the root of the foundation of that remarkable conference, the Kathiawar Political Conference, are things it is impossible to forget. It is a matter of pride to us that it is you who have been entrusted with the helm of the Congress. We shall regard ourselves fortunate if we can get an opportunity to serve that institution through you. We shall feel the satisfaction of having done our part, only when the required quota of Congressmen (under your new spinning franchise) is enrolled in our State. You may rest assured that it is the object of my State to give to your Congress, as much co-operation as it can¹. I need not recount here in detail the long-standing relationship that has been existing between your family and mine. Your name will remain carved in our hearts for ever."

It is impossible to give a completely faithful account, both of the speech that Gandhiji delivered in reply and the atmosphere he conjured up at the time. The man who would prefer to note down every word was certain to fail in catching the atmosphere and the man, who thought he would rather do the latter and hence decide not to note down every word, was equally certain to drop from his report some of the invaluable expressions uttered in that speech. The reporter of Gandhiji's speeches is



thus often put in the position of Trishanku³ who is neither here on earth nor there in the heavens. This was one such occasion. In order to adequately appreciate that speech, it is necessary to visit the place where it was delivered—the courtyard of the royal palace—as well as to understand properly what customs in royal families like 'unzana'² mean. Gandhiji, who denounced without mincing matters the Satanism of the British Empire from a thousand platforms, and who started big plants to manufacture sedition everywhere in India, played quite a different role here. He begged for his 'fief by crying like the Thakore Saheb's own little child on the ground of his being the son of a former Dewan of the State; and he did so in the typical style of an attendant of the King's *darbar*, but with such intense feelings as no such attendant could dare to express before a monarch.

His 'fief' meant nothing more than the spinning wheel and service of the untouchables. Here is Gandhiji's reply:

"Your Highness the Thakore Saheb, members of the Conference, sisters and brothers,

"I must, first of all, beg pardon of the Thakore Saheb for my inability to stand up in order to reply to the address. I have even now the physical stamina to wander from place to place, but I cannot keep standing the while I deliver a speech. That is why I do not rise from my seat to address you. It is a thing I am ashamed of but in view of my physical incapacity you will please forgive me.

"The moment I stepped into the precincts of this Darbargadh (Royal Palace), a hallowed recollection sprang up in my mind. And just as I was talking of it to Sri Liladharbhai, the car pulled up to fetch me here. I wish first to refer to that sacred recollection.

"Two *unzanas* were once about to start for Kanpur (in U. P.) and Dharampur (in Gujarat) on behalf of the late Thakore Saheb. My respected father (the Dewan) deliberately kept us aloof from such functions. And today when I think of it, I see the perfect propriety of the attitude. But my mother was of a different mind. She wanted her sons to be included in one of the parties that was about to go. She had a fascination for money and for *kirti*⁴ also. But *kirti* is a woman and how can she marry a woman? All the same, she had a craze for fame also. On this *unzana* occasion, she called us to her side and said: "The Thakore Saheb is a kind man. Go to him, start weeping in his presence, and he will let you go with the party." But one party had already left the



palace. My mother wanted her sons to be sent to Dharampur, because they were sure to get a larger amount there. So we followed the shrewd advice of Mother and went straight to the Thakore Saheb.

"As I see this Darbargadh, the exact spot at which we had carried our complaint to the Thakore Saheb comes back to my memory. So we went to the Thakore Saheb and started crying. The Thakore Saheb asked Father, "Why are the boys crying?" But Father frowned upon us. Father was never wanting in paying due respects, but if ever he found the Thakore Saheb committing an error, he would even stare him down. We lost our nerves. The Thakore Saheb then said, "'Don't be afraid. Say what you want to.' We said, 'We want to go to Dharampur.' 'But that party has already left', the Thakore Saheb answered; 'We will send you to Kanpur.' "

"Thus on that occasion we, the two brothers, won our kingdom by crying and today also I want to gain my 'fief' by using the same method before the Thakore Saheb. When Shastriji was blessing me, he said among other things that Fame was a virgin. Let that Fame remain a virgin, because if she married me, I would be hacked to pieces. That is why I am not enamoured of Fame. But I want one or two other things for which I shall have but to use the child's weapon of crying. In the address itself much has been said about me and much more has been added by the Thakore Saheb in presenting it. But I am not so simple-minded as to be swept off my feet or taken in by those panegyrics. I am not going to believe, on that account, that I deserve them. I will not take it that I have now become a king, because the Thakore Saheb has given me a seat next to him on his right side and honoured me with the address. I have no ambition for kingship. I am only one of the subjects and wish to stay as such. Only, I cannot be less polite than the Thakore Saheb has been. If I could have my wish, I would keep myself strictly aloof from all these addresses of honour and expressions of civility, so that I may never transgress my limitations, may never go mad at these encomiums.

"While thanking you for the address, I beg your permission to say that reference to two things has been omitted in it. I don't know whether the omission has been made deliberately or inadvertently. There has been an evaluation of my services and it has been stated that truth and non-violence are the guiding principle of my life. And that is right. If truth and non-violence ceased to animate my life, I would become a corpse. I would then find it impossible to spend the remaining period of my life.

"But when I think of it, I wonder why you forgot to mention those two activities which I carry on for putting into practice my ideals of truth and non-violence, and are,



therefore, two aspects of my *sadhana* (spiritual practice). The power ingrained in the performance of these two aspects of *sadhana* is greater even than that in the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity. It may even be said that if even one of these two items of work be dropped, Hindu-Muslim unity also becomes impossible. A Muslim friend once chided me, "How is Hindu-Muslim unity possible, so long as you cherish the belief that untouchability has a legitimate place in Hinduism?" That friend is a pious Mussalman. There are Hindus who regard Muslims as degraded souls, but I think that those who think so are committing a profane act themselves. Gitaji and Hindu Dharma teach us that it is impossible that Hindus and Muslims can be water-tight compartments.

"I call the Hindu Dharma to which I am clinging today as Gangotri (the source of the Ganga). It has many branches but the source is one and the same. And just as its source is one, its mouth also is one. When I realised that this truth of unity permeates our religious books I resolved that I would thenceforth always be called a Hindu and die a Hindu. It is true that there was a period in my life when I had my doubts about Hinduism and in those days I used to tell a Christian missionary, 'I am born a Hindu, but I don't know what I am now.' But that is an old story of the time before I came to know what Hindu Dharma really was. And now if any Shastri puts me to a test, I believe I would get full, 100% marks. They also must pass my test. Today I can get all that I want from the Hindu Shastra and can find not a single defect in it, that may make it necessary for me to search anywhere else to get the deficiency repaired. I do not say that I have been able to absorb into myself all that it is capable of giving, but it possesses ample material to provide me all that I need.

"That Muslim friend opened my eyes. He said, "If untouchability has an inviolable place in Hinduism, why should Mussalmans, Christians, and others put up with the existence of an untouchable in India?"

"What does it matter if the so-called untouchables were born as 'Bhangis', 'Dheds' etc.? There is no community in existence called 'Chandala'.⁵ Is there a community called Dhed? Does even the word 'Dhed' occur in the shastras? No. It doesn't. The word, however, does exist in our present common usage. 'Dhed' means a weaver, and 'Bhangi' a scavenger. But I am a Bhangi myself, right today! If a child passes stools, I would myself make it and the place clean. My mother too was a Bhangi and she cleaned our excreta countless times. Your mother also, even if she be as holy a 'Sati' (a holy woman) and as devoted a wife as Sita must have swept her children's



dirt, i. e., she too must have done a scavenger's work. Sati Sita was such a holy woman that she deserves the remembrance of her name in the early morning by way of adoration, but even she had done quite a lot of scavenging work and, hence, had become a scavenger. If it is a sacrilege to give up our contact with our mothers, why can a Bhangi be cut off from our society? If, therefore, a thing called untouchability has an irremovable place in Hinduisim, I would never be proud to call myself a Hindu. I am presumptuous enough to say even to our learned Shastris that there is no place for untouchability in Hinduism and I will repeat the statement day in and day out all my life through.

'When I glanced at the programme and found that before beginning the function, Shastris (theologians) were going to give me their blessings. I was both glad and sorry. I was glad that learned theologians were going to bless me for my untouchability work also; but then I felt, whatever the language they might use, it had little value, since they were going to speak as the proteges of a king. Many persons have told me that among the mounds of the Kathiawar Princes, there is at least one towering hill that deserves respect. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Thakore Saheb has the good of his subjects at heart. But every creature is liable to err and if I find some error in the Thakore Saheb's action, I would exercise the subject's right—I am one of his subjects—and say to him, 'You are erring here.'

"I remember the State's Shastris of my times even now. One of them was Mawji Joshi. Though he was a Shastri and a *gyani* (a man of spiritual wisdom), occasions used to arise when his knowledge was spilled out in strong language. He was a man who called a spade a spade, but there were times when even he had to make discretion the better part of valour and check himself. I thought that the Thakore Saheb might have passed an order asking the Shastris to confer their blessings on me.

Is it possible otherwise for Shastris to come out to bless a man like me? What then is the value of these command-performances? I would rather Shastris possessed the pluck to call me a non-Hindu if they thought me so, to dub me even a *Chandala* if that was their view.

"What I want to do is to remove the delusion of the Shastris, to tell them that nobody who worships the *dharma* of non-violence can ever regard a man an untouchable. That is why I am pained at the fact that though the Shastris have been made to give me their blessings, my service of the untouchables is conspicuous only by its absence in the address given to me. I am definitely going to lodge my complaint



on this matter before the Thakore Saheb and win that 'fief' of mine by the urchin's method of getting what he wants by crying before the father. That means, I will tell him, "Please cast the same gracious glance on the *antyajas* as you do on other castes. Only then will this State, very small though it is, shine out in the whole world, will become a Ramarajya (an ideal state, since Rama was an ideal king also). The Poet Valmiki has stated (in his Sanskrit Ramayana) that Sri Ramachandra did justice even to a dog and Tulsidas (author of the Ramayana in Hindi) has shown that Rama made friendship with those who were called 'Chandalas'. Bharat⁶ had gone mad after Nishadraj and had washed his feet. You are a scion of that Bharat's family. Please don't forget the poor. Find out for yourself all the troubles of your subjects by moving among them *incognito* at night⁷. As a representative of the *antyajas*, I beg of you to inquire whether *antyaja* children are allowed to study in your schools, and if they are not, to see that they are admitted in them, and to let the schools remain vacant, if the caste-children leave them.

"When I saw the Boy Scouts here, I wondered why even their uniform was not made of Khadi. My *antyaja* brothers would get some relief from their distress and so would the countless poor women of Kathiawar, if the Scouts were given Khadi to wear. One very poor woman told me, 'We used to ply your spinning wheels, but your men took them away.' I was stunned. My men take away spinning wheels! If my men did so, would not the world come to a standstill? I sensed the situation and consoled her: 'My men may have asked you to stop spinning, because they might have got tired of continuing their efforts to keep your wheels working.' You have loaded me with praise, but what I want is the alms I beg of you. Give me Khadi. I appeal to you to take to that sovereign remedy for our ills. All of you, please be good enough to wear Khadi and get resolutions for the use of Khadi passed by the States' People's Conferences. What you have done is to give me an address encased in a gold frame. But whence to bring a safe for it? And if I beg for a safe, I shall have to beg for a guard for that safe also. For whence can I get a guard? My guard is none other than Rama. Hence, when I accept such costly addresses, they are sent away to their keeper, quite a rich man himself, that Jamnalal Bajaj, who has made himself my son. At my Ashram, there is place for only Khadi and for that I send round the hat before any and every body. I had told even Lord Reading, 'I would like you as well as your watchmen to be clad in Khadi.' These very same words I repeat before you and the representatives of your subjects.



"That is why it pains me to find that you have dropped the reference to my two chief activities—removal of untouchability and Khadi. I want, therefore, just now to join the *unzana* parties both of Kanpur and Dharampur. The Thakore Saheb's real marriage is with his subjects. In order that that marriage may be brought about, my request for joining the *unzana* party means the use of Khadi and the uplift of the untouchables. Your praja (subject-people—the word is the feminine gender) is still unmarried. If you don't like her to remain a lovely spinster, you should love and marry her and make her happy. Watch your subjects closely and make a study, by a round at night, of their sorrows and grievances. From only a very casual slighting reference to Sita, and that too made by one washerman, Rama gave up Sitaji. I appeal to you to know likewise the public mind and act accordingly. The sword that hangs by the side of a king is not the symbol of his destructive power. It is an attestation of the king's *dharma* which is as hard to keep as walking on the sharp edge of a sword. The sword is a constant visual reminder to the king that he has to have the wariness of a sword-dancer, that his is the straight and narrow path of *dharma*, that he should never digress from it. It means that there must not be a single person of loose character in Rajkot, not a single drunkard rolling in mud with his senses lost, and it means that every girl possesses the moral strength of Sitaji.

"I am reminded of my father. Not that my father was free from defects, but he was also endowed with sterling qualities. The late Thakore Saheb likewise was not free, but had virtues also. May you inherit all his virtues, may your people inherit them likewise. It is Your Honour's duty to remove the defects in the State by strenuous effort, to replace weakness with strength, vice with virtue. I appeal to you, therefore, to have mercy for the poor, to feed them first and then take your meals. Your sword is only for your own threat. You may proclaim to your subjects, 'If I fall from duty and thus discard the bounds of my authority, you, the people, must use my sword to cut my throat.' If I indulge in fulsome flattery, I would only commit a sin. I have eaten the salt of the Durbar Saheb. The late Thakore Saheb had given away to my father 400 sq. yards of land without any conditions or rent. He had offered 4000 sq. yds., but my father would not take that much and had himself requested a gift of 400 sq. yds. instead. Since I have eaten your salt, I would be faithless to you, if I did not tell you what I should. Even if the whole world showers honours on me, I would not feel elated. But I like very much the honour *you* have given me, because I was bred up in this same Rajkot, had numerous chums as my playmates, was fondled and blessed by quite a lot of women here.



"But would I be happy if a million women blessed me, and my mother did not? Can it do, if I am given liquor when I ask for milk, a cigarette when I want a sugar-cane? What I want is the redress of the sorrows of women, of the wretched, of the untouchables. I have become an *antyaja* with *antyajas*. To women I say, 'For you I have turned myself into a woman. I have been roaming the world over for the protection of your honour.' I have come here as an humble beggar, as one of the subjects of the state, and not as a V. I. P. whom the world has chosen to honour. It will please my heart if you tell me that so many wheels have been introduced in the State and so much Khadi used. When I am informed that Her Highness wears Khadi, that Khadi has become an article of vogue and penetrated even into the remotest corners of the State, I shall come to you, barefooted. to bow down to you⁸. May God shower his blessings on you and give you the strength to do good to your subjects!"

The Thakore Saheb said:

"We accept the advice you have kindly given us. State Resolutions have already been made in favour of the spread of Khadi and acceptance of the *antyajas* in our fold. The State has given complete freedom to everyone to do that work. You may please be at ease on that score."

Gandhiji and other guests were invited to the session of the People's Conference. The members expressed themselves with a freedom that entitled the State to be proud of the fact. But what was a more pleasant surprise than even this was the Thakore Saheb's frank confession. Speaking on the resolution (which was later on passed) recommending the State to give up its liquor revenue the Thakore Saheb declared, "When I myself drink alcohol, how can I prohibit its use in the State?" The statement is unexceptionable, if it only means that a physician must heal himself first. But if it suggests that because the Thakore Saheb has that failing, it should be fostered among his people also, then it becomes a very dangerous proposition. On the first day of his meeting with Gandhiji the Thakore Saheb had expressed his regret at the fact that he had not had the good fortune to come into close contact with Gandhiji. 'If you want to be in touch with a saint walk seven steps (and no more) with him'—so says our proverb. The same thing is true of Gandhiji also. What a trial it means to come in contact with him, was shown by Gandhiji in his very first speech, in his reply to the address of the People's Conference. He beseeched the Thakore Saheb to give up his bad habits and explained the deep significance of the sword he was hanging by his side as an insignia of royalty.



It was the Thakore Saheb himself who opened the National School in the presence of Gandhiji in the evening.

The school owes its existence to the non-co-operation movement.

The Thakore Saheb gave away the campus at a dog-cheap price and the building has been erected from the donations of public-spirited men, the biggest of which comes from that prince of philanthropists, Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. The President of the Managing Committee is an experienced and old patriot, Sri Revashankarbhai. He began his speech with giving the history of the school. It had 50 students on its roll, but now has only 40, because of the admission of untouchable boys in it. When he came to this point expression of deep pain came out of his lips. He reprimanded the people for hugging untouchability, though their native land, Kathiawar, was the holy land of three great crusaders, viz. Bhakta (devotee) Narasinh Mehta,⁹ Maharshi (great sage) Dayanand,¹⁰ and Mahatma Gandhi. Nobody ever knew Sri Revashankarbhai as a good speaker and yet he had filled his expostulation for the removal of untouchability with such deep feelings, that it showed what tremendous effect even a man who never utters a word in public can produce, when he pours out in his remonstrance all the anguish of a heart burning for good cause.

Before declaring the school open, the Thakore Saheb delivered an extempore speech. In the beginning he had to fumble after an exactly apposite word, but as he proceeded he opened out into astonishing precision. He treated the question of untouchability from the angle of citizenship. "We keep untouchables miles apart from us, but who can affirm that it is impossible for a hero or a saint to rise among them? Are we not robbing the nation of saints and heroes, when we boycott *antyajas* so ruthlessly?" It was these same sentiments that had actuated the Thakore Saheb's statement earlier, at the opening ceremony of the Jain Students' Hostel, "Why should it be impossible for my Dewan to be an *antyaja*?" Referring Sri Revashankarbhai's statement that the observance of the vow of Swadeshi (use of goods made in one's own country i.e., of Khadi etc.) and renunciation of untouchability were the essential requisites of the teacher of this national school, the Thakore Saheb expressed himself in a way that made the whole audience roar with laughter. "Let me plead with Gandhiji that it would be good if he relaxed these conditions a little, for, if a man has got to accept them in order to be a teacher here, a man like myself may have to think twice before doing so."

Gandhiji then addressed the meeting:



"On behalf of myself as well as my colleagues, I thank the Thakore Saheb for accepting our request and coming over here to perform the opening ceremony of the school (building). I trust, no occasion will arise in future that may require the voluntary closure of that institution which has been opened under the auspicious auspices of the Thakore Saheb himself. He has given us the assurance that we may freely rush for help to him, when difficulties arise, and that he will not be found wanting in doing what he can at the time. And that much is enough for me.

"He has stated that education has a top-priority claim on the state revenue. That is a really good idea, but I would like to go a step even further. This school—or better still, the National University of which it is an off-shoot—is one of the great experiments that are being made these days in India. States and Princes rarely make such novel experiments. They prefer to jog along the rut. There may hardly be any state that leaves the beaten path and goes in for experiments in education. It is the people's business, not the State's, to make them. The king is the protector and representative of his people, or, if I may speak more truly still, a good king is the servant of his subjects. He cannot embark upon adventures at the expense of his people and from that point of view the Thakore Saheb was quite right in saying what he did about the teachers. But for us, who have spent our whole lives after making experiments, anything else is impossible. I may, therefore, only pray for the Thakore Saheb's gracious look on men like ourselves. If the teachers of model schools of that nation which is throbbing with a new life and is bent upon becoming independent are not required to conform to extremely strict rules, things may come to a pass when it will be difficult to get teachers of even ordinary calibre for other common schools.

"To these teachers I wish to say that they must go on grappling with difficulties that come in their way and keep to their *dharma* to the last breath of their life. It doesn't matter if the number of students has come down to 40 from 150. Even then they should continue undaunted to serve the school. It is only their tenacity of purpose and faith that will turn the school in future into a magnet to attract other pupils. We have been stigmatised as men eager to start an enterprise, but lacking in the resolution to go to the end of it. We are so self-centred that, instead of praying to the great 'Help of the helpless' to come to our aid, in our egotism we simply give up the work we have undertaken, when difficulties arise. If we read the history of different nations, we shall find that where the people are free and independent, countless men and women have kept to their principles to the end of their lives. Let alone five years, it doesn't matter



if the school does not seem to make any headway for 20 years. 20 years is nothing in the life of a school. Let it appear that no good comes out of the school's existence, but if the teachers have faith in themselves, they must follow only that course which seems to them the right one; and they are sure to reach the haven of rest.

"It is necessary to say a word or two about the distinguishing features of this school. One of them is, of course, the fact that it has braved many hardships from its championship of the cause of the *antyajas*. It has, besides, given a place of honour to physical labour. The teachers and the boys of the school have contributed to the greenery that we see here in the school compound. Physical labour is a sacred act, is a kind of *yagna* (holy sacrifice), but the highest kind of *yagna* for our age and country is that of spinning. Every son and every daughter of India should daily ply the spinning wheel for half an hour for the sake of this fallen country, for its suppressed untouchables, for the unnumbered miseries that swarm the land, and for an equally appalling number of widows here. Parents should understand that their children should develop not only their mind but also their body, that they should serve not only their own interests but also of others. And he who realises that the spinning wheel is the highest form of service to the Self within, will never give it up. But instead of having that healthy attitude, I hear that parents are averse to their sons' doing manual labour and spinning. You cannot have real knowledge without the simultaneous development of the body, brain, and soul. A human being's true welfare lies in adoring this trinity. Ours is the unfortunate country where even self-less and diligent teachers are forced to be discreet and timid. I appeal to the Thakore Saheb to be very kind to these teachers who are living in the midst of such adverse surroundings.

"Does the policy of the school go against any ethical tenets? Were it so, the question would be different. If untouchability appears sacrosanct to parents and they think it sinful to do away with untouchability, they may refuse to send their children to the school. In that case I shall pray to God, 'Please save me from my misconception if I am wrong or make the parents give up their inhibition if they are erring?'

"But after all, let me point out that this school, if it continues to exist, will do so, neither by the sympathy of the Thakore Saheb nor by the co-operation of the parents, neither by my efforts nor Vallabhbhai's, and not by the promise of help given by that beggarly institution, the Gujarat Vidyapith, either. It is the teachers on whom the future of the school wholly depends. I do not know of any institution that money alone has been able to keep up. If money was all that mattered, the Hardinge School of



Calcutta would not have ceased to exist. What such institutions really lack is the right man to manage them as their life and soul. That was the reason for that school's extinction. It is, therefore, you, the teachers, who must invigorate the school and do your work, heart within and God overhead. Whoever imbibes a woman's heart, goes on with his work and sends as piercing a cry of help to God as did Draupadi¹¹ of yore, will need neither the Thakore Saheb's help nor the Vidyapith's. If, therefore, circumstances arise which compel the closure of the school, the teachers will stand to blame and none else.

"And this final word. I wish that school may prosper and I appeal to the Thakore Saheb to shower his blessings on it by his help."

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1. Even though the Indian National Congress had suspended civil disobedience in 1922 and concentrated in 1925 on the triple constructive programme, this statement is unusually fearless, coming as it does from a vassal of the British Empire in those days when the Indian Princes were merely its puppets.
 2. This king wanted to ascend to heaven with his human body kept intact. Sage Vishwamitra undertook to perform a sacrifice that could enable him to do so. As the sacrifice proceeded, Trishanku began to go up. The Devas (Gods) opposed the ascent, since heaven is a world only of disembodied virtuous spirits. The result has been that Trishanku remains suspended midway. Vishwamitra, however, has created a new heaven for Trishanku at that place in the sky.
 3. *Entourage* of a newly-wed princess sent by her royal spouse to escort her to his State.
 4. The Gujarati word for fame is 'kirti' which is a noun of the feminine gender in Gujarati.
 5. Even this name is mentioned only in the later 'Smritis' (words remembered long after God's words were uttered) and not in the earlier 'Shruties' (words noted down as they were heard). In Hinduism 'Shrutis' (Vedas, Upanishads etc.) have always commanded greater weight than the later Smritis.
 6. Rama's younger brother who refused to accept the kingdom of Ayodhya (given him through the machination of his own mother Kaikeyi), since Rama was the rightful heir, and put the wooden sandals of Rama on the throne during Rama's exile. Nishadraj was the king of Bhils whose devotion to Rama has been a favourite theme with later poets. Bharat also loved this Nishadraj just because both were devoted to Ramachandra. The statement that Bharat washed his feet is not to be taken literally. There is no such mention in the Ramayana.
 7. According to a belief universally held in India it was the practice of a good king to move about in lanes and by-lanes in the dark to find out for himself from common talk the grievances of the people under his rule.



8. Holy places in India may not be visited with shoes on. It is a sign of special respect to take off one's shoes, when it is not essential to do so.
9. A mediaeval saint and poet, who had been ostracized by his castemen, the Nagar Brahmins, (but re-admitted later on), because he went to the locality of the untouchables and sang hymns all the night through.
10. Founder of the Arya Samaj, an intrepid religious and social reformer of the mid-nineteenth century, who was poisoned at last for his fearless advocacy.
11. When Yudhishtira, the chief Pandava, lost his all, including his wife, Draupadi, in a game of dice, an attempt was made to disrobe and dishonour her in the open Durbar, where she was brought as a serf. A heart-rending cry for succour went up from Draupadi's lips and her prayer to the Lord was heard. She was miraculously supplied with a new *sari*, even before the old was removed and this went on till the hands of the miscreant were exhausted thoroughly.



Jain Hostel

The building of this Jain Hostel of Rajkot is also due to the munificence of that same philanthropist—Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta. The Thakore Saheb delivered a long speech in declaring it open. One may well say that these three days of public speaking have turned him into a good speaker. He began with a comparison of the past and the present conditions of the State and showed what progress it had made. He expressed the hope that, by the end of four or five years, there would not remain a single village in the State that did not have a school. All the same he was somewhat despondent about the future, when he gave out his views on education. "Education does not mean what goes on now under that name. That is education when every child's aptitudes are first found out by psychological tests and he is then provided with facilities for progress in that line which suits him best. But at present, a boy is compelled to leave school simply because he is, naturally, averse to, and so is backward in, a particular subject. Social conditions, moreover, must be such as would obliterate the perplexing problem of 'What shall I do now?' when a boy leaves his school after completing his studies. But how can I launch upon experiments in education in this my very small State? They may be easy in Europe, but here, in this our very small field, they are difficult." From sentiments of this kind he went on to speak on caste-hedged institutions. "Such residential schools," he declared, "should be provided for students of all castes, not one." Then he added, "Our rigid rules that particular communities must follow particular avocations must also be scrapped." He referred in this matter to his own caste, the Rajput community, and gave vent to these really astonishing expressions: "Why should Rajputs not be Gandhiji's followers? I myself wish to be Gandhiji's lieutenant. Why may I not surpass his followers like even Vallabhbhai?" And his concluding remarks bore witness to his burning zeal for the country. "The whole country is ailing. I have constituted myself the resident doctor of only Rajkot, but Mahatmaji is in charge of the hospital for the whole of India. Will you, Mahatmaji, treat the stricken land?"

Gandhiji was then requested to say a few words, "In his reference to me, the Thakore Saheb has expressed sentiments which I cannot but feel be as those of the greatest respect and boundless love for me." He then dealt with the Thakore Saheb's views:

"The Thakore Saheb's thoughts on education were excellent, but he expressed his disappointment at the fact that he could do little in that direction in his very small



State. But there is no cause for such dejection. On the contrary, a small State is at a special advantage. The people of the Rajkot State are, by no means, so backward that they cannot respond to such enterprizes. Many small States of Europe—Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, etc., for instance, have not received the notice of the world because they did not join the recent war. And yet in culture they are not a whit inferior to the big States and they have successfully made various experiments in education. Big States, on the other hand, have big difficulties to overcome. I alone can understand what tremendous difficulties Lord Reading has got to face.¹ What really effective work can he do, when he has to thread his way through numerous conflicting parties and vested interests and tackle a field of vast expanse? It is only small States that can more easily take up excellent schemes. The Gujarat Vidyapith is doing this very same thing in a way. If you found only one excellent school having the pick of students on its roll, numerous other schools will spring up from that model. A 'zero' is ever a zero. Multiply it with the largest imaginable number, the result is still a zero. But 'one' can grow into many by multiplication. Hence, there is no reason for despondency. The cause of a man's depression is on other than he himself. His own self is the enemy as well as the friend of man. One need never prescribe a limit to the extent of one's *purushartha* (effort, both material and spiritual). As there is no limit beyond which a man cannot fly in the sky above, so is there none to one's *purushartha*. There is the boundless sky above for one's ascent, but for descent, for a fall, there is a limit. God, Nature herself, has made those limits in the forms of earth, water, stone. etc. That is why one need never give way to despair. To the people I say 'Take as much advantage of this king as you can.' To the king I will only say, 'You have done much, but much remains to be done.' "

Gandhiji said so much by way of a hint to the king. But he had no party-spirit. He had something to say to the state's people also.

"Like the warp and the woof in a piece of cloth, the ruler and the ruled must be woven into one unit. Just as the saying, 'As the king, so the people' is true, so this one, 'As the people, so the king,' is also true. With the best will in the world to do good to the State, the king can do nothing, if you, the people, are inert and will not stir a finger to help him. If you imbibe fulsome flattery, hypocrisy, sham, etc., in your life, they are sure to be reflected in that of the king also. I am compelled to refer to these blemishes, since the line of the poet (Navalram, an inhabitant of Surat in South Gujarat). **‘मीठां तो**



मधथीये अदकां' "Sweeter in words than even honey" (with regard to the people of Saurashtra) are true even now (about 50 years after the line was written)."

1. Immediately after his arrival in India, Lord Reading invited Gandhiji for a confidential, heart-to-heart talk with him at Simla.



16-2-1925, Jetpur.

Some people had hoped that the birth-day celebration of the heir-apparent, the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot would announce some scheme to encourage the spread of spinning or, at any rate, some change in the present State policy re. alcohol, against which the people were raising a hue and cry. But far from any such announcement, drinks were served in the very presence of Gandhiji at the royal banquet given that same night by the king!

19-2-1925

The Darshan of Gandhiji's Birth-place

Porebundar was to me a place of pilgrimage. I was looking forward to its visit with tense eagerness. Hence, I did not 'see' the old house, where Bapuji used to live but I had its 'darshan'. I was shown the exact spot where he was born. From the darkness of that room, it struck me that the Lord God had sent Bapuji down to the earth specially to remove the intense darkness that prevails now, that it was just because Bapuji took his birth in that pitch-dark room, that he realizes in the twinkling of an eye the wretchedness of the millions and millions of the totally dark rooms of India and never forgets for a moment the sad fact. That darkness infused in me a new hope and inflamed a new light in the mind. The public meeting at Porebundar was held at 2 p. m. The audience had a treat of a sweetness in language which it is impossible to describe, since every word of that speech was dripping with Bapu's love for his birth-place and his motherland. The people of Porebundar did give him the usual welcome address, but instead of giving it encased in a silver casket, they gave him a cheque of equal value, of Rs. 201. Gandhiji made this trifling change the nucleus of his superb speech He began with:

"I thank most heartily the citizens of Porebundar for giving me this address and the Dewan Saheb for handing it over to me. And I congratulate you for the discretion you have shown in giving me a cheque for Rs. 201, instead of the usual silver or sandal casket in which an address is encased. If the people of Porebundar cannot understand my predilections and gratify them, I don't know of any other spot on earth where I can hope to find them understood and satisfied. I have stated at numerous places that I have no vault to keep silver wares etc. And it is a nuisance to possess them. I can preserve my freedom only by renouncing such things. That is why I have been telling



India, 'Whoever wants to follow the principle of Satyagraha has got to be prepared to degrade himself to beggary and be ready even to invite or welcome death at any time. Is it, therefore, possible for a man like myself to keep vaults for silver articles? I am, therefore, highly gratified to find that you give me a cheque in place of a silver casket.'

"But, while, on the one hand, I give you my congratulations. I am moved, on the other, to pity myself for my avarice and miserliness. I am a man of voracious appetite. This piece of paper cannot appease my hunger. The sum of 201 rupees is not sufficient for me. I say so because I can assure you that you will get from me in return double, or even more than double, the amount I take from you. I do not get a single pice (1/64 of a rupee) from the public, from which a tree of pices does not grow up—though not because that pice fetches so much interest, but because it is put to the best use. As for usury, it is better to die than to live upon it. But I will use that pice in such a way as will afford you greater joy than ever it can through any other. It will be spent after saving India from sacrilege, after covering its naked sons and daughters. Every pie (the smallest coin 1/192 of a rupee), moreover, will be strictly accounted for.

"I have not yet met a single man to whom I can say, 'O, you have now given me enough.' That is why my Momen friends (a Muslim community of rich businessmen) fly away from me. Otherwise, a man like Oomar Haji Amad Zaveri (a leading businessman of South Africa) was sure to be here. But he tells me, 'O, the moment I now happen to see you, all your talk has only one trend—that of robbing me.' It is thus dangerous to be on terms of friendship with me in these hard times. Only that man can stick to his friendship with me, in these distressing times, who, being a Hindu is prepared to let his money be robbed by scavengers, or being an Indian, is ready to spend all his energy or all his wealth in the cause of India's freedom.

"The Thakore Saheb was showering on me a veritable torrent of love and I was about to be drowned in its flow, but my heart was trembling and telling me, "But, my dear sir, just think! How long can you remain friendly with this man—a king?" Is it possible that I may not like to accept an address at the hands of the king of that State whose Dewan my grandfather was during the regime of the grandfather of His Highness? My great-grandfather, besides, was the Dewan of the Maharana Saheb's great grandfather. The Maharana Saheb's father also was my friend and client. I have eaten his salt. However, therefore, can I be averse to an invitation from the present Maharana Saheb?



"But it is difficult to continue to be friendly with one and All—just as I have not been able to keep up my friendship with the English rulers, because I am convinced that only one kind of friendship deserves to be maintained at any cost, and that is friendship with God. And God means the Indweller. If the call comes from Him and I feel that I must give up my friendship with the world, I am prepared to do so. All the same, I crave your friendship and would not feel satiated, even if I sweep away all your money. I will go on begging at your door and if, in disgust, you banish me from India, I shall find my refuge in God's abode. The boundary of India is the limit within which I wish to live and roam. As long as a conflagration is raging in India, nothing can induce me to leave her for any other place. South Africa will open its door for my stay there, but today I would not like to go even there, since the fire raging there can be quenched only when the fire here is extinguished. I have been appealing to all the Indian Princes to help me in putting it out. Am I not entitled to cherish the highest hopes from Porebundar?

"From the public also I am entertaining that same hope. I ask for co-operation from you all. It is just possible that, as a result of that internal co-operation, we may be able to co-operate with the Englishmen also. That does not mean that we shall hanker after co-operation with them. It means they will run to us on their own account. They tell me 'You are a good man, but your co-workers are scamps. They will betray you as they did at Chauri Chaura¹.' But I am a believer in the innate goodness of human nature. The Divine dwells within every individual and the power of every soul is as great as mine. My soul-force is manifest because I have kept my soul awake by beseeching it, by loudly beating drums before it, and by dancing to its tune. Your soul may not be as wide awake. But by nature the soul is equally powerful in everyone.

"Princes vs. people, Hindus vs. Muslims—that is now they go on fighting with each other. But without God's support no human being can move a straw from one place to another. The States' people may think, 'Let us first grow strong. We will then harass our king.' The king may imagine, 'I will grow powerful and then crush the subjects.' Hindus may fondly think that it is not difficult to subdue the seven crores of Muslims, and Muslims may dream of beating down the vegetarian, twenty crores of Hindus. If that is how they feel, both the Indian princes and their subjects as well as Hindus and Muslims are fools. That is Khuda's decree, that is the infallible word of the Vedas. Universal brotherhood of man is one of the writings in the Bible. Every religion proclaims from house-tops that it is only the ties of love that bind the world and sustain



it. Erudite scholars teach us that but for that love's bond of cohesion, every particle of the earth would separate from every other. If there was no such uniting force even in water, it would dissipate into separate drops. In the same way, if there is no love to unite mankind, it is certain to die.

"If, therefore, we want Swaraj, if we want Ramarajya, we must first bind ourselves with the silken tie of love, which is made, not of silk actually, but of self-spun yarn. If you use foreign yarn instead, it will turn out to be shackles of steel. Your link must be with your villages, with the shepherds and cowherds of your State, with the Meros of the Burda Hills. If you are allied to Lancashire or Ahmedabad, what good would it do to Porebundar State? The real thing, the masses cry out for is this: 'Use articles made from our labour. Don't keep us unemployed and starve us.' How harmful it would be if you order your stones from Italy instead of using those of Ranavav² for your buildings? In the same way, how can you afford to discard the *pankoras* (thick dhotis) woven in your villages and the ghee (clarified butter) made from your own cows' and buffaloes' milk and send for these things from Calcutta? If you order for things from outside instead of using home-made products, I shall say you are bound in the fetters of slavery. Ever since I happened to acquire this *mantra* of pure Swadeshi, ever since I realised that I must align myself with the poorest, I have become a free man; and neither the Rana Saheb, nor Lord Reading, nor even His Majesty King George V can rob me of the joy I feel now.

"To my sisters I will say, 'Only then shall I feel myself purified at your *darshan*, when Khadi dress adorns you and when you make it a rule to spin daily. At present, you think you perform your religious duty, if you visit the Haveli (Vaishnava temple) daily, but, let me tell you that that woman's heart itself will become a temple of God, who spins daily.' I ask you, 'Will you listen to me only if I speak of miracles I performed on the heights of Himalayas and not till then? If I ask you to daily ply a spinning wheel just as you daily light your kitchen stove, will you burst out in disgust, 'O, this old fool has gone crazy.' But I am a wise man, a man of true understanding. I am speaking only from the depth of self-experience.

"Before I came here, somebody had remonstrated, 'What's the use of your accepting an address from the people of Porebundar? Please learn first what kind of men the Khadi-clad people in Porebundar are.' But instead of making inquiry, I am now constrained to ask you, 'Is there even one person in Porebundar who wears Khadi?' You like to wear superfine clothes. Millionaires tell me that even a millionaire cannot



always afford to buy superfine clothes. But if you spin fine yarn, as fine as you make your very fine threads of sev (a sweet or saltish variety made from wheat or gram paste), you can certainly wear fine clothes.

"This Swadeshim is the one and only way to join us all together in love; and there is no other way if you want to bring even the whole world into one unit. And with all the emphasis at my command let me repeat: THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. Even for the solution of the Hindu-Muslim question, that is the only way. Mr. Shuaib Qureshi was with me when I came to Rajkot the other day. The local Muslims told him, 'Gandhi is cheating you. He only wants to make beggars of the Muslim businessmen who deal in foreign cloth. But Shuaib was not the man to listen to it. He knows that I would never cast an evil eye on the handfuls of foreign-cloth merchants. He is himself a lover of Khadi and knows that I am actually rendering more service to Islam, than I can to the country or to Khadi. Muslim friends must realise that India is their land of birth and that there is no hope of freeing Islam from thralldom without making India free.

"This may be my last visit to Kathiawar. I may not have to live much longer. After a great searching of the heart I accepted the Presidentship of the Congress and then of the Kathiawar Political Conference. Only 10 months now remain for my period to expire. The only object in my coming over here is the hope that you may listen to my plea and spin for half an hour, if you regard me as your brother, though personally I consider myself a brother to every creature on earth. You don't lose anything by spinning and the country, on the other hand, shakes itself free from poverty. I wonder how much teaful pleading from me you require to rouse you to action. Our Dharma is lost if you do not drive out untouchability from the land. That is true Vaishnavism which has the greatest vitalizing power. As things go, it is in the name of that same Vaishnavism that untouchables are being crushed. Untouchability is not the essence of Hinduism. Removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and Khadi—these are my three life-springs. I want these three things done by everybody, man or woman, rich or poor.

"Our work will not suffer, even if not a single individual here becomes a member of the Kathiawar Political Conference. But it is certain to suffer, if you have not with you those charming spinning wheels. A spinning wheel is a must for these parts at least. May God enlighten your hearts! Take this (spinning) as the easiest thing in the world. It is not at all necessary to pore over ponderous volumes to understand one's *dharma*. What is essential is the heart. Literary education becomes a prey to Satan's



instigation, if the knowledge of the heart, i. e., of *dharma*, is not imparted side by side with it. Think of the plight of the man whose life is guided by Satanic wisdom.

"The drink evil has got to be destroyed, by the efforts of the people themselves. I am certain that the evil can be rooted out by only the people's efforts. Had not some fools resorted to methods of violence, this evil would have been effaced from the whole country long ago. I am told that many sailors of Porebundar have given up drinking and that the Rana Saheb not only approves, but is ready to help the movement. Without releasing ourselves from the deadly grip of the drink habit, it is impossible for us to be free. European methods for winning freedom are useless for us. The people and the climate there are far different from those here. The people there can become pitiless, we can't. Mussalmans of foreign parts tell me that Indian Muslims are comparatively milder than others. Only the Hindus and the Muslims of India can say—or the world may say—whether that is a good thing or bad. But to me it seems certain that we are going to lose nothing by the fact that Indian Muslims are mild by nature. To be kind to others is not to be a coward, or not to carry a stick with you. It means refusal to use a club even when we possess it. That man who refuses to use it and bares his chest to the opponents' blows is definitely stronger than the man who flourishes it to beat down the enemy. It is the principle of a man of iron-nerves not to swerve from his position, not to turn his back in a battle-field, and that is the Kshatriya spirit. In order to assimilate that virtue it is essential to give up intoxicants. Hence, I wish that the people of Porebundar gave up alcohol altogether.

"Rajkot is reeking with alcohol. A competition is going on between the shop in the town and the one at the Rajkot Civil Station and alcohol is sold at the price of soda water. But those who get it so cheap are shedding tears of blood. Labourers' wives complain to me in anguish, "Can you not put in a word for us to the Thakore Saheb? This evil has brought our homes to rack and ruin. They have ceased to be homes and become battle-fields. Our husbands have lost their character. Stark poverty is stalking our homes." If we want to earn the blessings of these wretched women, we shall all have to gird up our loins and speak out to the king, 'Do please save your subjects from this horror.' What does it matter, if the State earns something by way of revenue? Does it mean anything to the drunkard even if alcohol affords some temporary relief to him? If the evil spreads, the country will deteriorate so frightfully that without the need of an extraneous agency or effort for it, it will destroy itself. May God bless you.



May He give you the wisdom to listen to my earnest, humble pleading. And may the whole world gain by it.

Meeting untouchables wherever Gandhiji tours has become an inevitable item of his programme. At Porebundar also he visited an *antyaja* quarter. That was a memorable occasion. The weavers of Chhaya had brought their charming blankets with them. They offered to Gandhiji one of them, the best they had, as a present. His throat choked with emotion as Gandhiji said, "To what depth would I sink if I took it from you? Would it behove me to accept anything from you? Is it right to accept a gift from my own children? There are many others to give me things and, for the present at least, do let me have the pleasure to give it back to you. When everyone deserts me and nobody cares to give me anything, I shall come running to you and tell you, 'Please give me food and clothing.' The untouchables took it back only when even their hard pressure failed to change Gandhiji's mind. Sri Devidas Ghebaria then presented, through Gandhiji's hands, a Khadi shirt-and-cap to each of the (*antyaja*) Schoolboys.

Gandhiji said at the meeting:

"Dewan Sahib, *antyaja* brothers and sisters,

"I am really very glad to see you all gathered here. To meet you all '*antyaja*' brothers and sisters by '*antyaja*' I mean Dheds, Bhangis, Chamars and others who are wrongly considered 'low caste' or 'outcaste'—is a thing that delights my heart. You know that high caste Hindus do not touch *antajas*. They think there is nothing wrong in giving to *antajas* the refuse of their dishes. Injustice and iniquity of various kinds are thus always heaped upon you. Some caste Hindus are making strenuous efforts to end all that. The Congress also has taken up the question in its deliberations and doing much in the matter.

"But everything cannot be achieved by them, alone and single-handed. Your help is also necessary. Many Hindus taunt me, "you are out to plead their cause, but please first see what kind of people they are! They eat flesh of dead animals, don't know what it is to bathe daily or wash their clothing. Their very sight is disgusting—even nauseating. Their manners and customs are all so dirty: How can we touch such people?"

"The charges are half-true. You should listen to whatever is true in them. You should give up all those habits which are really bad and thus help the reformers. Even God does not help him who does not help himself. That is why I say, you should help



yourselves. Get up early at 4 O' clock in the morning, wash your face and remember God. If you ask me how you should remember God. I say, take 'Ramnam', 'Kisan', 'Karsan', (corrupt forms of Krishna) and other names. They are all good and true but 'Ramnam' is the easiest to take. You may pray to God in an earnest appealing tone, 'O Lord! purify us.' You allow days and days to pass between one bath and the next, and that is not right. You should take your bath everyday. Labourers among you may bathe in the evening, after their day's work is over. And you must not steal. You should also keep your children clean. If they are dirty, the fault lies with you people. What can the poor village school-master do? The third thing I should ask you to do is to give up the drink habit. The drunkard becomes almost a beast. You should never take putrid flesh or, better still, refrain from taking flesh altogether. Can you not do without flesh, if you can get rotis and milk? Those among you who know weaving should continue your profession and never give it up. It is bad if you don't spin. I can put up, however, with that. But all these bad habits have got to go. They are intolerable."

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1. The reader may be reminded here that Gandhiji suspended his proposed mass civil disobedience at Bardoli in 1921, because of the outburst of violence at Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces.
 2. Those parts of Kathiawar are known for the high quality of their rocky stones.

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APPENDIX

- I. Not even half-mast.
- II. The Kohat Tragedy.
- III. Untouchability.
- IV
 - 1. Kohat Hindus.
 - 2. Gandhiji's statement on Kohat.
 - 3. M. Shaukat Ali's statement on Kohat.



APPENDIX I: NOT EVEN HALF-MAST

The perplexity of No-changers continues unabated. Some of the best among them, those whose advice and co-operation I value above everything else, are bewildered. They feel that I have probably given up even lifelong principles for a patchwork.

One such communication I quote below:

"You are reported to have said that not having the power to give battle to the Swarajists immediately, you are forbearing, marking time. But why thus? The cause of truth and non-violence demands that you keep the flag flying for us collectively outside the Swaraj Party and the Congress, in no spirit of hostility to anybody, even as Muhammad did. His followers dwindled to three depending upon the holy God's strength.

Personally, you undoubtedly gain by surrendering and helping opponents, but the cause suffers irretrievably when non-cooperators are neither asked nor allowed to hoist the flag collectively. No spiritually-minded man can take interest in politics which neither promotes nor draws sustenance from truth and non-violence. No strategic unity will attract God, because fight with the Government then becomes immoral. Further, under the Swarajists' regime there will be nothing to purify the criminal tendencies of impatient idealists as under your previous regime of high moral idealism and spiritual endeavour. Now utter futility and blank despair will stare them in the face."

The friend represents a large body of non-co-operators. He himself was attracted to the struggle because of its spiritual nature. I have, therefore, carefully read the message more than once. My hope is that he has formed judgment on garbled, even misleading, reports of my speeches. He was not present at the Conference. He was not in Bombay. It is most difficult to follow any movement merely from newspaper reports. I have not seen the report to which the friend makes reference. The expression 'giving battle to the Swarajists', torn from its context, may bear a meaning opposite to the one intended by me. Let me explain. I cannot give battle to the Swarajists, if they misunderstand me, if No-changers do not understand the spirit in which a battle of non-violence conceived in a humble spirit can be offered;



if the Government takes of such a battle advantage not contemplated by me, or if the atmosphere required for it is wanting. What happened, in fact, is that all these things have more or less come about. Let it be further remembered that with me the safety of the cause has not lain in numbers. My so-called popularity has been perhaps the greatest stumbling-block in the swift execution of my plans. I should not have done penance, either for the Bombay riots or Chauri Chaura, if the people who took part in them had been utter strangers to me and made no profession of non-violence. So long, therefore, as I continue to attract crowds, I live to walk warily. A general with a large army cannot march as swiftly as he would like to. He has to take note of all the different units in his army. My position is not very unlike such a general's. It is not a happy position, but it is there. If it often means strength, it sometimes means a positive hindrance. It is perhaps now clear what I mean by 'not having the power to give battle to the Swarajists'.

I have in no way 'lowered the flag' of non co-operation. It is not even brought half-mast. For not a single non-co-operator is called upon to deny his faith. It is always risky to bring in the illustrations of the great prophets or religious teachers of the world. I am in the world feeling my way to light 'amid the encircling gloom.' I often err and miscalculate. But since the great Prophet's name has been mentioned in this connection, I may in all humility say that I am not without hope that I shall not be found wanting. If I am left with but two human comrades or without any. My trust is solely in God. And I trust men only because I trust God. If I had no God to rely upon, I should be like Timon, a hater of my species. But if we are to draw a moral from the lives of the great teachers, let us also remember that the Prophet entered into treaty with those with whom he had little in common and who are described in scathing terms in the Quran. Non-co operation, exodus, resistance and even violence were with the Prophet phases in the same battle of life wherein truth was everything.

I do not believe as the friend seems to do that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. I do not help opponents without, at the same time, helping myself and my co-workers. I have not asked or advised believing non-co-operators not to 'hoist their flag' either collectively or individually. On the contrary, I expect them to keep it flying top-mast against all odds. But that does not mean that the nation or the



Congress non-co-operates. What we must recognise, if we will not ignore facts is that the nation, i. e., the Congress in so far as it represents the nation, is not carrying out the programme of non-co-operation. It must, therefore, be confined to individuals. Non-co-operating ex-lawyers, ex-title-holders, ex-school-masters, ex-councillors may remain that to the full and still belong to the Congress. Their special programme is hand-spinning and Khadi. These the Congress has not yet rejected. The Swarajists are gracefully accommodating No-changers in this respect to the fullest extent compatible with their convictions. They do not consider as No-changers do, that universalising hand-spinning is necessary for accelerating the exclusion of foreign cloth. And yet in order to retain the co-operation of No-changers, if you will, my co-operation, they, seeing that they have no objection on principle to hand-spinning, have become party to the introduction in the franchise. It is well to bear in mind that the introduction of hand-spinning, as part of the franchise is an extraordinary proposal. A conscientious man like Mr. Stokes opposes it tooth and nail, although he is himself an enthusiastic spinner. Many of our distinguished countrymen laugh at it. It is no small thing then that the Swarajists have accepted. Therefore if they prove true to their word (and I have no reason to doubt it), non-co-operators do not need any separate organisation. The No-changers need not, ought not, take part in the Council activity and, therefore, the Swarajists have the sole authority and consequently the sole responsibility for the Council programme. They will use the name of the Congress as of right, but they will not, therefore, use the name of the No-changers. The Congress is a joint concern in which the liability and responsibility for certain items are joint and for particular activity given to and taken over by a section.

If unity, removal of untouchability and the *charkha* are an integral part of the politics of this country, then No-changers have all the truth, all the non-violence and all the spirituality that they may wish for. A No-changer's fight with the Government consists chiefly in purifying himself and developing his own strength. But he must not, by any act of his, impair the power of the Swarajists whom he is bound to regard as honest as himself. A No-changer should be the last person to arrogate sanctity for himself to the exclusion of others. And granting that the Swarajist system is bad, let him not act as if the existing system of Government is not much worse. Even a believer in non-violence has to say between two combatants which is less bad or whose cause is just. Between Japan and Russia, Tolstoy gave his verdict for Japan. Between England and Dutch South Africa, W. S. Stead sided with the Boers and prayed for England's defeat. Between Swarajists and the Government, I do not take single second to make



my choice. There is danger of our vision being blurred because of the Swarajist revolt against the programme of 1920. Assume for the moment that the Swarajists are as bad as the Government would have us believe, even so their government will be infinitely preferable to a government which has limitless resources for crushing the slightest attempt at independence of conduct or real resistance. I am not aiming at any 'strategic' unity. I am simply aiming at representation of all parties in the Congress, so that we may learn to tolerate one another's opinions, we may know one another better, we may react upon one another and if we cannot find a common method of execution, we may at least frame a common scheme of Swaraj.

I agree with the friend in his concluding remarks that it is not the Council programme that will ultimately keep the impatient idealist from mischief, but it is the non-violent non-cooperation which evokes the highest spirit of self-sacrifice that will wean him from the error of his ways. I promise that I have done nothing to weaken the strong non-co-operator. With myself, I have put him on his mettle. Let him sacrifice himself to the utmost on the altar of unadulterated love and the whole Congress will follow him like one man. But such love acts in an unseen manner. The more efficient a force is, the more silent and the more subtle it is. Love is the subtlest force in the world. If the No-changer has it in him, it is well with him and every one else.

M. K. Gandhi
4th December, 1924.
Young India.



APPENDIX II: THE KOHAT TRAGEDY

The Government of India has rung down the curtain upon the Kohat tragedy. In the Viceregal reply to Pandit Malaviyaji the Government had prepared the public for some such resolution as is now before the public. The resolution is a demonstration of the Government's unchallengeable supremacy and disregard of public opinion, as it is also a demonstration of national impotence. To me the Kohat tragedy is not so much a result of Hindu-Muslim tension, as of the utter worthlessness and incompetence of the local administration. Had they performed their elementary duty of protecting life and property, the wanton destruction begun and continued in broad daylight could have been easily prevented. But like Nero the authority watched and danced while Rome was burning. The authority cannot plead helplessness. It had ample resources at its disposal. It was at no time overwhelmed except by its own criminal indifference and callousness.

And now the Government of India has become partner in the crime by white-washing the local officials and even converting their neglect or worse into 'coolness and courage.'

One would have expected a full, open and independent inquiry. But nothing beyond a departmental inquiry at which the public was unrepresented took place. Its finding can command no public confidence. The refugees from Rai Bahadur Sardar Makhansingh, downward whom my Mussalman colleagues and I saw, whilst admitting that a pamphlet containing the highly insulting verses was published by Lala Jiandas, said that ample amends were made for the publication by the Hindus and that the Hindu firing was in self-defence and after the destruction had been started by the Mussalmans. On behalf of the Kohat Mussalmans it was contended that sufficient amends were not made with regard to the pamphlet and that the Mussalman destruction and firing took place after the Hindus had opened fire and taken Mussalman life. Unfortunately, the Mussalmans of Kohat not having come to Rawalpindi, we were unable to find out the real truth. It is, therefore, difficult to say that the Government of India's distribution of blame is erroneous. But its finding cannot be accepted as an impartial or acceptable judgment. The Hindus of Kohat cannot be expected to accept and submit to the finding. Nor can such a finding, because it seems to favour the Mussalman contention, be any consolation to the Mussalmans of Kohat. For it would be wrong for the Mussalman public to applaud the



Government of India's finding, because it, for the moment, seems to support the Mussalman contention. Any finding to be satisfactory must be joint and arrived at by Hindus and Mussalmans of proved impartiality. The Government of India resolution is, therefore, a challenge to both the communities. It tells the Hindu refugees to return to Kohat on pain of submission to humiliating conditions. It bribes the Mussalmans to impose humiliation on their Hindu brethren. I hope that Hindus will prefer a life of penury outside Kohat but without humiliation, to a life of plenty in Kohat with humiliation. I hope that Mussalmans will be manly enough to refuse the bait offered by the Government and decline to be party to imposing humiliation on their Hindu brethren who are in a hopeless minority in Kohat. Whosoever the initial blunder and provocation, the fact stands that the Hindus were practically forced out of Kohat. It is up to the Mussalmans, therefore, to go to Rawalpindi and take the refugees back to Kohat with friendliness and with full guarantee for the safety of their lives and property. The Hindus outside Kohat should make it easy for the Mussalmans to make the approach. The Mussalmans outside should insist upon those in Kohat recognising their primary obligation to the Hindu minority. On a proper and honourable solution of this delicate problem lies in a large measure the success of the efforts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity.

The sooner we, both co-operators and non-co-operators, cease to rely upon Government protection against one another, the better it will be for us and the quicker and more lasting will be the solution. Viewed in that light, the indifference of the Kohat officials is to be welcomed. History would have been differently and more honourably written if the Hindus had not sought the protection of officials, had stuck to their homes and without offering any defence, or even in the act of forcibly defending themselves and their property and their dependents had been reduced to cinders. I would welcome a resolution by the Government that no one need look to them for protection in inter-communal quarrels. If we would learn each party to defend itself against encroachment upon its liberty by the other, we would be well on the road to Swaraj. It would be a fine training in self-defence and self-respect or, which is the same thing, Swaraj. There are two ways of defence. The best and the most effective is not to defend at all, but to remain at one's post risking every danger. The next best but equally honourable method is to strike bravely in self-defence and put one's life in the most dangerous positions. A few pitched battles between the two will soon teach them the uselessness of breaking one another's heads. It will teach them that to fight thus is not to serve God but to serve Satan.



I conclude this article by repeating the promise I made to the refugees¹ in Rawalpindi. If they will not return to Kohat till they receive cordial invitation from the Kohat Mussalmans, I shall be prepared as soon as the engagements already taken up are finished to go to Rawalpindi in company with Maulana Shaukat Ali and attempt to smooth the relations between the two or failing that to help them to find suitable occupation in life.

18th December, 1924

Young India.

M. K. Gandhi

1. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* of 20th November, 1924:

Kohat Refugees—I have seen references in the press urging me immediately to go to Rawalpindi to meet the refugees from Kohat. I have also had messages to the same effect from them directly. I am extremely sorry that I am unable, at the present moment, to respond to the call. My health is not yet such as can bear the strain of continuous journey and I dare not postpone my visit to Bombay to attend the forthcoming Conference in connection with the Bengal repression. I hope however, immediately on my return from Bombay, to proceed to Rawalpindi. Meanwhile I wish to give my assurance to the refugees that they have never been out of my mind. As soon after the fast as I was able to move about a little I made all the preparations to proceed to Kohat. Had I been permitted it would have been my first duty to go there in the company of some Hindu and Mussalman friends. I felt that I could then have rendered useful service and in company with the friends contributed my humble share towards reconciliation between the Hindus and Mussalmans of Kohat. But my visit to Kohat having been prohibited, I did not feel that a visit to Rawalpindi would serve any useful purpose. I know too that many friends were assisting the refugees and that Pandit Malaviyaji was giving special attention to them and, even though in obedience to the call from the refugees, as already stated, I shall go to Rawalpindi, I realise that beyond giving comfort to the refugees I might be of little service. This much, however, I shall venture to urge upon the attention of the refugees that the Kohat question is an All-India question. Both the Hindus and Mussalmans of India are interested in a proper, honourable and correct solution and settlement to secure the approval of the Hindu and Mussalman leaders. Indeed, I will venture respectfully to tender the same advice to the Government. I am glad to observe that they have denied the correctness of the terms said to have been offered by them. The Government have declared themselves in favour of unity. It would be in earnest of good faith if they would take the public into confidence and secure public approval of any terms of settlement that they might propose for the acceptance of the two communities.



APPENDIX III : UNTOUCHABILITY

Sri Mahadev Desai had taken down notes of my speech at the Anti-untouchability Conference in Belgaum. I reproduce his report here, as it contains my thoughts almost completely.

— M. K. Gandhi

It is simply superfluous for me to say anything about untouchability. I have often and often declared that if I am destined not to gain redemption in this very life, it is my aspiration to be born a Bhangi in my next birth. I believe in *varnashram*¹ and in both *janma* and *karma* (birth in a particular caste and fate fixed by actions in past births) associated with it, but I refuse to believe that a Bhangi is a born sinner. I have, on the contrary, seen countless Bhangis who deserve my veneration and many among Brahmins whom it becomes a very difficult task to adore. I shall be able to render more service to Bhangis by being born a Bhangi and be able in addition to make other communities see the light in this matter, than I ever can to Brahmins or recluses by being born a Brahmin. I wish to serve the Bhangis in numerous ways. But I do not wish to advise them to detest and hate the Brahmin. Hatred, disgust, causes me deep pain. I do wish the uplift of the Bhangis, but do not regard it my duty to teach them to wrest their rights by the way of the West. It is not our *dharma* to gain anything by that method. Whatever is gained by brute-force is not going to last long in this world and I distinctly perceive the advent of that age in the world when it will be impossible to gain anything by means of physical might.

I want Hinduism to prosper. But that is not all. I want to make the untouchables my very kith and kin. Whenever, therefore, any untouchable renounces Hinduism to embrace another faith, the news lacerates my heart. But what can we do? We, Hindus, have fallen from our high estate. Our pristine spirit of renunciation has departed from us and so have our love and our true religious attitude. In the Bhagavadgita we have been asked to regard the Brahmin and the untouchable as on an equal footing. But what does this 'equal footing' mean? It does not mean that the *dharma*s of the Brahmin and of the Bhangi become the same. But there has to be—it is a definite must—equality to the extent that we deal the same justice to both. I must provide for the Bhangi's necessities. The oppression from which the Bhangi suffers lies really in the fact that we do not supply him even with his barest necessities. The Bhangi also requires a roof to lie under. He is in need of clean air and fresh water as we are. He



too must have nourishing and clean food. In these matters they are equal with the Brahmins. And to any Bhangi who is in need of personal service, say, if he is bitten by a snake, I must assuredly render all the needed service. But if I give the Bhangi the leavings of my dishes, I myself become a fallen soul. That is why I say that untouchability is Hinduism's heinous sin.

Yes, there is indeed a place in Hinduism for untouchability—of a sort. Let a man remain an untouchable after touching night soil—till he cleans himself by a bath. Whenever she cleansed our dirt, my mother would not touch anything in the house before having a bath. Belonging as I do to the Vaishnava sect, I believe in untouchability of that limited kind, in that momentary untouchability, but never in that permanent untouchability springing from birth in any family. Whenever I remember my mother as one who had once cleansed me and the place soiled by my excreta, she becomes, to me for one, the object of all the greater adoration. In the same way when I think of the service the Bhangi renders to society, he becomes to me a person worthy of my veneration.

I have never advised *rotivyahavar* or *betivyahavar* (inter-caste dinners or marriages) with untouchables, though personally I do dine with them. And there is no scope for *betivyahavar* (giving of daughter in marriage) in my case. I observe the *vanaprastha* dharma; I cannot say I observe *sannyasa* also, since it is very difficult in this Kaliyuga (iron age) to keep the *sannyasa* dharma. I am but a common creature. I have not studied the Vedas and I doubt if I am fit for *moksha* (redemption; or release from births and deaths), as I have not completely renounced *raga-dvesha* (attachment and aversion). Not that I may not get absolution because I cannot pronounce the Vedic verses as faultlessly as Pandit Malaviyaji does, but so long as *raga-dvesha* persist in my being, there cannot be *moksha* for me. It does not matter to me, however, if I am not a *sannyasi*; all the same I see nothing wrong in Hindus of my type dining with untouchables. (Hindu *sannyasis* do not observe caste distinctions). But the wrong, the injustice, the sin that has to be removed is none other than untouchability. *Rotivyahavar* is not included in it.

It is not solely for a political object that I have regarded removal of untouchability as one of the essential activities of the Congress. That object is trivial, is nothing. It is only temporary besides. But the point that is fundamental with me about this removal is that there must never be this stain of untouchability in Hinduism which I regard as the supermost of all. I do not want to exploit the untouchables for



earthly Swaraj. I do not wish to trap them in that temptation. To me it is certain that Hindus have committed a grave sin by adhering to untouchability and a proper penance must be made for it. Anything like '*shuddhie* (purification) of the untouchables' does not, therefore, exist for me. I believe simply and wholly in my own purification. Impure myself, how can I purify others? It is I who have committed the sin of untouchability and it is I who have to become pure. The work, therefore, of removal of untouchability that we are doing is solely for the purification of our own selves, not for that of the untouchables. What I am talking of is nothing but this eradication of the Satanism dwelling in Hinduism. I have nothing to do with any talk of giving a bait to untouchables and cheat them.

But for the Hindu race, the question of dining is peculiarly its own. There are members in my family who observe the *maryadadharma* (*maryada*=limit or restriction). They will never dine in company with any other person, they have for their use their own vessels and utensils and they light separate fires to cook for themselves. I do not think that in that *maryada* lies their ignorance or blindness to light or the degradation of Hinduism. I myself do not keep to these outward rituals. But if somebody asks me to advise the Hindu world to follow my steps in that matter, I would return him a decisive 'no'. Malaviyaji is a person whom I revere, I may even wash his feet. But he never dines with me. But that does not mean he holds me in contempt. That *maryada* too has no permanent place in Hinduism. But it has been held up in esteem for a certain stage of a man's evolution. Let the *maryada* (restriction) about *roti* and *beti* continue in Hinduism, but only to the extent that there is *sanyam* (self-restraint) in it. It is not at the same time always true that a man necessarily falls by simply dining with somebody. I would not approve of my son taking any kind of food, anywhere, he has a fancy for—as food does have an effect upon the soul's development, but, also, I do not believe that he renounces Hinduism if he takes definite articles of food at whatever place that is suitable to him for rendering service to others or for observance of self-restraint. I do not wish the total extinction of the restrictions on food and drink imposed in Hinduism. It is possible that a time may come when even those bans may have to be given up. If that happens, it will not mean our ruin. But for the present at least I am prepared to advance in the matter only so far as my conscience carries me. According to my line of thinking, restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage need not be obliterated in this present age. For this attitude, some of my friends consider me a pseudo-reformer, but there is no sham in my attitude. Swami Satyadev and I were once proceeding to Aligarh. He protested: "What are you



doing? Dining at Khwaja Saheb's (a Muslim)!" "Yes, I will," I returned. 'Not to take food there is for you the right form of *maryada*. For me, not to eat there even those articles of food which I usually do at home is committing a sin. But if you eat there likewise it would mean your fall, since you observe *maryada*." A Brahmin was called for Swami Satyadev and he prepared the food. The same arrangement is made at Maulana Abdul Bari's—and that to such an extent that not only is a Brahmin called when we stay with him, but he is asked to bring all the necessary things for cooking from outside and not use a single one already in the house. "Why are you so very particular," I asked him once. "Where is the need for all that?" He said, "I don't want anybody whatsoever to imagine that I wish to convert you. I know that according to Hindu *dharma*, many of them object to dining with us." I have respect for the Maulana. He is a man of simple habits of living and is frank and open-hearted. Sometimes impulsively he commits some mistake, but he is a devout believer in God and walks in His fear.

Many may tell me, "You call yourself a Sanatani? What a travesty? You never go for *darshan* to Kashi Vishvanath and have made an untouchable girl your daughter!" I simply pity the ignorance of the remonstrant.

My dear *antyaaja* brothers! I did not want to enter into a long talk with you, but I did have it because I am in love with you. I beg your pardon for the sin that is being committed in connection with you. But you must also understand the condition for your uplift. When I was in Poona, an *antyaaja* friend got up at the meeting and declared, "If the caste Hindus do not deal justice to us, we will take to the method of terrorism." I was pained to hear all that. Is that the way to lift up either Hinduism or your own selves? Can that method remove untouchability? There is only one way, only one remedy, and that is, we may reason with the fanatic Hindus and bear with all the sorrows they inflict in consequence. You are quite right when you demand equal rights of attendance in schools, entry into temples, access to all places which all the four Hindu *varnas* resort to and enjoyment of the same status or position to which they can attain. That there should be no material benefits which may remain debarred against you is the meaning of this 'removal of untouchability.' But all these things you may gain, not by the methods of the West, but by the one which has been enjoined in Hinduisim as beneficent to one and all. If we believe that our purpose will be served by the use of physical might, it would mean that we want to do something religious by means that are irreligious, devilish. I appeal to you to observe the real Godly *dharma*



and not to let the above Satanic attitude possess you. May God grant us such light of wisdom that this work of removal of untouchability be successfully ended in no time!²

Navajivan,

(translated)

11-1-1925.

1. The four castes: Brahmin (tutor), Kshattriya (warrior), Vaishya (businessman) and Shudra (servant) and four stages: Brahmachari (student), Grihastha (married man), Vanaprastha (retired elder) and Sannyasi (total recluse).

2. Gandhiji moved away considerably from this position later on. Not only did he fully approve of the marriage of his son (Vaishya) with a Brahmin girl and give his adopted 'Harijan' (untouchable) daughter to a caste Hindu, but in his last years he would not give his moral support even to an inter-caste marriage in which one of the parties was not a Harijan—*Translator*.



APPENDIX—IV—1: KOHAT HINDUS

I know that the pages of this week's "Young India" will be searched for the finding of Maulana Shaukat Ali and myself on the tragedy of last September. I am sorry to disappoint the curious. For Maulana Shaukat Ali is not with me and I must not publish anything without his first seeing it. I may, however, tell the reader that I have already discussed my impressions with Pandit Motilalji, then Pandit Malaviyaji, and lastly with Hakim Saheb Ajmalkhan, Dr. Ansari, and the Ali Brothers. And I have just finished writing them out during my journey to Sabarmati. My notes will be immediately forwarded to Maulana Shaukat Ali and I shall hope to publish them together with Maulana Shaukat Ali's endorsement, addition, or amendment as the case may be. But apart from the finding, I am in a position to reiterate my advice to the Hindus, that in their place I should not return to Kohat unless there is an honourable peace with the Mussalmans without the Government intervention. This is not possible at the present moment. For, unfortunately, the Muslim Working Committee which is at present guiding the Mussalmans of Kohat was not and would not be represented before us.

I can appreciate the delicate position of the Hindus. They do not want to lose their property. The Maulana Saheb and I have failed to bring about peace. We have failed even to draw the principal Mussalmans for a discussion. Nor am I in a position to say that we should succeed in our attempt in the near future. In the circumstances the Hindus are at liberty to take any course they may consider advisable. In spite of our failure, I can only advise one course. 'Don't return till the Mussalmans take you to Kohat with self-respect and dignity.' But I know that this is cold comfort, except for those who are in need of no advice from any quarter, whatsoever. Such is not the position of the Kohat refugees. I have conveyed my views to Pandit Malaviyaji. He has been their guide from the beginning and they must act as he advises them. Lalaji (Lala Lajpatrai) came to Pindi but he was unfortunately laid up in bed. My own considered opinion is given in the statement sent to Maulana Shaukat Ali. But I confess in advance that it will bring no solace to them. I am but a broken reed not worth relying upon.

But there is no hesitation about my advice regarding what the refugees should do whilst they are outside Kohat. I cannot help remarking that it is demoralising for men and women, who have strong arms and legs and who are otherwise physically fit, to subsist on charity. They must find out some occupation for themselves or with the



aid of the local men. I have suggested carding, spinning and even weaving. But they may do any other work they choose or that may be chosen for them. The idea is that no person, man or woman, who is physically fit should live on charity. There must be always enough occupation in a well-ordered State for all who are willing to work. The refugees must be able to give a good account for every minute of their time, whilst they are being supported by the nation. 'Idle hands some mischief still will ever find to do,' is not a mere schoolboy rhyme. It contains a profound truth which can be verified by everyone for himself. Let there be no distinction between rich and poor, high and low. They are all bed-fellows in adversity. And the rich and the well-to-do should set an example to the others, by labouring usefully even though they may not be drawing rations. What an incalculable good it must be to a nation whose members know an occupation which can stand them in good stead in distress. The refugees' life would have taken a nobler turn, if they had all been spinners or carders or weavers. The refugee camp would then have presented the appearance of a busy hive and could have been kept up indefinitely. If the men do not decide to return at once, it is not yet too late to mend. It is a mistake to issue dry rations. It is no doubt less trouble to the Committee of Management but it means more waste and utter indiscipline among the refugees. They should place themselves under soldiers' discipline keeping regular hours for rising, washing, praying, feeding, working and retiring. There is no reason why there should not be Ramayana readings or such other readings for them. All this requires thought, care, attention, and diligence. Given these the calamity could be turned into a blessing in disguise.

Young India,
12th February, 1925.
M. K. Gandhi



APPENDIX—IV—2: GANDHIJI'S STATEMENT ON KOHAT

Maulana Shaukat Ali and I went to Rawalpindi on the 4th February to meet the Hindu refugees and the Mussalmans of Kohat to whom the Maulana has written and who were expected to come to Rawalpindi. Lala Lajpat Rai followed a day later. But, unfortunately, he came with a predisposition to fever and was laid up in bed the whole of the time we were in Rawalpindi.

Of the Mussalmans Maulvi Ahmad Gul and Pir Saheb Kamal were the principal parties whose evidence we took. The Hindus had their written and printed statements to which they had nothing to add. The Muslim Working Committee which is functioning in Kohat did not and would not come. They sent a wire to Maulana Saheb saying:

A RECONCILIATION HAS ALREADY BEEN EFFECTED BETWEEN HINDUS AND MUSLIMS. IN OUR OPINION THIS QUESTION SHOULD NOT BE REOPENED. THE MUSLIMS SHOULD THEREFORE BE EXCUSED FOR NOT SENDING THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO RAWALPINDI.

Maulvi Ahmad Gul and another gentleman who came to Rawalpindi with him were members of the Working Committee but they said they came not as such but as members of the Khilafat Committee.

It was difficult to come to any conclusions on details without a thorough examination on the spot and without examining many more witnesses. This, however, we could not do. We could not go to Kohat nor was it our purpose to take up the whole controversy again by going into minute details. Our purpose was to bring together the two parties if it was at all possible. We, therefore, confined ourselves to elucidating the main facts.

As I am writing this without a detailed consultation with the Maulana Saheb, I state my own conclusions, leaving him either to confirm mine or to state his own.

The causes of the events of the 9th September and after were many. Among these was the resentment felt by the Mussalmans over the resentment felt in their turn by the Hindus over the conversions (so-called in my opinion) of Hindus—men and married women—and consequent steps taken by them, the Hindus. The desire of the *parachas* (Mussalman traders of Kohat) to oust the Hindus of Kohat was another¹. The



resentment felt over the alleged abduction by Sardar Makhan Singh's son of a married Mussalman girl was the third².

The cumulative effect of these causes was to create great tension between the two communities. The immediate cause that lighted the conflagration was a poem in the notorious pamphlet published by Mr. Jiwandas, Secretary, Sanatan Dharma Sabha at Rawalpindi, and imported by him into Kohat. It contained a number of *bhajans* or poems in praise of Shri Krishna and Hindu-Muslim unity. But it also contained the one in question. It was a highly offensive poem, undoubtedly calculated to wound Muslim susceptibility. Mr. Jiwandas was not the author. He did not import the pamphlet in order to irritate the Mussalmans. As soon as the matter was brought to the notice of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, it sent a written apology to the Mussalmans for the offending poem and removed it from the unsold copies. This might have satisfied the Mussalmans, but it did not. The unsold copies, over 500 according to Mussalman testimony and over 900 according to Hindu testimony, were brought to the Town Hall and publicly burnt in the presence of the Assistant Commissioner and a large concourse of Mussalmans. The cover of the pamphlet contained a portrait of Shri Krishna. Mr. Jiwandas was arrested. This took place on the 3rd September, 1924. He was to be brought before the Court on the 11th. The Hindus tried to avoid the Court proceedings and to settle the matter amicably. A Khilafat deputation, too, came from Peshawar for the purpose. The Mussalmans wanted to try Mr. Jiwandas according to *Shariat*. The Hindus declined but offered to submit to the award of the Khilafatists. The negotiations fell through. The Hindus, therefore, applied for discharge of Mr. Jiwandas. He was released on the 8th September under security and under instructions to leave Kohat. He did leave Kohat immediately. This anticipation of the date of trial enraged the Mussalmans. During the night of the 8th September they held an excited meeting at which fiery speeches were made. It was resolved to approach the Deputy Commissioner in a body and to demand the re-arrest of Mr. Jiwandas and the arrest of certain other members of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha. Reprisals against the Hindus were threatened if the Deputy Commissioner did not listen to the demand. Messages were sent out to the neighbouring villages to join the assembly in the morning. About two thousand angry Mussalmans' according to Pir Kamal, marched to the Town Hall. The request of the Deputy Commissioner that a small party from among the assembly should see him in the Town Hall was rejected and he was compelled to face the vast crowd outside. He yielded to the demand and the elated crowd dispersed.



The Hindus had become nervous through fright during the preceding week. On the 6th September they sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner informing him of the prevailing excitement among the Mussalmans. But no precautions were taken by him for their safety. They were aware of the proceedings of the meeting during the night of the 8th. They, therefore, sent in the morning of the 9th telegrams notifying the authorities of their fears and requesting them not to re-arrest Jiwandas. The latter still took no notice. There is a hot dispute as to what the crowd did after dispersal near the Town Hall. The Mussalman version is that the Hindus fired the first shot killing a Mussalman boy and wounding another, that this infuriated the mob resulting in the burning and looting that took place that day. The Hindu version is that the first shot was fired by the Mussalmans, that they, the Hindus, fired afterwards and in self-defence and that the whole of the looting and burning was according to a pre-arranged plan and after pre-arranged signals.

There is no direct evidence on the point and I am unable to reach a definite conclusion. The Mussalrnans contend that no damage would have occurred if the Hindus had not fired the first shot. I am unable to accept the contention. In my opinion some damage was bound to be done, whether the Hindus had fired or not.

It is certain to me that Sardar Makhan Singh's suburban residence was burnt and its garden damaged by the crowd before the firing, no matter from which side it was begun. But there is no doubt that the Hindus did fire and kill or wound some Mussalmans at some stage or other. My opinion is that the crowd elated by its success dispersed itself in several directions and made hostile demonstrations in front of Hindu houses or shops. I should not be surprised if the Hindus who, as shown above, were already nervous and were expecting trouble, took fright at the demonstration and fired in order to scare away the mob. But such an attitude of resistance would infuriate the Mussalmans who were unused to resistance on the part of Hindus. For as Pir Kamal said, the Frontier Mussalmans regarded themselves as *Nayaks* (protectors) and the Hindus as *Hamsayas* (here meaning protected). The more, therefore, the Hindus showed resistance the greater became the fury of the mob.

To me, then, who fired the first shot has not much significance for the purpose of the distribution of blame. No doubt, if the Hindus had not defended themselves at all or if they had not fired the first shot, assuming that they did, the Mussalman demonstration would have exhausted itself sooner. But such was not to be expected of the Hindus who were in possession of arms and knew more or less indifferently how



to use them. Mussalman witnesses questioned Hindu deaths or even injury to Hindus on the 9th. I am, however, certain that several Hindus died or were wounded on the 9th at the hands of the Mussalmans. It is difficult to give the total number. It is a pleasure, however, to note here that some Mussalmans befriended the Hindus and gave them shelter.

It is generally admitted that on the 10th September the Mussalman fury knew no bounds. No doubt highly exaggerated reports of Mussalman deaths at Hindu hands were spread and tribesmen from all parts stole into Kohat by making breaches in the walls and otherwise. Destruction of life and property, in which the constabulary freely partook, which was witnessed by the officials and which they could have prevented, was general. Had not the Hindus been withdrawn from their places and taken to the Cantonment, not many would have lived. Much has been made of the fact that Mussalmans too suffered and that tribesmen, once their passion for looting is let loose, make no distinction between Hindu property and Mussalman property. Whilst this statement is true, I do not believe that the Mussalmans have suffered in any way proportionate to the Hindus. And I must respectfully mention that even some Khilafat volunteers, whose duty it was to protect Hindus and regard them as their own kith and kin, neglected their duty and not only joined in the loot but also took part in the previous incitement.

But the worst is yet to be related. During these days temples including a Gurdwara were damaged and idols broken. There were numerous forced conversions³, or conversions so-called, i.e., conversions pretended for safety. Two Hindus at least were brutally murdered because they (the one certainly, the other inferentially) would not accept Islam. The so-called conversions are thus described by a Mussalman witness:

The Hindus came and asked to have their shikhas⁴ cut and sacred threads destroyed, or the Mussalmans whom they approached for protection said they could be protected only by declaring themselves Mussalmans and removing the signs of Hinduism.

I fear the truth is bitterer than is put here if I am to credit the Hindu version. I must say in fairness to the Mussalman friend that he did not regard these acts as conversions at all. Taking it at its lowest, the performance is humiliating alike for the Mussalmans and the Hindus. It would have redounded to the credit of the Mussalmans concerned, if they had steeled the hearts of the unmanly Hindus and offered them



protection in spite of their remaining Hindus and retaining the symbols of Hinduism. The Hindus would have gone down to posterity as martyrs and heroes of whom mankind, let alone Hindus, would have been proud if they had preferred death to denying their faith, albeit outwardly, in order to live.

I must now say a word regarding the Government. The authorities on the spot betrayed callous indifference, incompetence and weakness.

It was an error to have burnt the pamphlet after the offending poem was withdrawn.

It was right to arrest Mr. Jiwandas in the first instance, but it was an error of judgment to have released him before the 11th.

It was criminal to have re-arrested him after release.

It was criminal to have disregarded the warnings given by the Hindus on the 6th September and repeated on the 9th that their lives and property were in danger.

It was criminal not to have offered protection when the riot eventually broke out.

It was inhuman not to have provided the refugees with food after their removal and to have left them to their own resources after their removal to Rawalpindi.

It was a gross neglect of their duty on the part of the Government of India not to have appointed an impartial commission to inquire into the events and the conduct of the officials concerned.

As to the future I am sorry that it is no brighter than the past. It is a matter of great pity that the Muslim Working Committee was not represented at our inquiry. The so-called reconciliation is a reconciliation brought about under threat of prosecution against both. It passes comprehension how a strong Government could be party to such a compromise. If it wanted to avoid prosecutions for fear of another demonstration on the part of the tribesmen, it should have boldly said so and declined to prosecute and then tried to bring about an amicable and honourable settlement between the parties.

The compromise is intrinsically bad, because it makes no provision for restoration of lost and damaged property. It is also bad because it still involves prosecution of Mr. Jiwandas who is being made the scapegoat.



It is, therefore, necessary, if there is to be real cleansing of hearts and genuine reconciliation, for the Mussalmans to invite the Hindu refugees and give them assurances of protection and help in reinstating their temples and Gurdwaras.

But the most important assurance that should be given is, that in future no conversions are to take place except in the presence of the elders of the communities and except in the cases of those who understand the full meaning of what they are doing; and if such conversions are attempted they should receive no recognition. I would personally like the stopping of all conversions and *shuddhis*. One's faith is a personal matter with oneself. It is open to any person of mature age to change his or her faith when and as often as he or she wishes. But if I could do so, I would stop all propaganda except through one's conduct. Conversion is a matter of heart and reason. An appeal to heart and reason can only be made through conduct. I am unable to conceive genuine conversions on the Frontier where Hindus live purely for purposes of gain and where they, a hopeless minority untrained in the use of arms, live in the midst of an overwhelming majority who are, moreover, by far their superiors in bodily strength and use of arms. The temptation for a weak man in such circumstances to embrace Islam for worldly gain is irresistible.

Whether such assurances are forthcoming or not, whether a genuine change of heart is possible or not, I am quite clear on the course that should be adopted. Whilst this foreign domination is in existence some contact with it somewhere is inevitable. But all voluntary contact must be avoided wherever possible. This is the way to feel independent and to cultivate independence. And when a large number feels independent we are ready for Swaraj. I can only suggest solutions of questions in terms of Swaraj. I would, therefore, sacrifice present individual gain for future national gain. Even if Mussalmans refuse to make approaches and even if the Hindus of Kohat may have to lose their all, I should still say that they must not think of returning to Kohat till there is complete reconciliation between them and the Mussalmans, and until they feel that they are able to live at peace with the latter without the protection of the British bayonet. But I know that this is a counsel of perfection and not likely to be followed by the Hindus. Nevertheless, I can tender no other advice. For me it is the only practical advice I can give. And if they cannot appreciate it, they must follow their own inclination. They are the best judges of their own capacity. They were in Kohat not as nationalists. They want to return not as nationalsits but for the purpose of regaining their possessions. They will, therefore, do what to them seems feasible and



advantageous. Only they must not try to do two things at a time—to try to follow my advice and at the same time to negotiate with the Government for terms. I know that they are not non-co-operators. They have ever relied upon British help. I can but point out consequences and leave them to choose their course.

My advice to the Mussalmans is equally simple.

There was no cause for offence at the Hindus feeling perturbed at the so-called conversions or Hindu husbands taking means to regain lost wives.

I know that in spite of the discharge of Sardar Makhan Singh's son upon the charge of abduction, many Mussalmans continue to believe in the guilt of the Sardar's son. But assuming the guilt of the young Sardar, his crime was no warrant for the fearful vengeance wreaked upon a whole community.

The importation of the pamphlet containing the highly offensive poem was undoubtedly bad, especially in a place like Kohat. But the Sabha made enough reparation by its apology. It was, however, held insufficient by the Mussalmans, and the Sanatan Sabha was compelled to make further reparation by the burning of the copies of the whole pamphlet including the portrait of Shri Krishna. Everything done thereafter to the Hindus was far in excess of the requirements. As I have said before, I am not sure who fired the first shot; but assuming that the Hindus did it, it was done in panic and in self-protection and, therefore, excusable even if not justifiable, and that the reprisals taken were wholly unwarranted. Therefore, it is the Mussalmans who owe them such reparation as is possible in the circumstances. They, the Mussalmans, need no Government protection or aid against the Hindus. The latter can do them no harm even if they wished. But here again I am on unsafe ground. I do not possess even the honour of an acquaintance with the present advisers of the Mussalmans of Kohat. They must, therefore, be the best judges of what is good for the Mussalmans and good for India.

If both the parties desire Government intervention my services are perfectly useless as I do not believe in the desirability of seeking such intervention and I could take no part in any negotiations with the Government. Whilst the Hindus are entitled to and must claim fair treatment from the Mussalmans, both need to protect themselves against the Government whose policy it is to set the one against the other. The Frontier is a non-regulation province where the will of an official is the law. It should be the pride of the Hindus and the Mussalmans to co-operate with one another



to achieve full representative government. Such cannot be the case unless the two communities can trust one another and the desire is common to both.

Tirupur,

M. K. Gandhi

March 19, 1925.

Young India, 26-3-1925.

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1. The original draft here has: "(3) Resentment over the Hindu abstention from the rejoicings over the Turkish Victory celebrations."
 2. The original draft here has: "The case has been since found to be false."
 3. Shaukat Ali in his statement published in *Young India*, 26.3. 1925, wrote: "As for the so-called conversions to Islam during the days of the riots, my position is clear. I detest forced conversions. They are against the spirit of Islam. If there were any, they deserve the greatest condemnation. But I am not satisfied that there were."
 4. Tufts of hair.



APPENDIX—IV—3: MAULANA SHAUKAT ALI'S STATEMENT ON KOHAT

From the very first day when I heard of the unfortunate affair of Kohat and all through the sitting of the Unity Conference at Delhi, when Mahatmaji was keeping his twenty-one days' fast, right up to the last day I spent at Rawalpindi in touch with both Hindus and Muslims, I have been very carefully considering the matter. Having made such enquiries as were possible in the circumstances, I have come to certain conclusions. Since these differ to some extent from those of the Mahatma in spite of our general agreement, it would, I think, be better if I write a separate report, particularly as I have emphasized certain aspects of the case. It is no use my entering into details and giving elaborate reasons for my conclusions.

1. As is well-known, I have always refused to visit places where Hindus and Muslims have quarrelled or are quarrelling. In my opinion both the communities in such localities have forfeited the right of asking the help and cooperation of those who are determined to live at peace and with brotherly amity with each other. Each side wants not peace but supporters for its cause. Mischief-makers on both sides are out to drag others down to their own level.

2. Enquiries after the event lead me nowhere. Cases are prepared carefully and our interference does no good. Each party puts all the blame on the other and will not accept any adverse judgment. In most cases the fault lies at the door of both and trying to weigh it or apportion it, besides being difficult, well-nigh impossible, serves no good purpose. In fact, it further reopens the question and both from the press and the platform the battle is fought over and over again.

3. This Kohat case, the only one in which I took part, has proved to me clearly that my instinct has been right. From what I learnt from impartial Hindu and Muslim friends early, I came to the conclusion that this was not such a one-sided affair, as it was made out to be by a section of the press. My closer acquaintance with facts and with people present at Kohat, has confirmed me in my former opinion. I cannot say anything about other places; but in Kohat, if the Muslims have to answer for much, the Hindus have also to answer for a good deal. The following facts deserve our attention:



(A) The effect of bitter acrimonious communal feelings in the Punjab and the United Provinces had reached Kohat also and relations between Hindus and Muslims there were not as pleasant as before. In fact, from all accounts the use of aggressive language was uncontrolled on both sides.

(B) The ignorant and less-educated Khans in the Frontier Province have a high regard for their dignity and position and, through their own follies and mistakes, keep up an empty show. The more clever and better-educated Hindu commands a position now, thanks to his thrift and business capacity. He has amassed a fortune and at times shows it aggressively. The old relation between the two had been changing and the Government officials, although they were anxious not to allow the Hindus to grow in strength, were taking special advantage of the situation to further emasculate and weaken the Muslim gentry. It was they who were regarded as a danger to the Government in the provinces and not the Hindus. It was the Muslims alone who started non-cooperation in Kohat and suffered for it. The real danger to the province, however, is the official element itself and it is against this that both Hindus and Muslims have to protect themselves.

(C) When feelings were already bad, came this pamphlet with an abusive poem in it, insulting the Kaaba and the Holy Prophet (May God's peace be on him). This pamphlet was specially printed for Jiwandas, Secretary of the Kohat Sanatan Dharma Sabha. Its effect cannot be minimised on any Muslim population, leave aside the Muslim population of a place like Kohat. In this connection I remember the resentment of the Muslims in Calcutta and all over India felt over in an article in the *Indian Daily News*. It was a letter from its correspondent in Paris, in which he had mentioned that the Arab from Africa, who had been put to clean the drains in Paris during the war, was looking at the filth with the same affection and reverence as if it was the tomb of his prophet. The Mussalmans blazed forth in anger and a huge All-India protest meeting was organised in Calcutta. This was stopped by Government and men coming to it in processions were fired at and many were killed and wounded. So I can well imagine the feeling of the Muslims of Kohat at the time. The news of such writings cannot be kept hidden and I cannot put the blame of this on Maulvi Ahmed Gul.

(D) The Hindus' case is complete and very carefully prepared. They have a large number of well-educated men at Kohat including several barristers and pleaders. Besides, they had the advantage of the support and advice of many other eminent and able men in the Hindu community. But the full Muslim case is not known. We had two



sets of people before us, both non-cooperators at one time, but now in different camps inimical to each other. There was no collusion possible between them, and they had the advice of no Mussalman from the outside. I am grateful these gentlemen came at my invitation. Like the other Government group, the so-called 'Muslim Representatives' 'Working Committee For Reconciliation' they could have declined. But they came and gave their evidence. There was very little material difference between the statements of Syed Pir Kamal Jeelani and Maulvi Ahmed Gul, and they both denied in their statements that there was any preparation or idea of a general attack or Jehad against the Hindus on the 9th September. The Mussalmans decided on the 8th night after the sudden unexpected release of Jiwandas to wait on the Deputy Commissioner. There was certainly indignation at the double-faced policy of the Deputy Commissioner who kept on promising the Muslims one thing and the Hindus another.

(E) The Hindus had no complaint to make against Syed Pir Kamal Jeelani. They accused Maulvi Ahmed Gul, Khilafat Secretary. From all accounts up to the 25th August, 1924, his behaviour was all right. It is after this pamphlet case that he lost his balance and went over to the Government side. The present putrid state of affairs and bad communal feelings have upset the balance of many old and tried Hindu and Muslim workers in the Punjab and elsewhere and Maulvi Ahmed Gul was not strong enough to withstand the attack of the general Muslim public opinion. He was carried off his feet and lost his belief in Hindu-Muslim Unity. Either he or any other courageous prominent man could have saved the situation, but there was none available. Dewan Anantram told us that he was then unfortunately too ill to be of use, otherwise this unfortunate incident would never have happened. With the knowledge of the rest of India before me, I cannot expect too much from a man of Maulvi Ahmed Gul's position. Still, if he could not carry the public with him, he should have kept aloof and not gone over the official side. At the same time I am unable to accept all that has been said about him by the Hindus.

(F) We must not judge of Kohat affairs with our own standards. It would be unfair. The condition there is not the same as with us. An ordinary apology should have been sufficient for us and there was no necessity of burning the book, but both the written letter of apology and the burning were considered insufficient by the Muslims of Kohat. Had there been present one real peace-maker in Kohat in each community, things would have been settled amicably. The Khilafat Deputation of Peshawar which



consisted of Haji Jan Mohammad, Ameerchand Bombwal, Syed Lal Badshah and Ali Gul did their best for peace but failed.

(G) I do not accept the Hindu theory that the 9th September was fixed for a general Jihad and invitations for it were sent beforehand. The Frontier village Pathans know how to fight, but are not anxious to lose their own lives uselessly. If they really wanted to organise a massacre of Hindus, broad daylight was not very suitable for it, nor a fixed day known to their opponents. They would have arranged a surprise. Further the fighting on the 1st day, the 9th September, was fairly balanced and from all accounts it appears the Muslim casualties were as many as the Hindu casualties, if not more. Nor do I believe the Muslim theory which was put before me at Delhi that the Hindus were preparing for such an attack on the Muslims as would teach them a lesson. It was alleged that in one sudden attack they hoped to prove themselves more than a match for the Muslims being well-armed and under cover, and that afterwards the Police and the troops would intervene and the matter would be left for settlement in the law courts. The Muslims of Kohat frankly said that such a thing was not possible.

In my opinion the firing and the fighting on the 9th September was accidental and not pre-meditated. By the sudden release of Jiwandas on the 8th September, the aggressive section of the Hindus in its elation must have openly crowed over its victory over Muslims. Next morning when the Deputy Commissioner, realising the intensity of Muslim feeling and his mistake in releasing Jiwandas, ordered the arrest of Jiwandas and several other Sanatana Dharma Members, it was the turn of aggressive Muslims to give expression of their elation over their complete victory, and on this the quarrel started.

(H) Who fired the first shot? The Muslims say that a Muslim boy and another man were killed near Sirdar Makhansing's house in the Bazar. The Hindus say that the "Parachas" fired the first three shots and killed one Hindu woman and wounded another. The Hindus further say that these three shots were a pre-arranged signal for the Muslim attack. I do not believe this latter as it is a part of the Hindu theory for which I have found not an iota of proof.

The Muslims on the night of the 8th September had decided in a very angry meeting to wait on the Deputy Commissioner early next morning. If the Deputy Commissioner decided against them, then they would see what else they could do. The Deputy Commissioner accepted their demands in full. Not only Jiwandas but several other Sanatana Dharma members were ordered to be arrested. The crowd was



jubilant and happy as it got what it wanted. The honour and the prestige of its faith was in its estimation saved. There was no meaning now in starting a massacre of Hindus. My own firm conviction is that the firing and the burning of the 9th September was quite accidental. The gunpowder was there in heaps, but the match was lighted accidentally resulting in a huge conflagration. Neither the Hindus nor the Mussalmans had any such intention, and the Mussalmans, naturally, could not want it after their signal victory.

(I) I was glad to hear both from the Muslims and the Hindus that they did not want the reopening of the questions, as it would not serve any purpose. Both parties repeatedly told us this. And I think even now without apportioning blame on either side an honourable and brotherly peace can be arranged. The Mussalmans say that they did neither want nor force the Hindus to leave Kohat on the 10th September. The Police and the border constabulary and all the British officers were present on the spot and for the unfortunate looting and firing of the 10th September, it is the Government which is responsible. They could have stopped everything if they wanted, but they did not want to stop. This Hindu-Muslim fight in the Frontier was a God-sent to them to further embitter the feelings of the Muslims of the Frontier and the Hindus of the Punjab and India and to proclaim to the world at large that the Hindus and the Muslims were now openly fighting and that their unity was impossible. It was the strong hand of the British Government that was needed for peace.

(J) The Muslims complained that with the assistance of influential Hindu leaders, the Hindus of Kohat have forced the hands of the Government and secured some special terms. Half the Police in future would be Hindu; no Muslim, man or woman, would be allowed to pass through Hindu Mohallas; "Kucha-bandis" would be done; one third of the officials there would be Hindu and more concessions like these. They said with the help of the Hindus, Government would curtail liberties of the 97 percent Muslims. Already it has demanded Muchalka (security) for Rs. 80,000/- from Syed Pir Kamal Jeelani and three others, because he and his party do not accept the representative character of this Muslim Working Committee in Kohat. The Mussalmans in the Frontier province are little better than slaves and they want the whole of the nationalistic India to come to their assistance and get for them the same rights as the rest of India. They want representative and elective institutions like the Councils, Municipalities, District Boards, Universities etc. Nothing is being done for their education and their ignorance is appalling. In Kohat, Peshawar, and in the whole



of the Frontier Provinces Municipalities have nominated members and the 97 percent Muslim population have the same representation as the 3 per cent Hindus, i. e. 50 per cent of each are nominated by the Government.

(K) In my opinion an honourable peace is possible and desired by both the communities. The whole country should raise its voice to free those fine people and save them from their ignorance and primitive methods of dealing with affairs, which is a danger both to them and to the whole country. The negligence of the Mussalmans of India in this matter is specially criminal.

(L) As for the so-called conversions to Islam during the days of the riots, my position is clear. I detest forced conversions. They are against the spirit of the Islam. If there were any, they deserve the greatest condemnation. But I am not satisfied that there were. What seems to have happened was that some Hindus for their safety asked their Mussalman friends to cut off their tufts and otherwise remove all outward symbols of Hinduism. The Mussalman witnesses rightly did not claim these as conversions. They are today as much Hindus as any other. Many a Mussalman told a lie to save the life of his Hindu neighbours, by telling the excited mob that they had become Muslims.

Such cases were not conversions, nor were considered such by any body in the Frontier. Both Syed Pir Kamal Jeelani and Maulvi Ahmed Gul stated that even a genuine desire for conversion under the circumstances would not be treated seriously, unless it was repeated at the time of Aman (safety) when there was no danger.

The two cases of murder of innocent and unarmed Hindus, who were reported to Pir Kamal as having been murdered on the 9th September because they could not accept Islam, were truly deplorable and the perpetrators of the deed deserve the strongest condemnation. As for the general question of conversion of married Hindu women and others, it could be discussed with responsible Muslim Ulemas and leaders and I need give no opinion here about it. However, from all accounts it is agreed that no woman, married or otherwise, herself accepted or was converted by others to Islam during the riots.

I would urge the Mussalmans who are in an overwhelming majority to make up with their Hindu brethren and I would equally urge the Hindu brethren to stand by their Muslim neighbours and make them feel that they have in them good neighbours and real friends and helpers.



As I said before, the incident at Kohat was not a one-sided affair and I blame both Hindus and Mussalmans. However, as a Muslim I feel it my duty to put the greater blame on the Mussalmans. They are stronger, both physically and in number, and even under great provocation they ought to have shown greater patience and forbearance, which I am sorry to say they did not in the excitement of their miserable fighting.

In conclusion I must say that when two such detached persons as Mahatmaji and myself differ in deciding such cases, how could others do better? We must not work as judges but as peace-makers.

Young India

26th March 1925

(Sd) Shaukat Ali

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