



Day-to-Day with Gandhi

[SECRETARY'S DIARY]

Volume VI

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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, we come across even the utterings of Gandhiji in his delirious condition 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 Bosswel, 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 ninth volume is in the Press.

The English translation of Mahadev Desai's Diary is being done by Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanth. We have published upto now 5 volumes of English edition.

This sixth volume is a bit late to our previous schedule. We propose to bring out the Seventh volume within next six months.



Preface

This Diary covers the period between 20.2.1925 and 22.5.1925, of just about 3 months.

The political situation is stagnant, if not deteriorating still further.

But the Diary has the relieving feature of revealing the inner man in Mahatma Gandhi, in greater detail and variety perhaps, than during the rush and bustle of his fighting days. Notwithstanding the stillness of political activity outside and his chagrin at the sight of Hindu-Muslim ill-feelings and riots, he is, if possible, more active than at other times, more determined to regain the lost ground and make his influence more pervasive, 'like waves of the sea silently creeping into the land through inlets and creeks.' Somebody has rightly said that Gandhi is more dangerous when he retires, than when he is fighting in the open arena. Whoever can stop him from carrying on his propaganda for the spinning wheel, for cow-protection, and against the evil drink or untouchability? But that makes him more than ever before the soul of India, captive but unconquered.

And what tremendous work he was doing during this 'retirement' from active politics. A single quotation from this Diary, an account of a single day's work, as given by Mahadevbhai is a sufficient indication. The reader will forgive its length for the sake of its vivid portraiture:

"Only today's itinerary, (probably d. 18.3.1925) given by way of a specimen will show what kind of a tour this one in South India was. Early at 4.30 a. m. meeting at Paarur; then to Aalwaai by car, 3 meetings there; then at 11 a. m. by train to Trichur; meeting with the Maharaja, procession, and 2 meetings there; start for Palghat at 3 p. m. by a motor-ride along the roughest possible hilly road; an extremely ill-organised public meeting there, owing to the jostle of the crowds it was 8 p. m. when Gandhiji could reach the rostrum; torrential rain; women's meeting at 9 p. m.; theological debate of pandits from 10 p.m. to 1 a. m.; visit of the Shabari Ashram of Krishnaswamy Iyer at 2 a. m.; rest at the station at last at 2. 30 a. m. This is the relentlessly non-stop programme of 22 hours in one day. But there were many such in the Southern tour."

And Mahadevbhai, the loving secretary, repeats his protest twice or thrice in this book.



That Gandhiji had no illusions about the intensity of the darkness that enveloped him is evidenced by his letter to Maulana Mohamad Ali:

"Before you wrote to me, I had realized your position. Such must be the lot of genuine workers. We were doing little when we were swimming with the tide. We have to exert ourselves, only when we swim against it. Now we shall know whether we have strength. It is a child's play for a soldier to fight against a foe, however formidable. But not many can stand demoralisation, distrust, indiscipline and want of faith, among their own ranks. You and I have to face that fact.

But what was his psychic reaction to the situation?

"I have such deep faith in God that I am sitting quiet now in the assurance that when the hour strikes, He will shake everyone out of his slumber" (p. 274). By the way, should this not serve us as a tonic in these days of party break-ups, floor-crossings, graft, strikes etc.? And this faith and assurance were based on no under-estimate of the opponent's strength.

"The age of speaking, book-writing, is gone and the age of action has come. You have to give battle not to a race of speakers, but of born workers, a race that has known not what it is to yield, a race of inflexible determination as well as some of the finest soldiers of the world." Verily, Gandhiji never stinted in his chivalrous tribute to the opponent where it was due.

And he had no illusions either, about the way in which a helpless, unarmed, disorganised, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country could pit itself against that mighty power.

"No diplomacy will be able to do the task before us. You want mass-consciousness, you want co-operation of all men. You want councillors to speak with power. Das can do little unless he had power behind him."

Hence, his repetitions '*ad nauseam*' of the triple programme for laying a sound foundation for a future struggle, and hence, his confession that he had no new stimulating programme to offer, till that foundation was laid.

This volume is sprinkled over with some anecdotes of Gandhiji's past life given in his own words, for instance, in his instructive and interesting speech before lawyers in South India. There are also flashes that reveal the lighter side of Gandhiji. Instead of quoting them or giving references to relevant pages, however, the reader is requested to go through the book to discover them.



How Gandhiji's seemingly spent-force silently affected a social and psychological revolution is glimpsed in the following extract from an address given to him and from Gandhiji's inspiring reply to it.

"Pranams (obeisances) from the *chiraparaadhinaa* (ever helpless and dependent) female sex to Gandhiji, the moulder of India's destiny, the lord of the hearts of millions and the herald of freedom."

Speculation as to how far the easy installation of Indiraji to the Premiership of India was due to Gandhiji's spade work is useless, but the fact stands that in the awakening among the women of India and in the conferment of social dignity and rights to them, Gandhiji's tours and acts contributed a large share.

And these are some of 'the points to ponder' which are scattered all over this volume also:

"That enterprise (=big business) which is not morally elevating is either useless or harmful."

"Selflessness may be the purer form of selfishness—I say so not for argument, but that is what I feel."

"Financial security is an obstacle (to an institution doing public service). That institution is a mushroom which gets at its very start, ample funds and numerous workers.

"Sterling character is a *sine qua non* of a good teacher."

"Blind obedience to my advice will do you no good."

"It is a misfortune that we (Indians) do not demand the same high standard of fidelity in love and behaviour for men as for women."

"When 'seva' (service) wags its tongue, it loses all its value."

"I make bold to say that Buddha was not an atheist. Splendid philosophy in action—that is Buddha's teaching. It is preeminently a religion of the masses. Buddhism has not been banished from India. We in India translate Buddhism far more in practice than the Burmese."

But let me not try the reader's patience too long.

- Translator



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Bapu hates sin, not the sinner. But, looking to the way he loves and hugs children, it would seem as if, in that one matter, he hates the sinner, and not the sin!

* * * *

Trust is a great thing, but those who gain Bapu's trust have to walk warily—like a sword-dancer. Take it for certain that the moment you lose his trust by your single false step, the whole fabric collapses and even its foundations are uprooted.

* * * *

On the day he got 's Letter telling of the moral crisis, Bapu groaned, "Had I become only a weaver and kept away from the maze of politics, it seems, no such thing would have happened and every one would have seen his way in life."

* * * *



20.2.1925

Vankaner

Vankaner has left us unforgettable memories. A reference to His Highness will appear later on, but the Dewan Saheb also is very cultured and excellent gentleman. He was, of course, dressed in Khadi but I am even told that a spinning wheel is humming in his home. There was a pleasing novelty besides in the Vankaner address. Khadi, the spinning wheel, and untouchability received a special mention. It was also stated that there were *antyaja* children in their school, and that 2500 spinning wheels and 250 hand-loom were working in the State. Gandhiji felt very happy at all this, but at the public meeting he opened his speech with the self-same question of untouchability:

"I have not much to say, if *antyajas* are allowed in your school. Hinduism is in great peril, so long as there is room for untouchability in it. If we ostracize *antyajas* who are an inalienable part of Hindu society, take it for certain that we are heading for destruction. This is the time when religions are held in the balance. You cannot keep your *dharma* now under lock and key. Every religion has to undergo the test of scrutiny by the whole world. Great philosophers are diving into the depths of all religions. If our religion fails to stand their test, its extinction is a dead certainty.

"If you are followers of the Hindu Dharma in the right sense, you must adhere to truth and non-violence and gain the power of fearlessness that emanates from them. From my peregrinations over the world and from my meditations—meditations for 44 Long years—I have not come across any other touchstone (than these qualities) to test the excellence of a religion. And when I found that Hinduism, as compared with other religions, passes through this test quite successfully, I felt proud to belong to the Hindu Dharma. A time was when I was assailed with doubts and approached Christian missionaries to have them removed. But that was years ago. Now I am putting before the *antyajas* what has been acquired from my own inner quest of truth. If we do not treat them as our kith and kin, our *dharma* is going to be wiped out. 'Hindustan' cannot stand, cannot sustain itself upon the prop of 7 crores of Muslims. If it does, it becomes anything but Hindustan, anything but Bharatvarsha. It cannot then be called a big sub-continent. It will only be a copy of the West.

My sisters, let me speak to you of one ugly custom. I have seen the thing happened before my very eyes and it was my mother who did it. When I recall the sight, I feel ashamed. I have seen Mother throwing the refuse of our meals to dogs or



antyajas. They said, everyone of them, that that was but the custom! We have taken it as an axiomatic truth that whatever our predecessors did was good and worthy of adoption. But as our popular saying warns us, we need not drown ourselves into the well, because it was our forefathers who dug it. We may certainly take a plunge, but only for swimming in it and coming out refreshed. We must accept what is good in our hoary customs and discard the bad. Even about our Shastras (scriptures) we should have '*neerksheer viveka*'.¹ There is nobody on earth that is free from faults.

"What my mother did was improper. Were she alive and did the same thing, I would first bow down to her and then protest, 'What's this you are doing?' I would tell her, 'This is certainly anything but the religion I sucked from your breast'. If you wish to give them some food, first set apart that much from your provision and then take your food. That is our culture. We must first of all keep apart something to give to the poorest of the poor. Only then will our riches cease to rouse jealousy and nobody will be tempted to cast an evil eye on it.

"We have grown so proud and selfish today, that, if the man who serves us is even slightly remiss, we storm at him. We do so because we have forgotten *dayadharm* (the *dharma* of pity). The more I think of it, the more I tremble and ask my heart, 'Dear, dear! How is it that you feel so gloomy, when you have become as good as gold?'

Antyajas are subjected to contumely and insults,—specially in Kathiawar. Station Masters pour abuses on them and so on and so forth. My mother was a lovely lady of extraordinary purity. She was a treasury of virtues. If I look white before you, it is due to her. But, owing to the force of custom, even she was no exception in this particular matter. That is why I tell you, "Give your best things to *antyajas*." And I must also add, 'Don't you make your latrine so filthy that *antyajas* may have the creeps, when they have to clean them.' As for me, I have given up using latrines. But I ask you who have not done so to keep your latrines as clean as your libraries. It is in that cleanliness that our own *shoucha-dharma*,² i.e. our sanctity, lies. Having pity for *antyajas* is thus not the only question involved in this matter. Your duty, therefore, does not end when you only touch an *antyaaja*."

Then he dealt with Khadi and the spinning wheel:

"Quite accidentally, the topic of the jungles of Kathiawar and the present plight of the Land came up in my talk with the Raja Saheb. He complained, 'There is a



regularly growing scarcity of rain in Kathiawar and a time will come when it will cease altogether.' We regard a famine as a visitation of God's wrath. But there is no caprice in that divine dispensation. A calamity descends on us only if we deserve it in some way or other. The rains may not come, if we commit some errors on the spiritual plane or if we are remiss in some duty on the physical. I, therefore, replied to the Maharaja Saheb—albeit in a polite, low tone—

'Maybe the scarcity is due to our destruction of our jungle.' South Africa also was once a dry Land of shrubs and cactus. But the people there are clever and intelligent, and know the physical sciences. With infinite labour they began to plant trees, and now there is a heavy rainfall there. Around Bombay also there was once such a dense forest that the city had a rainfall of 100 inches. But the forest has been largely cut down and Bombay has now to suffer from one of its evil results. The normal rainfall has gone down and now the people have begun to take even 70 or 80 inches of rainfall as heavy. We must thus think of such physical causes also. If water grows scarce both the princes and the people will have to fly away. That was what happened in America where many new villages were founded and then destroyed. How can human beings live in a place where water dries up and there is no greenery? Only hunters may live there, but you will never find a single thickly populated area without the provision of water.

"It will take some time before there is no rainfall in the Land. But we should remember that even at present Amreli has been affected with a decreasing rainfall for the past several years. This year it went down to not even 50%. What should we do then? Yes. One can do manual labour. But there is no part in Kathiawar, where peasants can employ themselves for all the 12 months of the year. They get work during the rainy season, and so, in a region where there is only one crop in a year, what should the people do for the remaining 8 months? Should they emigrate? It is God's law that man must work for 8 hours everyday all the year round. Where that is not done, starvation is the inevitable result. India suffers from starvation, since 22 crores of her people have to remain unemployed for 6 months. Starvation crows down the spirit of the sufferer, and can it ever strike a man, who has no enterprize, to ply a spinning wheel? When will he do so? He will start turning the wheel, when his King is turning it, when his Dewan is turning it. It will not affect our agriculture. It will go on, but it requires many improvements. The spinning wheel is only a subsidiary industry that will supplement the income from agriculture. I am not deluding you in my plea for the wheel. If we want to make India free, if we want to do something for the poor, and



if we believe that our masses, who are crushed under the grinding wheels of poverty, must also share with us the fruits of freedom, then, I assure you, none else will be able to point out any other universal supplementary industry for our teeming unemployed millions. We shall have but to spin, as a form of *yagna*, as a symbol of our desire for self-sacrifice, as a sign of our dedication to the country's cause. The poor can understand all this only when the King, the Dewan, the Sheriff, this Gandhi, and that Devachand, one and all, start working a spinning wheel. It is ignorance that makes us revel in this 'devil-may-care' attitude and in the comfortable holding of big meetings. But freedom is not won so easily. We have got to make strenuous exertion and gather much knowledge. The spinning wheel is the basis, and Khadi the product of all these things.

"Our girls wear *Saries* of foreign clothes and look ugly in them. Nobody in England does such a queer thing. Englishmen never use a thing that harms their fellow countrymen. Queen Elizabeth used to wear only a thick lace. She sent for skilled craftsmen from Holland and made them teach their crafts to their English compeers. That was Elizabeth. From one point of view her work was Satanic. She wanted to hem in the world with her rule. But from another angle, we find her a brave woman who encouraged her people to go in for adventures. These qualities have made me her ardent admirer. Why should not we too follow her? If you order your cloth from Ahmedabad, I say, better order your *rotis* (breads) also from there. You will then at once cry out, 'Even if that *roti* from Ahmedabad costs only two pice, it is too dear for us. Down with that pseudo-economics.' We love our ugly child more than someone's beautiful baby. Why, then, don't you feel, 'Be it rough and thick, Khadi made in this my Vankaner is the best in world?' Why should the cloth used in the Royal Palace not made of Khadi? Khadi, besides, is the warp and the woof of the fraternity between Hindus and Muslims.

"I wish to thank you for your Loving address, but I cannot be content. I am burning with a passion that has consumed my patience. I find that the hearts of the people and the princes have grown cold towards each other. I am hearing these things with my ears and feeling their air on my skin. The question is never out of my mind, but I have kept silent, because the only way in which I can return the overwhelming love that both the princes and the people are pouring over me, is to express before you the feelings that sway my heart at present and to pray that you too be fired with them. May God bless you and the whole world."



Left Vankaner and came to Wadhwan (now Surendranagar) on 21. 2.1925.

Gandhiji paid a visit to the house of the late Mr. Shivalal Nimjibhai who had given a hundred thousand rupees for Khadi work. Then he went to the public meeting held in Wadhwan Camp, where he said:

"We miss the presence of Shivalalbai today. You have just now heard of the many services he rendered to Kathiawar and India. It is India's misfortune that new men do not spring up to replace her worthy sons who die. Death is the inevitable destiny of everyone on earth. Birth and death are an inseparable pair. One ought to remain unperturbed, by infatuation or sorrow and yet we feel aggrieved at the death of a dear one. It seems to me that it is our selfishness that makes us unhappy. When I recall the hallowed memory of Shivalalbai, I realize how greatly our self-interest was involved in his life. If we want to keep his memory green, we must come forward to take his place. We need not feel any shame in stepping into his shoes and in outstripping him in work. A son has cause to feel ashamed only when he does not increase the wealth he inherits. That is the true inheritor who increases the property he receives. It is our duty to increase the heritage Shivalalbai has left us. I am sorry that that has not been done.

"It is my cherished dream that Khadi may become the craze of the people and penetrate into every village. So Long as the spinning wheel does not enter every village and everyone of us does not begin to wear Khadi, the advent of *Swaraj* in its real sense is an impossibility. We know that the hearts of Hindus and Muslims have not united. Let both these Hindus and Muslims begin to spin, if they want to become one at heart. Khadi helps in the solution of the untouchability question also. This question had created a commotion in Wadhwan, I don't know why. If we wish to make Khadi a universal vogue, we shall have to embrace *antyajas*. India's reputation lives upon Muslim and *antyaj*a weavers only. Without an organisation of weavers, you cannot get the Khadi of your choice. I am coming from Vankaner. There are 300 Muslim weavers there. Excellent weavers all, but those who weave hand-spun yarn are only 2 or 3. If we want all the others also to weave Khadi, we all have got to start spinning. We don't want those women for spinning, who may have to give up any other paying occupation thereby. We want only those sisters to spin who don't get even two pice per day. Our spinning wheel is a manna from heaven for this country, where people have nothing more to eat than a piece of dry bread and a pinch of dirty salt. That much *yagna* is, therefore, a must for us all. I wish this spinning activity flourishes.



"People don't turn to weaving, when they begin to spin (*sic.* perhaps Gandhiji means, 'and hence don't know the difficulties of a weaver'). If we want fine yarn spun and woven, we shall have to spin it ourselves. Without that fine yarn, what shall we do about our delicate sisters and brothers who will not otherwise wear Khadi?"

"If you want to make Shivalbhai's name immortal, you must keep the work he was doing ever going on. Khadi was Shival's first and last love. While he gave that big sum for Khadi, we should feel ashamed if we did nothing for it."

1. This is a very popular traditional concept. It is said that '*hansas*' (swans) inhabiting the '*Manasa*' lake on Mt. Kailas have the knack of drinking only the milk and leaving out the watery particles in it. Hence, this simile means, 'Have the discrimination to sip only the milk (—good) and discard the water (—bad) from the mixture. There is also an allegorical meaning where '*hansa*' is man, '*Manasa*' lake his mind, and Mt. Kailasa the abode of God. A man of the higher type distinguishes between the good and bad promptings of his mind, accepts only the good, and hence lives on Mt. Kailas, i.e., in the abode of God.

2. The word *shoucha* means cleanliness of body and mind.



The Vadhawan Balmandir¹

When the public meeting was over, Gandhiji left for his stay at the Balmandir built by Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta. The Mandir is situated at charming solitary spot on the bank of the river Bhogavo and is just adjacent to the historic place where the holy Rani Ranakdevi² became a Sati. Everybody knows the history of that Mandir, i.e. the history of Sri Fulchandbhai's attempts to spread national education. It is common knowledge that the school was flourishing very well at first, but the question of untouchability created a schism and the result was that the number of students went down to a paltry 25. Kakasaheb³ visited Wadhwan and succeeded in making the Managing Committee of the school accept the principle of removal of untouchability. All the same, the people withdrew their children from the school and refused to give even the donations already promised. Gandhiji's speech at the opening ceremony of the school building, naturally, refers to all this; but as it contains many things besides, it deserves a rather detailed report.

Fulchandbhai had formerly served the Satyagrahashram (Gandhiji's own Ashram) for many years. In opening his Balmandir, Gandhiji delivered his speech with all the fervour he would feel, if the Balmandir were his own creation. He was not requested to open the National School at Rajkot and he had to indulge in some plain speaking to the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot besides. His speech, therefore, took quite a different turn there. In addition to the opening of the school building, Gandhiji had to lay the foundation stone of a library here. The entrance door of the school was closed with a silver lock, which Gandhiji opened with a silver key, and both of them were presented to him. The silver scoop with which he laid the foundation stone of the library was likewise given away to him. All these things provided Gandhiji with excellent material for his speech.

Referring to the silver lock-and-key and the scoop he said:

"I am to take with me this silver lock-and-key as well as the scoop which has hardly touched any mortar. Sri Dhorajiwala, moreover, has given me a gold *mohur* (sovereign) which, however, I can dispose of by giving it to Fulchandbhai. All these presents carry a deep meaning. Activities of various kinds are going on in this country, but who can say how much truth, how much sacrifice, how much sincerity and zest, underlie each of them? I for one can't, but I know this much in general. Innumerable institutions are going on in India today, but very few are really institutions throbbing with life, institutions, I mean, that are conducted in the right spirit. In his description



of heaven an English poet says that St. Peter is guarding the doors of heaven and the key to open them is made not of gold, but iron. In his elucidation of this poem another poet says that it is no easy thing to open the doors of heaven. A key of gold cannot do it, gold is soft metal, but iron is regarded as one of the hardest of metals and those doors can be opened only with an iron key.

"We here in Kathiawar speak of a very difficult effort as equal to chewing iron grams. Proper management of such institutions is thus as hard as chewing iron grams. A silver scoop cannot construct the building of this library. An iron one and no other can do it. And for this school also a silver lock will not do. Only an iron one will serve the purpose. So we have bowed to an artificial convention at the very start of both these institutions. What I did was simply to throw some mortar in the pit of the foundation stone. It is the masons who will construct the building of the library and it is the teachers who will really open the school. A library has a meaning neither because of the building in which books are stocked, nor because of the books themselves, nor even because of the readers as they may be empty scholars. Were it so, book-sellers who sell thousands of books ought always to be men of high character. The Balmandir (building) has a charming appearance, a large amount of money has been spent on it, but did that suffice? It will prosper only if the institution is endowed with a soul, i.e., if there are devoted men who can keep it going.

"Ordinarily, I don't like to perform the opening ceremony of such institutions, for I myself can do little for them after opening them. But I agreed to open this one, since I have faith in the men who conduct it. That apart, don't be under the delusion that the institution will flourish, just because it is I who open it. I am but a flying bird; today I may be here, tomorrow at Ahmedabad, and on the day after at Delhi. All the same I agree to let the sponsors make capital out of my name in order to advance the interests of the institution.

"The existence of this Mandir depends, neither upon millionaires, nor upon the children who attend it, nor upon the gift of hundreds of thousands of gold sovereigns, if somebody gives them. Those so many millions of gold sovereigns would prove to be not only no help, but a hindrance. My personal experience tells me that my activity has grown lax, when money has flowed into it in a torrent. During the South African Satyagraha struggle there was a phase when South Africa was simply flooded with money from India. The result was that the life and energy of that activity immediately vanished into thin air—just as when Udhishthira⁴ made that equivocal



pronouncement. '*Naro va Kunjaro va*', his charlot fell down at once to the earth and stuck fast into it. Since God has made the day of not more than 24 hours, a man can get all that he needs for the 24 hours from his labour of 8; and everyone ought to feel satisfied with that earning only. That is why I do not at all wish that this institution prospers financially. But it may only have just enough to enable the workers of the school to keep their body and soul together, and they may give up even their body, when the situation demands it.

"Just as financial security is an obstacle, so is absence of difficulties. That institution which has no troubles to overcome may be compared with a mushroom. Nobody sows the mushroom. It grows up by itself, automatically, without anybody's labour. I would call that institution a mushroom which gets at the very start ample funds and numerous workers. It will have an ephemeral life and is certain to be destroyed soon, as the mushroom is. What I want to drive in by saying all this is this: Those friends who have come here and taken a vow to sacrifice their lives to the institution, should have the fullest faith in God and rely upon Him only. And even when it seems that the heaving waves are about to drown them, they must summon that faith and persist doggedly in their efforts to swim. If they don't do so, take it for certain that India's curse will fall upon them. It will not then become them to use such an imposing charming building even at this early stage. Such a building may be all right for our princes, but in the stark of poverty of India its use by us is certainly inexcusable, unless we give the people a sufficient return, unless this building weighs heavy upon the conscience of the managers, till they repay the cost by adequate service. The institution's existence is justified and I have done the right thing in opening it, if Fulchandbhai and his colleagues live in this building as only hermits who want nothing for themselves, just as King Janaka⁵ has been venerated as a recluse though he lived in a palace. But if the principle of renunciation is thrown to the winds and sense-pleasures are given a cordial welcome, the institution is certain to die. That alone is a 'National School' by means of which we can win Swaraj, in which the teachers practise the rules of self-restraint, are fired with the spirit of renunciation and live a hard life.

"I am grieved at the fact that the citizens of Wadhwan are not supporting this institution. Practically every institution in India is, at present, under the same difficulty. But if we want to conduct an institution, local monetary support is an essential requisite and the managers have got to be able to gratify the local public. The position of men like us, who want to do social service and are out to win Swaraj as well, is



difficult, since we are not only servants of the people but social reformers as well. The reformer finds himself placed in an awkward situation, because when he cannot at once fit in with the local atmosphere, he grows over-eager to get whatever help he can from outside and thus bypasses those whose help is really indispensable. What, otherwise, has Dr. Pranjivan Mehta of Rangoon to do with this institution?

"The citizens knew very well Fulchand's views on untouchability when they promised their aid to the school fund and I can't understand what makes them boycott Fulchand now. I wish they approached me and told me whatever they felt. I am prepared to discuss the matter with them. They may show me Fulchand's or the managing body's faults, if any. If neither is to blame, the local people should welcome this school with a warm heart, by sending their children and helping the school with contributions. I have heard that the institution's service of the untouchables was not the only reason for this alienation. In that case we (National workers) who are only a handful, must think of our possible fate, when we don't have the knack to get along with our neighbours and keep them satisfied.

"There is only one object, one aim in conducting a 'National' school. 'National' is that which has no connection with the Government. But connotation of the word has to be expanded now. 'National' now means that which invigorates the nation. Sterling character is thus a *sine qua non* of National education. At present there is a rush for getting education; so many boys and girls go to the other school here. I Like that. But that education is so unsatisfactory that I have no words to point out its limitations. It cannot bring you Swaraj. It does not tend to the country's welfare. And it does not impart religious education at all. I inquired of the Raja Saheb, "Do you look after the physical culture of the pupils?" He expressed his helplessness since, to the neglect of everything else, the citizens of Vankaner have only one object in view—how to make their children earn as much money as they can. That is not education, but its travesty. The children who attend this National school may earn their livelihood, but money-making is not the object of the education given here, since that is not the object of education as such. Its object is to awaken the soul of the child, to draw it out, to develop its hand, head, and heart. When we simply crush the two others in order to develop only the head, we become "*Banias*" (Vaishyas; here a derogatory term meaning those whose whole business is to get rich by hook or crook). It is said that the (common) school in Vankaner is thriving in numbers, since the percentage of passes is



fully 100 there. It is not bad to judge a school by that standard, but it is really a lilliputian footrule to measure education.

"Even if the teachers of that school may be morally strong, the fact stands that children are sent there not in order that they may imbibe the good qualities of their teachers, but that they may pass their exams, owing to the teaching power of the staff. We must go above that dwarfish view and it is to draw us out of it that the Vidyapith as well as this National school have come into existence. And that is why I say to the parents, 'You must encourage this (National) school' and to its teachers, 'You must stick to your ideals, discipline your life by austerities and attract children towards you by the force of your high character.' If that is done my coming over here and opening the school will be worthwhile. O, God! Grant courage, patience and consciousness of their *dharma* to the teachers so that they may not budge an inch from their ideals."

After the ceremony was over, Gandhiji snatched a lighter moment. As he was accepting yarn garlands which the kids were presenting him, he was so moved with fatherly love that he played pranks with them. He opened the buttons of some child's shirt, untied another's little short, pulled a third one's ears, and caught and dragged the forelock of a fourth.

Went to the Durbargarh (Royal Castle) at 7 p.m. He talked with His Highness at his royal palace, the Rangamaharaj, there. He requested His Highness to use only Khadi where cloth was required for furnishing the palace. The Thakore Saheb took Gandhiji to the Queen Dowager also. Gandhiji was given yarn garlands there too.

1. *Bal*-children; *mandir*-temple. Hence temple of learning for children.

2. Siddharaj, a king of Gujarat, wanted to marry this beautiful princess, Ranakdevi, but his vassal, Ra' Khengar, the Chief of Junagarh, married her before he could do so. That enraged Siddharaj who laid siege on the impregnable mountain-fortress of Junagarh. He captured the fort after a long tiresome siege and only because Ra' Khengar's nephews turned traitors. Ranakdevi sternly refused all Siddharaj's overtures for re-marriage, was forcibly brought upto Wadhwan, but there she became a sati, burnt herself, rather than let her chastity be sullied. Some historians doubt the authenticity of this story.

3. An earliest colleague of Gandhiji, who suffered incarcerations and other hardships like many others, but what has endeared him to Gujarat is the fact that though a Maharashtrian by birth, he has rendered yeoman services to Gujarati literature by his versatile pen.



4. Udhishthira, the eldest Pandava, was honoured as '*Dharma-raj*' (the king of *dharma*), because he used to keep to his *dharma* at any cost and never tell a lie. But during the Mahabharata War, he once succumbed to temptation. Dronacharya, the Guru of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas, sided with the latter and created havoc among the Pandava forces. As he was invincible in an armed fight, he was disposed of by a ruse. He had a son named Ashwaththama, upon whom he doted. Somebody killed an elephant whose name was also Ashwaththama. Bheema, the second Pandava, loudly proclaimed "Killed outright! Ashwaththama killed!" The story spread like wild fire and reached Dronacharya's ears who was far away. Dronacharya felt that life was worthless without his son and decided to commit suicide. But to ascertain the correctness of the news, he asked Udhishthira, who was known for his veracity. This time, however, Udhishthira replied loudly "Ashwaththama is killed" and then inaudibly "Be it the man or the elephant." Immediately his chariot, which used to float in the air, fell down to the earth.

5. Father-in-law of Ramachandra and ruler of Mithila. He was completely free from any attachment to his possessions and is, therefore, called 'Videha' (one who has gone beyond the body consciousness) also. When he was once listening to the discourse of his Guru, news came to him that his town, and with it his palace, was on fire. He remained unperturbed and continued to listen to the sermon, as he regarded all earthly possessions as valueless and spiritual wisdom as invaluable.



At an Antyaja locality

Some blissful moments were spent at an *antyaja* quarter. The blind poet, Hansraj,¹ also came to Wadhwan when Gandhiji visited it. Not only did he treat Gandhiji with one of his songs at the function of the Balmandir, but he accompanied Gandhiji to this place too. The *antyaja* brothers were first asked to sing a hymn. A devotee sang:

हरिनो मारग छे शूरानो ...!

"The brave alone can tread
The straight and narrow Path"...

in his incorrect pronunciations but a very sweet and moving tone. The poet, Hansraj, was then requested to sing. He sang a song² befitting the environment:

The course we took was right
To Freedom's shores is wended;
In careless ease we lost it
And now, alas! are stranded.

We took to wine and carrion,
Smoked and talked, and then forgot
Both 'Bhoodhar' and ablution.

We promise, we will return
Now to the glorious way;
And beat both sloth and brute-force,
Cost whatever it may.

We shall surely reach the end,
Shed lustre on our land,
By our victory grand.

Gandhiji started his sermon on the theme of this song. He asked the *antyaja* women, "Do you know who 'Bhoodhar' is?" and then splitting the word into '*bhoo*' (–the earth) and '*dhar*' (–sustainer), asked, "Who is the sustainer of the earth?" He was answered by the women in chorus, "Bhagawan (–God)." Gandhiji then explained the poem: "The poet says, 'We were going along the right path, but, through our own sins, we slipped; but if we now remember the lord and again take the right road, we shall



soon reach the happy land (of freedom). That is the hope we cherish.' And then the poet adds that you too were going along the right path, but indulged in intoxicants, took to drinking, besmeared yourselves with dirt and yet did not take a daily bath, ate carrion, and forgot to pray to God. That is why, when I approach the Shastris (–Hindu Pharisees) they retort, 'Now, Please! Will you have enough of your Bhangis? Who would care to touch that scum?' If you give up all these bad habits and keep yourselves clean, nobody will have any reason to point a finger of scorn at you."

1. His patriotic songs used to fire the young in those hectic days of non-co-operation. He too suffered incarceration. When the magistrate asked him if he had anything to say in defence, he sang a moving song.

2. अमे जातां' तां जलधिने घाटे

मुक्ति केरी वाटे हो भूधरा भूलां पड्यां |

दारु पीधो, मुएल मांस खाधु, बीडी पीधी,

स्नान न क्युं, भगवाननुं नाम न लिधुं ||

नभतलनां पशुबलनां मूल काढीए

तमस दरिये नहि फरिए कोल पालीए

ईश्वरप्रिय मातृभूमिने उजालीए

पार पडशुं सपाटे |



The Public Meeting

There was yet the usual public meeting to attend. It seemed the people in general had boycotted it. At the start there were only a handful of men, but a few more came in later on. Gandhiji said:

“My programme for Vankaner ends with this meeting. But I did not come here for delivering speeches, my only business here was to perform the ceremonies of opening the Balmandir and laying the foundation stone of the library. The National Balmandir ought really to be the pride of the town, but I know that some people are at variance with the Balmandir, and its Wadhwan Education Society. Some points of the quarrel had been reported to me also and I had even written something in *Navajivan*. It was the citizens who had sent me their complaints. I do not remember who they were, but let me declare here at the meeting that if the complainants are present and if they wish to have a talk with me, they can meet me privately.

"But I have one request to make to you all. Don't think of this 'Education Society' as one of the common rut. Don't shy at its new experiments in education and in our social build-up. The chief of them is that of the admission of *antyajas* in the school, though they already possess that right with regard to the State-school. That is why the poet (Hansraj) wonders, 'Why is it that Bharatvarsha, the very land of the *lila* (play) of the lord, is a subject country?' And yet the fact remains that the country is in a pitiable plight today. We ought to implement in life what we hold to be our ideal for it. Independently of what others may say, we have to decide for ourselves whether untouchability is worth retaining in Hinduism. Is it or is it not a part of the Hindu Dharma? So Long as the filth of untouchability sticks to the Hindu Dharma, there is neither Swaraj nor any peace and happiness for India. If, on the ground that a few get rich and have lordly palaces to live in, we take it for granted that all of us are happy, it is a dangerous delusion. A tenth of India hardly gets even a dry bread and some dirty salt to mix it with. We have no idea of the grovelling poverty of our land. But we reap what we sow. Our present wretched condition is the natural consequence of our sins, both subtle and gross. That is why we have to suffer so much and that is the cause of our country's wretchedness. Just think in what straits that religion may fall where a section of its followers are regarded as unfit for even a physical touch by the rest of their fellow believers! If there is any religion which asks its followers to keep away from fellow humans, it cannot claim to be a religion of mercy. There can be no sin more heinous than the one which stigmatises human beings as forever untouchables since



their birth. God does not command us to feed ants by putting flour near their holes, nor to make a *pinjrapole* (a shed for decrepit cattle), but we do those things since they are acts of virtue. But if at the same time we hate and condemn a whole race of human beings, those acts of virtue lose all their value. If I recite the *Gayatri mantra* perfunctorily, do you think I can realize the Self? An act bears a good fruit only when it is done with sincerity and an awareness of its purpose and meaning. You can gain nothing from a mechanical thoughtless act. You must, therefore, never shun *antyajas*. I am coming just now from an *antyaja* locality. It gave me great pleasure to sit in their midst; since I had the consciousness that I was doing only my duty thereby. But for coming over here God will certainly question me, 'Had you something new to say to the citizens of Wadhwan?' But I wonder what new thing I may tell you, what miracle I may work that may fascinate you and make you keep your real *dharma*? All I can do is to warn you that what you regard as your *dharma* is nothing but sin, give it up. Yes, but one thing. There is no sense in asking you to follow my advice, even if your mind does not agree with me, for then that blind obedience will do you no good. You may, therefore, ponder deeply over what I have said and serve *antyajas*, if you think my plea sensible. I don't say that you must go to the untouchable quarter right now and touch them. I simply say you should not regard *antyajas* as untouchables.

I am not happy over the fact that this school gets help from outside. In fact, I dislike the very idea of extraneous assistance. At various spots in India there are men who have resolved upon taking up some good activity and sticking firmly to it. That is why institutions like this one are going on. The man who takes any such vow must keep it at any cost.

I cannot help talking of Khadi here. A large majority of the twentysix hundred thousand here are peasants and they are not happy. They do not have the rains whenever and as much as they want.¹ The land is not fertile enough to provide occupation for all the 12 months of the year and yield sufficiently for their maintenance. A few imposing buildings may have sprung up, but don't be led away by them. That is not *abadi* (prosperity) but *barbadi* (adversity). The expressions that I gave vent to in 1916 at the opening ceremony of the Banaras Hindu University were terrific² in their content. When I see palaces jutting forth in proud disdain of the surrounding hamlets, my heart trembles in agony and foreboding, as they are constructed only by pounding the poor to make mortar for the palaces. What prevails in India today is justice in Bedlam. Every year 60 crores of rupees are drained away to foreign lands.



We, the middle classes, are agents or middlemen in that exploitation by foreigners. We snatch away those 60 crores from the hands of the poor and send them out for a commission of 5%. These palaces, we see, are built from that commission amount, but India's villages are going to rack and ruin. Even British Ministers have admitted that India is sinking into ever deeper poverty. We, who are living in towns and cities, have no idea of the frightful abyss which this continuous drain is leading us to. How long can such a dreadful system go on? Who can at that time quench the wildfire that will set the whole prairie ablaze³? When I visualize that eventuality, I feel that *Swadeshi* means nothing else but Khadi and the spinning wheel. Our villages will begin to live a rejuvenated life, if we devote ourselves to those two activities. But at present, I hear only expressions of disappointment from even very good workers.

"I do not wish to take your time on the question of Hindu Muslim unity.

"It is undeniable that no institution can work for long without local sympathy. The school will fall into trouble if the citizens of Wadhwan do not co-operate. India is at present in the throes of a similar stress. All the same I am certain that no institution stops for the sole reason of want of funds. Let me give you my own example. On coming to India, I founded my Ashram at Ahmedabad only after previously visiting the city, meeting leading citizens and giving them my views, and securing their definite promise to support the Ashram for one year. The subject of untouchability was also discussed. I told them that I would never make any distinction against a non-Hindu and, as for the *antyajas*, I was certain to accept them as inmates. But they replied 'You won't get any *antyaja* fit for stay in your Ashram.' So I settled in Ahmedabad. I was given some necessary things like vessels etc., but not money. But my faith did not waver and I carried on. A month passed and Dudabhai (an untouchable) came up with a note from Sri Thakkar.⁴ As soon as I admitted Dudabhai's family as inmates, citizens of Ahmedabad decided to have nothing to do with me. My neighbours also who used the same well from which I was drawing water, boycotted me. But I told them, 'Do what you may, I will bear it, but I am not going to leave Ahmedabad. If God wants me to be here, I shall be here, and if nothing else can be done, I shall resort to an *antyaja* quarter and stay there. I am a man who knows both how to maintain my self-respect and how to keep within the limits of courteous behaviour. You may fret and fume, but I am not going to take offence.' The hearts of those who shared our common well melted after five days and allowed Dudabhai to draw water from it.



"But money? Almost on the day when the last coin was spent away, God came in person and filled the chest. One day a motor car drew up. A gentleman, whom I never knew before, got out and said, 'I want to give away Rs. 13,000/- will you accept them?' The next day he came again, handed over Rs. 13,000/- to me, and raced back in his car. That Satyagrahashram is quite alive even now. What I wanted to do was to adhere to my *satyagraha* principle and to stay in Ahmedabad as well. And now those same citizens of Ahmedabad have lifted their boycott, all of them come to me and I have their sympathy. The event took this happy turn because I had tied all of them with the cord of love and firmly believed that my love was certain to get a response from Ahmedabad itself. The result proved the truth of my conviction and I entrenched myself in Ahmedabad.

"Like myself Fulchand is a man who can keep himself rooted in one and the same spot. He should not budge an inch from this place, even if he has to starve himself to death for his doggedness. But if he does anything in anger or resentment, if his insistence on a demand is unjustified, if he has a sharp tongue, then that is a sin. But if his behaviour is filled with love, he will melt you. God knows how he treats you. The result will fit in with his behaviour."

Bapu requested Hansraj to give him a copy of his hymn:

O, Come, my lord; Come soon, I pray,
Disorder in Thy home hath sway;
Robbers have come and rule us now
Say, who can humble their pride but Thou?

Your palace's robbed, your subjects too;
In dire distress they helpless stand;
O, where have you strayed and left us all,
When you, my King, must rule the land?

This Dvaarika⁵, this body, I mean,
Seems now—just now—about to sink;
The heaving, fitful, waves of the mind
Will sink it soon—in but a wink.

Your men have drunk delusion's wine,
Have lost their sense, are fighting sore,
Do please, my lord! come now betimes,



Your kinsmen, or, will be no more.

Thy Throne—this heart—is vacant now,
Shedding in silence tears for Thee;
O lord of the worlds! O light of the worlds!
Drive out this darkest gloom in me.

If rambles you loved, what made you build
This house, to lead a worldly life?
Gyana⁶, over there, has grown so wild,
His mother's weeping! Thy Pragnaa⁷! Thy wife!

Come Ye! Whose⁸ flute so charms the world,
Whose crown a peacock's feather wears;
You mustn't become so heartless, now,
A grief too heavy Your beloved bears.

Two persons who were present at the meeting requested Gandhiji to let them explain privately all the facts about the non-co-operation with the Balmandir. Gandhiji assured them that they would be given the fullest and most satisfactory hearing and dispersed the meeting. And Gandhiji had that talk with those two gentlemen which lasted till 11 or 11.30 p.m. It is hoped that this parley will help the Balmandir.

[The above is all reproduced from Mahadevbhai's manuscript diary. What he published in *Navajivan* about Gandhiji's visits to Porebundar, Vankaner and Wadhwan is now given.]

When he was still at Rajkot, Gandhiji received an invitation from the Rana Saheb of Porebundar to visit his town. We took the train for Porebundar on the 18th evening, spent the 19th there, the 20th at Vankaner and the 21st at Wadhwan. At all these towns he was given a warm welcome by the States and was in one way or another a State-guest. I use the expression 'one way or another.' since circumstances differed at every State. It was the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot who was the first (among Princes) to invite Gandhiji and so he presented himself on the platform on both the occasions of Gandhiji's arrival and departure. At every function at Rajkot, it was plain to see that the Thakore Saheb was feeling an excusable pride and elation at being in Gandhiji's company. At Porebundar the Rana Saheb sent the Dewan Saheb as his representative to give Gandhiji an official reception. Gandhiji was lodged besides at the State Guest House and invited to dinner at the royal palace. But the Raja Saheb of Vankaner excelled in his warmth. He even came up half-way between Rajkot and Vankaner to



receive Gandhiji there and himself escorted him to Vankaner! Gandhiji's visit to Wadhwan synchronised with the celebration of the marriage of the Thakore Saheb's brother. Even though the Thakore Saheb was thus busily engaged, he invited Gandhiji to meet him at the royal palace.

Gandhiji had long talks with all of them. At all the places Gandhiji had only 3 topics to discuss: Khadi, untouchability, and prohibition. He had to enter into a Long and earnest pleading with the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot as regards prohibition, since the Thakore Saheb holds rather strange views on it. They can be summed up in 2 words: 'individual freedom.' But the Thakore Saheb forgets that if a referendum were taken in the State, 99% would vote for prohibition. He has a soldier's love of loyalty and discipline and with them, it seems, a trace of aloofness and harshness. He feels that one must do what one decides to do and then care little for the world's reaction. His subjects will, therefore, have to be cautious in their dealings with him. The gentle features of the Rana Saheb of Porebundar suggest just the opposite qualities. Perhaps there is a strain of timidity lurking in that softness and gentility. He presented to Gandhiji hand-spun blankets made in Chhaya, a village in his State, and thus attested to his love for Khadi. It seems he is using Khadi by and large also, but one cannot say whether he will introduce Khadi in all the departments of the State. The Raja Saheb of Vankaner has a charming amiability. Among all the rulers, he alone seemed to really belong to Kathiawar as one of the indigenous sons of the soil. The Kathiawari peasant's simplicity and sweetness came out in his way of speaking. Nobody will fail to mark him out as a man of the people more than all other princes. The easy unaffected manner in which he accompanied Gandhiji to an *antyaja* quarter and the freedom with which the *antyajas* talked with him showed this trait in him clearly. If such a king only takes it into his head, he can bring in a new era in no time. We did not either see the Thakore Saheb of Wadhwan often enough or, as he is temperamentally taciturn, have a long talk. But there was one thing remarkable in the manner of his reception. He and his brothers threw yarn garlands round Gandhiji's neck when they bade him goodbye.

1. Allusion to the popular concept that the rains fall according as they are needed in a region inhabited by virtuous people.

2. It is hardly any exaggeration to say that that speech—his very first political utterance in public after his return from South Africa—startled India out of her several hundred years' sleep. A vivid account



has been given in the Preface to Vol. II of this series on pp. 7-8 by Sri Narharibhai, but parts of it are reproduced here:

"As H. E. the Viceroy attended the function, many Indian Princes and Mrs. Besant and other National leaders were also present. The lordly palaces of the princes and millionaires, he (Gandhiji) said, shamed the meanness of the miserable sheds of the millions around them; he added that that grave economic inequality was a menace to the country; that the imposing body-guards and stringent police precautions for the protection of His Excellency betrayed a distrust of the people; that owing to the C. I. D's watch Indians Lived Like prisoners in their own land. He showed how British tyranny and injustice were responsible for the growth of the Terrorists. He himself was a terrorist, but of a different kind, he added, and with faith in God, Indians must never feel afraid of the bureaucracy. And then raising his voice, he professed that if ever he found it necessary that the Englishman must be driven out, he would proclaim the fact and face death as a penalty. It was but natural that such a speech would shock some leaders. Mrs. Besant even asked Gandhiji to stop. But the young blood, the students, hailed his forthright statements and cried out 'Go on, Go on.' The Princes began to get up from their seats and left the meeting and there was great clamour. Gandhiji's speech remained unfinished at this point."

3. Gandhiji quotes a Gujarati proverb which means "'How can you patch the sky when it is torn into shreds?'"

4. Sri A. V. Thakkar, member of the Servants of India Society of Mr. Gokhale and known as 'Thakkar Bapa' (Father) for his sympathy and work among aborigines and untouchables.

5. The legend has it that the real Dwaarkaa of Sri Krishna's time lies at the bottom of the sea a few miles from the present town. Soon after the Mahabharata war Lord Krishna's, kinsmen yadavas, exterminated themselves in a drunken orgy.

6. *Gyana*—Spiritual wisdom or empty knowledge. Since Lord Krishna is away, real spiritual wisdom has deteriorated into Pharisaism.

7. *Pragnaa*—Enlightenment from which true knowledge springs.

8. Lord Krishna is represented as playing upon a flute and wearing a peacock's feather on the head. The music of the flute arrests the world's attention to listen to his Divine Call and his charming appearance with a peacock's captivating feather (India has made the peacock her National bird), whets the desire to go back to him This is the song of a Gopi, i.e. of an individual soul wedded to the Oversoul.



25-2-1925

Marriage of Vallabhbhai's Son.

Blessing the newly-weds Gandhiji said:

"The right time for giving blessings is this prayer time. There were two earlier occasions, when marriages of persons brought up in the Ashram itself were performed. Many among us, Ashramites, have not been able to appreciate that step. All those who live in the Ashram, whether they be children or married persons, would wish to observe *brahmacharya*. And it is but natural that one may wonder why marriages are allowed for the inmates of that Ashram whose object is to lead everyone to a life of *brahmacharya*. All the same three such marriages had to be performed, because, though the rules for the Ashramites were stringent enough, we found that we were unable to keep them. It is no easy thing to train a youngster to the life of *brahmacharya*. It is not true that even we, the elders, are observing *brahmacharya* perfectly. If a man wants to hitch his wagon to a star, he must have a burning passion for his aim. The realization of that high ideal is so difficult, that the more I advance towards the goal, the more dreadful the path looks. And yet I see that the goal has an alluring charm also and provides me a deeply interesting pursuit. But you cannot admit children and youngsters in the Ashram and then oppress them. A marriage may, therefore, become inevitable. Three such occasions have happened so far. We had to find out a way to satisfy the questionings of the mind. The marriage ceremony, we decided, might be held outside the precincts of the Ashram, but rather than cheat ourselves and the world it had to be performed, and then the pair might come to stay in the Ashram and receive the blessings of all the inmates.

"If a marriage thus becomes necessary, the fact may be impressed upon the couple and all Ashramites that marriage is not for indulgence but self-restraint. Never should an Ashramite cherish a desire to get or see someone married. But it is a different matter if such a necessity arises by itself. This ordinary marriage is a preparatory stage for that real marriage in which an individual soul is united with the Oversoul. That is why the soul is conceived as a woman in the English language and Jayadev¹ visualises the soul as a woman and declares that she pays amorous court to the Lord' (Krishna). Once this divine marriage is solemnised, nothing remains for the man to aim at or do in this world. If that union is yet to take place and an occasion for (earthly) marriage arises, let it be performed. Hence, on this fourth occasion I must tell you, in the presence of all these people, that your marriage is not for *bhoga* (sense



enjoyment) but for *tyaga* (renunciation, for, renunciation of the ego alone can bring about the divine marriage). You are deciding today that if you want to enjoy conjugal pleasure, you have to observe limits even there. The *dharma* of *avyabhichara*² (even mental non-prostitution) is regarded among us as one which only women need strictly observe, though at the *vivaha sanskara*,³ during the last four morsels which each of the pair puts into the mouth of the other, there is the joining of flesh with flesh, soul with soul, bones with bones. It is our misfortune that we do not demand the same high standard from men as from women. That is why I must ask you to keep within limits and know that sexual intercourse is really meant only for bringing forth a progeny.

"But in these times of dire distress, has anybody the right to give birth to even a single child? There are countless men in India and quite a large number in Europe also who observe *brahmacharya*. Among the Roman Catholics, you will find many adults both men and women who observe *brahmacharya*. A girl of even 18 leaves the world aside and observes untainted *brahmacharya* all her life. There are monasteries also where such recluses spend their lives. In India, in these dreadful times, none is entitled to add to her population. As long as we have not grown into men of strength and valour (i.e. have not gained our freedom), we don't have that right.

"I wanted the marriage ceremony to be performed in the Ashram, since the preceptor would explain to you here every item in the ceremony and you might thereby see that the institution of marriage was introduced in society for self-restraint and not for self-indulgence. You both may, therefore, ponder over this matter and remember the rationale of marriage. I have agreed to accept only one responsibility. I am sure I shall have no cause to repent for it and only good will come out of this marriage. You know my relationship with Vallabhbai. On his own he pressed me to officiate on this occasion. Kashibhai (father of the bride) also agreed. Is heavy expenditure a necessary part of the ceremony? No, but *tapasya* is. But at any other place (than the Ashram), it was not feasible to do away with marriage expenses. It was impossible anywhere else to perform only the religious rites and drop taking a big marriage party to the bride's town and other customary expenses. That was why the ceremony was performed here. The seed that is sown today will grow into a tree. But in order to nourish it, your conduct in life must be such as your parents may be proud of. You must, therefore, rise above worldly temptations. There was no idea of saving money, none of refusing to distribute money among relatives and others, and absolutely no element of greed behind this simplicity of the ceremony. But the burden



of such (marriage) expenses falls too heavily upon the Patidar world in general and we wanted to keep away from them to set an example.

Dahyabhai I know for a long time past. I know Yashoda also. I think that both of them possess the power of adorning married life by leading a life of self-restraint. As for the Ashramites, I may not repeat what I may say to them more often than absolutely necessary. I don't go out of my way to seek such occasions. It is not my business. All the same if they do arise by themselves, our acceptance of the situation and the necessary action upon it will only increase our power of self-restraint. It is possible that this idea may be chimerical. And yet I don't think I must refuse to yield and to perform a marriage on such an occasion if it comes. And yet I would wish that all the inmates here imbibed greater self-restraint from incidents of this kind. That is the only reason for inviting the presence of all the Ashramites at such ceremonies. We may pray to God to grant us our cherished desire that the Ashram may produce only such men and women as are entirely indifferent to such matters, may never think of marriage and hence of progeny, regard the children of the world as their own, and serve those among them who are unhappy.

It is good if the idea that marriage seriously increases one's responsibility has struck both Dahyabhai and Yashoda, individually, before deciding to marry. At present at least it seems they have lost their personal freedom. There may be a charm and beauty even in that. May they be happy, and self-controlled. May they develop the spirit of self-sacrifice and lead a life that will raise their parents and us all in the eyes of the world, so that nobody may have any ground to say that such a marriage should not have been performed within the Ashram precincts."

1. Jayadev was a devout mediaeval Vaishnava poet who has made his name immortal through his Sanskrit poem "Geeta Govinda", by the charm of the sweet butter-soft lilt of his verses. He is a poet of *Madhura rasa*. Perhaps the expression, 'sweet ambrosial drink of spiritual conjugal love' may convey its sense. Sir Edwin Arnold has translated 'Geeta Govinda' in English verse under the title "The Song of Songs".

2. It is necessary to note here that Gandhiji would call it 'prostitution' to indulge in sexual contact even with one's wife, every time one has an urge. That apart, tradition, based on over-emphasis on Sati-dharma in books and legends, has unconsciously led the male sex to imagine that strictest conjugal loyalty is the woman's province. At the same time be it noted that Ramachandra has been held up for reverence for his strictest loyalty to Sita. A *Yagna* cannot be performed except by man and wife. Ramachandra had banished Sita and wanted to perform a *rajasuya* (a king's) *yagna*. So he



installed a gold image of Sita to represent her, instead of marrying some woman, though polygamy was advised for kings to let their line continue and avoid disorder.

3. Marriage ceremony. An Arya was expected to receive 16 *sanskaras* (impressions). These impressions were imprinted upon him through special rites. Marriage ceremony is one such important rite. There is a Sanskrit verse saying that a man is born a *shudra*, but after *sanskaras* he is called a *dwija* (Brahmin).



26.2.1925

Blessing Dr. Pranjivan Mehta's son after his marriage, Gandhiji said:

"Let us all pray to God that the vow taken today may be kept up in life. May both of you live a long and healthy life and may your happiness increase through the marriage. May you be religious and walk in the fear of the lord. If the vow that Champa took as she walked 'the seven steps'¹ with her husband were kept faithfully in letter and spirit, neither she nor her husband would be unhappy at any time. Both of them have vowed to each other, 'My flesh, my bones, my skin and my life have been joined with yours.' It is a very pure and sacred sentiment. Let the couple remember it and be woven into each other's life like the warp and the weft.

May they not be self-willed and uncontrolled, but self-restrained and make use of their marriage not for increasing indulgence in sex but for ultimately giving it up. The mind revels in dirty thoughts, as a swine likes to grovel in dirt. May your minds remain free from that evil. The wife must believe that her heart is wholly dedicated to that one man and the husband must have the same feelings for his wife. May both of you learn the *dharma* of service. You fasted before marrying. Our Shastras require purity from married life. They don't give a licence for *bhoga* (sensual pleasures). They, therefore, enjoined a fast before marriage and they asked you to worship Ganapati² first of all. You should enter married life with holy thoughts and desires. You should remember them in the morning and spend the whole day accordingly in thought and action."

1. Hindu marriage is legally Finally completed only after the pair takes 'seven steps' round the holy fire. At each step a resolve has to be stated aloud.

2. Son of Mahadev and Parvati. He was blessed by Mahadev that on every auspicious occasion, He would be invoked and prayed to first of all that He would be the giver of spiritual as well as material happiness. The word Ganapati means also 'the lord of all species of creatures.



27.2.1925

@ Letter to Sri S. V. Bapat:

"I have your Letter. 'Much wants more and loses all'. Pray excuse me."

28.2 1925

@ To Dr. Mochraver (Germany):

"I thank you for your Letter. My belief in Satyagraha and non-violence is as green as ever. I am myself still practising non-co-operation and so are thousands of men and women of India. The agreement with those who differ from me is to suspend non-co-operation as a National programme. This suspension leaves those who wish free to enter the legislative councils of this country."

2.3.1925

@ To a gentleman of Patna:

"I kept your letter by me all this time. I can see nothing to except in M. Mohammed Ali's statement. May not a man seven feet tall say of another five feet in height that the former is superior to the latter in height, although the latter is superior to the former in every other respect? May not the Maulana truthfully say that he is superior to the so-called greatest man in the world in so far at least as the Maulana believes a religion which in his opinion is the best of all? I think that the Maulana has legitimately drawn the contrast."

@ To Fazli Hussein:

"Dear Mian Saheb,

"You were kind enough to ask Mohammed Ali to let me see your note on Hindu-Muslim question. He, therefore, sent it to me. I have read and reread it. I am entirely in favour of the Mussalmans of the Punjab and Bengal having representation in accordance with their numbers. But I have been unable to follow the argument in favour of separate electorates. Its working seems to be proving unsatisfactory almost everywhere. And if you have separate electorates for one community, you can hardly resist such a claim on behalf of the others and finally by sub-sects. This must mean ruin of nationalism.



"Have you given a thought to the proposal made by me?"

"I hope you are better and stronger than when I met you. I wish it was possible for us to meet again and oftener.

"I am in Delhi just now. I leave tomorrow for Sabarmati and thence for Madras."

@, To Sarojini Naidu:

"What is this decision to close the National schools even I can understand somewhat the closing of the college. Is it necessary to close the schools also?"

To Fulchand Kasturchand:

"I cannot understand the principle that we should never dine at a drunkard's house. I for one, visit homes where they do not wear Khadi. Prohibition will not step up immediately by the way you propose. I rather think the cause receives an impetus, if we refuse to touch drinks when they are served to us alongwith others. If we give up our contacts this way, we may better keep ourselves aloof from society altogether."

To Narottam Lalji Joshi:

"I have kept your letter with me all these days. If I get some time for it, I shall put it to public use through *Navajivan*, without giving out your name. If I do so, please read my comments carefully. I shall see if I can attend to your letter within a short period. You are very greedy, you want to know everything here and now and leave nothing for the future. You don't give time to faith to work its way. One should take Ramnam not to advance in his profession but to purify himself. It is possible to chant the name even while we are at work. Only those who have the faith can enjoy its fruit. If you have no faith in your teacher, you can't learn anything from him. They may let you stay in the Ashram even for a short time, if there is a vacant room for you. You may, if you Like, write to the Manager of the Ashram. But in our villages you can have plenty of work to do provided your mind feels at home and you are willing and able to do physical labour."



@ To Maulana Zafar Ali Khan:

"I have your letter. I think you are unnecessarily perturbed. If you will re-read my note,¹ you will find it to be harmless. I am dealing with your Letter in the columns of *Young India* as the subject matter is of general interest. But assume that I have erred, must we not tolerate one another's opinions, especially when they are honestly held?"

1. A heretic was stoned to death in Afghanistan. Gandhiji wrote a note of disapproval in *Young India* d. 26.2.1925. This Letter is in reply to M. Zafar Ali Khan's protest against the note. Gandhiji deals with the Maulana's Letter in another issue of *Young India* d. 26.4.1925 as promised here. Both the note and the article bear the heading "Stoning To Death."



4.3.1925

Reached Delhi on 27th evening. Next day Bapu asked me to give him a report of my talk with M. Shaukat Ali. The Maulana's affirmation, "The law of an eye for an eye and a head for a head is quite all right; only, Khuda prefers the man who forgives," amazed Gandhiji and his next declaration, "If there is a mention of stoning to death in the Quran, the act must be accepted as right and proper" gave Gandhiji a serious shock.

Ramdass (Gandhiji's third son) was this time asked to join us in the trip. Gandhiji told him, "Yes, you may simply go on attending to my personal needs. That will give you everything you want." Then to me he said, "Haven't I told you that I have gained everything from *pitribhakti* (devotion to father) *pitriseva* (service to father)? In the days of our childhood itinerant rustics used to carry a box like a portable cinema with slides inside it. They would show the pictures to children through magnifying lenses fixed in holes on a side of the box. I saw a picture of Shrivastava¹ carrying his father and mother seated in two pans balanced on his shoulder. That picture left a permanent impression on my mind. Then I read his whole story. It struck me, "May I not serve my parents with the same devotion? And I have actually done it. Mother insisted that I and none else was to press her legs, and Father would never accept any service whatever from anybody else. I would go on pressing his legs at night, till he would cosily fall asleep. That happened till the last day of his life. And it was I alone who was called upon to prepare *kasumbo* (a cooling beverage) for him. After having it he would take *badampak* (a nourishing sweet made from almonds)."

Left Delhi on the 3rd morning. Kohat was the only subject discussed at Hakimji's residence right upto 10.30 p. m. on the preceding night. Dr. Ansari and Hakimji (Ajmal Khan) held the view that the separate inquiry reports² were best left unpublished. But Motilalji Nehru strongly opposed. "That's impossible. The public was certain to expect the publication of the Inquiry Committee's findings and it is incumbent upon us to satisfy it." It was at last decided to publish the reports, but with some changes. Shaukat Ali accompanied us in the train up to Sawai Madhopur on the 3rd morning to make them. Bapu first revised Shaukat Ali's report. He kept his every view intact, but cancelled only unnecessary repetitions. Shaukat Ali accepted the deletions. His last paragraph was a little clumsy and Bapu re-wrote it for him. Bapu then began to amend his own report. Shaukat Ali vehemently insisted that Bapu must drop the comparison with (Gen.) Dyer, the paragraph showing Bapu's reasons for his blaming Muslims and



the sentence that it was, by and large, not the Muslim community that had suffered but the Hindus. Bapu slashed all that. I protested, though not strongly, against all those incisions and said that that mind itself was vitiated which could not bear the statement of even bare facts. "But what else can be done?" Bapu rejoined; "that is the only way to change his attitude. Moreover, he too has conceded much."

1. Shravana represents the ideal of a devoted son. Both his parents were infirm, aged and blind. He wanted that his parents should be helped spirituAlly by taking them to places of pilgrimage. Too poor to hire a vehicle, he himself carried them in the way stated.

2. Vide Day to Day with Gandhi, Vol. V, App. IV 2 and 3



5-3-1925, Bombay.

6-3-1925, On the way to Madras.

@ Letter to Babu Janakdhari Prasad:

"Your Letter has been travelling with me all this time. I am now writing this on the train that is taking me to Madras. I had no intention of being inattentive to anybody at Belgaum. But what was I to do? I had not a moment for personal chats. I, therefore, hardened my heart.

"You are morose. There is no occasion for it. Let us do the day's work to the best of our ability and smile. All work faithfully done has the same value in the book of life. Why then should we worry? You have not asked any definite questions. But if you have any, pray don't hesitate to ask them. Be assured that you are the same to me that you were before. I treasure the memory of the faithful workers of Champaran.¹ I shall never have and never had a more faithful band to work with. If I had such band throughout India, Swaraj will not be long in coming."

You cannot go to Vykom except via Madras and Cochin. Gandhiji had, therefore, to satisfy Madras and Cochin before reaching Vykom,² just as a worshipper has to gratify beggar-gods and many others before he can get into a temple and have the lord's *darshan*. I don't propose to cover the public meeting at Madras. But the *darshan* of a gentleman at Sri Shrinivasa Iyengar's house deserves notice. He is one, Dr. Shrinivasachari, now about sixty. One of his sons is a leading lawyer and the other an engineer. This Dr. Shrinivasachari is a regular spinner for the last many years and wears Khadi from top to toe. He presented to Gandhiji thousands of yards of yarn spun by himself along with some amount of money and then quietly walked out without exchanging a word with him! Sri Rajagopalachari (now C. R., founder of the Swatantra Party) had earlier introduced him with the remark: "He is the one jewel in Madras. His faith has never wavered and he has done absolutely nothing to come into the limelight. He is a true non-co-operator."

Madrasis themselves told us that it was an act of no small courage on the part of the Madras Corporation to have given a welcome address to Gandhiji. In a short and sweet reply Gandhiji spoke before the Corporators on the potency of the *mantra* of Khadi and the joy of doing a scavenger's work.

Reached Cochin the next day. At an intervening station, Podnoor, people collected a fund for Vykom Satyagraha and gave Gandhiji Rs. 200/- in a trice.



At the Shornur station, we had the *darshan* of Gujarati brothers and enjoyed their hospitality from there onwards. A visit to Cochin was not at all called for, since the question of untouchability is not so acute there as in the Travancore State, but Gandhiji complied with the pressing request of these Gujarati brothers and visited Cochin also. Now that a big Corporation (like Madras) has made the way clear, there is no wonder if the smaller town municipalities may be eager to follow and present addresses to Gandhiji. More than a dozen municipalities, of Cochin and Travancore combined, took advantage of the opening and had the pleasure of giving an address to Gandhiji during only the last week.

Cochin is a cosmopolitan city—with all the merits and demerits of a variegated population. You will meet there not only Indian Nationals from all parts, but foreigners from nearly all countries. A spirit of enterprise combined with the 'get-rich' imputation has converged them all at Cochin.

Addressing the public meeting held there on 9-3-1925 Gandhiji said:

@ "It gives much pleasure to be able to meet you. When I decided to go to Vykom, I little thought that it would be possible and necessary to stop here before going there. I know that yours is a historic city. It is full of all kinds of recollections not all of them of a pleasant type.

"Living on the seaside you are aware of what adventure can do. The sea is an epitome of adventures. At the present moment, however, I am concerned not with the adventures that the sea offers. What we need is the spirit of adventure in our National life, and if we find that we have made but little progress towards our goal, it is because the spirit of adventure is absent from us. It requires, for instance, adventurous spirit to find out in the Hindu religion its black spots. Those who are not fired with that spirit are satisfied with things as they are. They do not stop to inquire whether they are good or bad. But ever since I have been to India after my sojourn in South Africa for 25 years, I have been telling Hindus in India that we are suffering from a bad spot—it is untouchability—and here I am going to add also unapproachability. But I have not come in order to argue with the orthodox people. I have come with a message of peace. I want to plead with them and tell them that these cannot be a part of Hinduism. I have come to tell them that the Satyagrahis who are fighting against hard and dry at Vykom are not to destroy Hinduism but to purify it. I have come to tell them of all the implications of the struggle and I have come to tell them also that it is wrong to be satisfied with things as they are, if we find that they are bad.



"It gives me pleasure that I shall be carrying there your prayers and sympathy, from the address presented to me on behalf of your municipality. I am assured of your support and sympathy, but I want you also to carry the same spirit a little further and I want you to find with me that one of the most potent causes of the ever deepening poverty of Indians is that they have nothing to do for a large part of the year. I would like you to discover with me that if we gave them the spinning wheel which had a prominent place in the economic life of India a few years ago, they will have occupation enough.

"But introduction of the spinning wheel in millions of homes will be useless if we do not discard foreign cloth. Going about, therefore, from place to place, I am pleading with men and women to see that it is right to discard foreign cloth and mill-made cloth and to adopt hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar. For you in Malabar plenty of clothing is a burden. I have no doubt that I am an object of envy with most of you. In this melting weather of yours the less you have for clothing, the better for you. I wish you will not run away with the idea that dignity and civilization require a multiplicity of clothing. Handsome is not who is handsomely clothed, but handsome is he who handsome does. The truest test of civilised culture is character and not clothing. And I feel overwhelmed with sorrow when I find people in India telling me that they have outgrown Khaddar and it is impossible to get back to the times when their ancestors did with Khaddar.

"I would like you to answer them in the best way, namely by wearing Khaddar. The best way to drive out pauperdom is to adopt Khaddar. To those of you who will go in for fineries and fineness, I say it is possible to get as fine cloth from hand-spun yarn as you wish to. I hope that you will tax yourself and your mind to see that every home in Cochin has a spinning wheel and that everyone wears nothing but Khaddar.

"I need say nothing regarding the Hindu-Muslim question. I know that you miss the presence of one of the Ali Brothers. It has been usual for one of them to be touring with me. But it was not possible for them to do so. But I congratulate them on being free from this taxing problem.

"It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me that all communities belonging to different religions are living in a spirit of good-will and friendliness in this State and I wish all in India everywhere will copy your example.



"May God give you the strength and wisdom to introduce the spinning wheel and Khaddar in your home and rid Hinduism of the curse of untouchability. May all your inhabitants in this fair land remain forever united as they are today.

"I thank you for the courtesy and patience with which you have listened to my remarks."

Gujarati friends gave Gandhiji a purse of Rs. 1500/- in a meeting at the school compound. Thanking them Gandhiji pointed out that it is the entrepreneur's *dharma* to repay his debt to the place where he gets rich, and that that enterprise which is not morally elevating is either useless or harmful. He appealed to them to help the Vykom Satyagraha also as best as they could.

1. It was the arena of Gandhiji's first Satyagraha after his return to India. He got annulled the compulsory rule that required every tenant in Champaran, Bihar, to cultivate indigo on 3/20th part of his farm, since the White settlers carried on a thriving business from the sale of indigo. He was forbidden by the lieutenant-Governor to pursue his inquiry, but he refused to obey the order and presented himself in the Court for punishment. The Government then appointed an Inquiry Commission—with the result stated above.

2. Even the public road that passed by the side of the famous temple at Vykom and was used by non-Hindus was forbidden to untouchables. A number of reformers were, therefore, offering *Satyagraha* by a sitting strike at the barrier beyond which they, in company with untouchables, were not allowed to go.



10.3.1925

Vykom

Left Cochin for Vykom. A half of the journey towards Cochin and beyond within the Travancore State has to be made in a boat. If I linger for a while to fix my gaze on one of the loveliest spots on earth, an impatient reader may think I am unnecessarily spinning out the report of Bapu's journey. But he too had better keep patience. By a matchless intermingling of land and water here, Nature has drawn such charming designs that a visit to Malabar also is a must for the tourist for the same reason that draws him to Kashmir. Instead of casting a smiling glance from a distance, the sea is tempted here to make a much closer advance and indulge in revelry with the land. That interplay of land and water has affected both the vegetable and the human products of the tract. There is undoubtedly art and beauty in every creation of man. In pursuance of his innate urge for it and love of beauty he has indeed used palm trees around him to make, by manipulation, numerous artistic and useful things that fit in with Nature's surrounding creations as well as decorate and furnish his dwelling, but he has never gone beyond the means supplied to him by Mother Nature.

Feasting our eyes with all this entrancing scenery, we proceeded towards Vykom. While it was still a few miles off, we were received by boatmen who were sitting in rows of two in canoes propelled only with paddles. This is not the place to write in detail about their song that kept time with the movements of their oars or about the joy of the others who were dancing in rhythm with the dance of the canoes that rose and sank with the waves. But let me say this much. The reason for the song and the wild hilarity of these boatmen who, with only their oars to help them, were competing with our steamer, lay in the fact that they were untouchables and Gandhiji had rushed to their rescue. They are not only not allowed to enter the Temple, but have no access even to the trunk roads that pass by its sides.

I wonder what has made the Creator choose to present a scene of such painful contrast at one and the same place—of Nature that is kind enough to lavish all her captivating beauty and Man who is cruel enough to pour all his wrath upon his fellow-men. We found Vykom as an instance of that weird choice.

Newspapers have been reporting 'Vykom' for the last one year. All the same let me state some facts. Vykom is by itself but a small village of 3 to 4 thousand in a Taluka (country) on the northern boundary of the State of Travancore. But the Mahadev's



Temple (of Lord Shiva), which is surrounded by roads for the entry into which the Satyagrahis are waging a struggle, is one of the most ancient temples of Travancore. There are many thousands of temples in this State bearing the motto, "Dharma is our strength," but about 1500 of them are under the State's management. The property alone of this temple goes up to tens of millions (in rupees). Out of the 1500 there are 60 of extremely ancient origin and Vykom is one of them. They say it dates as Early as from the times of Parashuram¹—though it is difficult to say where Parashuram does not come in Malabar—Travancore. That 'Vyaghrapadapuram' whose corrupt form is the present 'Vykom', is invested with great religious merit and is the favourite resort of pilgrims. This temple was, therefore, chosen as the starting point for Satyagraha against unapproachability when the workers decided to offer it.

The construction of these temples calls for a word or two also. Most of them face the east. There is the image in the *garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorium), around all its four sides is a square *mandap* (a hall with pillars to support the ceiling) which is called '*namaskar mandap*' (the hall for worshippers to bow to the deity), which again is surrounded by a passage enclosed by a square of four walls with a gate in each of the four directions. Four trunk roads pass along these biggest walls. The officiating priests as well as the whole and sole managers of this temple are all Nambudri Brahmins. The haughty air and power of these Nambudris put to shame those of the Nagars² in their heyday. But they don't possess the statesmanship of the Nagars. The Nambudri's world is comprised within his home, his studies in Sanskrit, and his temple. From that angle, the Nambudri's stern refusal to co-operate with others is very remarkable. Not one Nambudri, out of the thousands of them has joined government-service or even private institutions or firms. English language also may have touched only a fringe of their population. Right upto today they have adhered so rigidly to their rites and their daily routine, that an occasion that demands a change makes them awfully sick. Their knowledge of the Vedas and their inflexible observance of the rules of *shoucha* (cleanliness) have, naturAlly, earned for them high prestige. But when power creeps into prestige, there is no end to its misuse. The Nambudri, therefore, even as he keeps himself confined into his temple, has created a wall of superiority-complex, an untouchability, that keeps him aloof from the rest.

Just as the highest among Brahmins are Nambudris, those among untouchables are Ezuvas or Thiyas. Then come Pariahs, then Pulayaas, then Kurwars, Kanikars, Shanans and so on. There are quite a number of communities among untouchables



and, copying the Nambudris, Thiyas or Ezuvas too treat untouchables on the lower rungs than themselves as their untouchables!

Between Brahmins and untouchables stand Nayars and others who are Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras and they are called *savarnas* (having a class or caste). Untouchables are 'outside the pale of Varnas' and so they are not ranked among any of the four varnas. Not only have all these 'outcastes' or 'untouchables' no right to enter the temple, but even their shadow must not fall on any of the outermost walls of the temple and hence they have no right to use the public roads that pass along the walls.

These untouchables make up 17 lakhs in Travancore's population of 40 lakhs (lakh—one hundred thousand). You cannot form an idea of the condition of the untouchables there from the Dheds and Bhangis (untouchables) of Gujarat. Ezuvas or Thiyas specially are difficult even to distinguish from *Savarnas*. They are very highly educated—the whole State of Travancore, for that matter, is more advanced than the most highly educated part of India. Not to speak of lawyers, barristers, doctors, engineers, and what not, there are numerous Ezuvas who are Pandits in Sanskrit. Even a High Court Judge of the Madras Presidency is a Thiya. Even the Nayadis, considered the lowest among untouchables, are not strangers to Sanskrit. All the same their plight is wretched beyond description. They are not only 'untouchables', but 'unseeables' also. As soon as he sees from a distance a *savarna* Hindu, the Nayadi has to shout out "Please keep away." Usually these miserable outcastes live under boulders or in caves of hills and, on the 12th of the lunar month or on the new moon's day, they stand on their hilly tracts and shout aloud for alms. Nayars then throw some food or cereals on their spread-out pieces of cloth, which they put at a distance.

A reform movement has been going on among Ezuvas and Thiyas for the past many years. The Guru of their community is Narayan Swami. He owns property worth lakhs of rupees and his message is gospel truth for these Ezuvas.

After this brief account of Nambudris and Ezuvas, let me come to the Satyagraha there. Some workers offered it last year, when they were not allowed to pass through those public roads. The State Government sent them to jail. The Stayagraha continues since then.

This is the present position. The Government has erected a wooden barricade around the roads passing by the four gates and wherever any small space is left vacant



the policemen themselves form a cordon. It is against the Satyagrahi's principle to use physical force and so he does not leap over the wooden barrier or jostle with the police for breaking the Government order. He simply sits there and spins. Every group of Satyagrahis performs this *tapasya* of squatting for 6 hours. But for the police cordon and the wooden fence, he would go to the prohibited road and get himself arrested as was done in the past. But the State was not prepared to imprison many men all at once. There is accommodation in the Central Prison at Trivandrum for 300 prisoners and no more. That is why the State has now barred the roads.

1. Parashuram, the 6th incarnation of God, was a Brahmin who came to the earth to destroy Kshatriya snobbishness, since his father, a sage was killed by a Kshatriya king. He is said to have exterminated Kshatriyas 21 times. But, at last, he also met more than his match in Ramachandra who defeated him and absorbed all his *reja* (lustre-valour) into Himself.

2. The highest among the Brahmins of Gujarat. In most of the States of Gujarat the Dewans and other highest officials were largely Nagars about a hundred and fifty years ago. They were thus both powerful and wealthy and so overbearing, but it must be said that they were shrewd statesmen and the States gained from their administration on the whole; and there were some really pious and honest Dewans also.



Meeting with Nambudrs

On reaching Vykom Gandhiji inquired about all the facts and then decided to meet first of all those Nambudris who were opposed to the untouchables. It was suggested to him that he should first see the disputed roads, but he refused. "Talks and parleys with the opposite party first," he said. It must be stated here that Nambudris too were ready and willing to meet Gandhiji. Immediately as he set his foot on the beach of Vykom and the people honoured him with an address, a note was sent by one or two telling him that Sanatanis had abstained from the welcome and that he should not misinterpret the welcome. That made Gandhiji seek permission to meet them. Hence, we crossed the roads in dispute and entering the precincts of the temple went right into the *mutt* (religious foundation) of the Nambudris.

This talk was so revealing and interesting that it is given in great detail. The Nambudris, the State Officer of the Temple Department, and the Collector sat on one side and Gandhiji and Rajagopalachari on the opposite. As the first party spoke in Malayalam, the talk was carried on through an interpreter. Gandhiji first explained his view:

@ Bapu's position: 'There is nothing in the scriptures to prohibit anyone, because of his birth, from the use of public roads or public places or even of semi-public roads. A robber or dissolute character may not be prohibited.'

Answer: 'They are worst than these because of actions of their past birth.'

Bapu: 'Who is to punish them? God or Men?'

Answer: 'Their birth is the punishment of God. We are only instruments for their punishment in the hands of God.'

Bapu: 'Let us invert the process. If they say we are instruments to punish you, will you allow that?'

Answer: 'When people are in opposite camps Like that, wise people should interfere.'

Bapu: 'Right; the Government, that is you, reduce it to a question of brute strength between one party and the other.'

Answer: 'We did not want force to be used to bring about the *status quo*; we want, Mahatmaji, to bring about a compromise and persuade them to retire from Satyagraha.'



Bapu: 'It is no compromise.'

Answer: 'They have come to take away a right from us.'

Bapu: 'Show us that you have a reasonable right to exclude them.' Answer: 'I invited you in the faith that this house was mine; even so, these roads we have been using to the exclusion of others.'

Bapu: 'Can a wrong be righted by the lapse of centuries?'

Answer: 'It is not wrong.'

Bapu: 'When you bring in the divine wrath, when you say that they are inferior to robbers and dacoits, who is to judge?'

Answer: 'Just like property, the use of roads is also a property and a right.'

Bapu: 'I cannot persuade them. It is my province to persuade you that you are wrong, because I see no warrant which is common to you and me for any such contention. Nor I have found a single person upto now defending it in the manner you have done. I was only last night reading an opinion of a Shastri of Benaras, and I can find nothing such in his opinion. And what I suggest to you is this: that seeing that there is an Indian Ocean between you and me, and that you think I have gone too far, we should take the opinion of a learned Pandit in Kashi and ask him to judge. It would be a most painful thing for me to say to the outside world that I found a most cultured part of Hindus defending what is an obvious wrong in a way which is still worse.'

Answer: 'It is only after convincing us that our position is wrong, that you need be sorry.'

Bapu: 'How am I to convince you? I can say I agree with the other party that you are wrong. I say that if you feel that such is Hindu religion, I would ask you not to take the terrific responsibility of deciding a point like this. I would also draw your attention to what the Dewan has been saying. I had the pleasure of reading his opinion today. If his opinion counts, he considers you are in the wrong and you are opposing the time spirit, and he considers you are taking up an attitude which is indefensible, and ultimately you will find the whole world against you, and if you will still say you are right and they are wrong, I will say it is the triumph of human liberty.'



Answer: 'You thought it was easier to persuade us and came here.'

Bapu: 'No. Because in my considered opinion your position was wrong.'

One man: 'I found pleasure in that you referred to the purity of mind.'

Bapu: 'I have come here to plead with you on behalf of those who are oppressed by Hindu society. I don't persuade the other party because I don't think they are in the wrong. My interpretation of Hindu *dharma* is wholly opposed to yours.'

Answer: 'Since you have used the word 'oppressed', there must be a reason for that oppression.'

Bapu: 'Do you want to know? The same reason that actuated Gen. Dyer.'

Answer: 'Which Gen. Dyer of Hindu community did it?'

Bapu: 'I say the *attitude* is similar to Dyer's—the reason is similar to that which appealed to Gen. Dyer.'

Answer: 'We have been observing this custom introduced by one whom we do not know. Did that man bring it about like Dyer?'

Bapu: 'I say that the spirit which actuates you today in oppressing the oppressed is that of Dyer.'

Answer: 'Ours may be the Dyer's spirit. But it is not a present day spirit. It has been handed down from Acharya to Acharya.'

Bapu: 'Don't you understand that I admit of no such Acharya, but if you say there was and can name one, I can say his ignorance was like Gen. Dyer's.'

Answer: 'Pollution-custom has been observed from time immemorial and we observe it on the authority of Acharyas. You say there may be no authority, we say there is.'

Bapu: 'I understand and appreciate it. But I don't think this (behaviour) is universal; and then I can say you can only put it on the ground of custom. And what I am endeavouring to plead with you is: Do not tie yourself down to custom or authority; try to reason with me.'

Answer: 'In the matter of religion and religious sentiment we cannot accept things from logic or reason.'



Bapu: 'Will you not try to defend it as common to religion or you will claim it as of a particular section? Need not the custom be universal?'

Answer: 'With regard to customs, there is a large difference of opinion. In one house there are different customs. There is Madhwacharya and Ramanuja.'

Bapu: 'Therefore, he (the Nambudri-headman) will not seek the aid of reason to justify a custom which is peculiar to only a few?'

Answer: 'We are not prepared to accept advice of a learned man. We want an Avatara (God in human form) or a divinely inspired person whose word we may accept as law.'

Bapu: 'Even local customs should be revised by a divine law-giver?'

Answer: 'Even this local custom is presented to me by Shankaracharya. Was Shankaracharya a Dyer?'

Bapu: 'Does Shankaracharya say so? Did he say that a road could be excluded in this way?'

Answer: 'For the sacred purpose of doing *pūja* they must have observed pollution distances.'

Bapu: 'I should like to see the Shankaracharya authority.'

Answer: 'We can show it.'

Bapu: 'And supposing this is not found in Shankaracharya. Will he (the Nambudri leader) be dislodged from the position he has taken?'

Answer: 'By some interpretation you may manipulate it according to your own way.'

Bapu: 'Not I, but some Pandit.'

Answer: 'If the interpretation is against our custom, we won't accept it.'

Bapu: 'So it is not Shankara's authority, it is your authority.'

Bapu: 'Another question. Suppose the courts decide that these roads are open to the public. What will you do?'

Answer: 'Then we will avoid these roads and also doing these acts that we do in the temples.'



Bapu: 'Will they cease to worship in the temples?'

Rajagopalachari: 'They were originally allowing people to move up to a certain point; then the Government allowed them up to a different point. Why? If you cannot tolerate the Government's order, but surely you accepted Government's order regarding the removal of a point. We are apt to exaggerate our feelings in the matter.'

Answer: 'We will do purificatory ceremonies.'

Rajagopalachari: 'Human endeavour on the part of Mussalmans can even override divine punishment.'

Bapu: 'I am convinced that this thing is based on long usage in Malabar or Madras. There is no unapproachability anywhere else.'

Answer: 'There is unapproachability in a milder form in untouchability.'

Bapu: 'Then you will allow reason its due share at a certain stage. You prostitute reason for your use. I am appealing to everyone of you. Will you be able to stand before the bar of public opinion?'

A Vakil (lawyer): 'There is no public opinion.'

Bapu: 'That is to say public opinion is entirely in favour of untouchability and unapproachability. Let us assume that. What I am asking you to do is to hold Hinduism as dear as life itself. You should defend it against the whole world. Shankara was logic personified. He cites the Vedas and then calls reason to aid. Do not say that there is no public opinion. I want you to feel that the whole world's opinion is not yet against you. But even today Indian opinion is against you. The Dewan's against you.'

Nambudri: 'I don't care what the Dewan says.'

Bapu: 'I honour him for taking up that position. But I warn you all. I say you are trustees of Hinduism and you must take care that you will have to defend yourself before the bar of the public opinion.'

Answer: 'It is with a sense of that trusteeship that I say so.'

Bapu: 'One more question. If these men whom you consider worse than robbers and dacoits become Christians and Muslims you would allow them.'



Answer: (brazen-facedly) 'No. We don't. Recent converts are not permitted.'

Bapu: 'How many years' converts?'

A Vakil: 'We don't recognize low-caste people turned Christians recently as Christians.'

Vakil: 'Why of all customs in the world Vykom should have been selected? Roads round other temples have been thrown open to public in course of time. Why would you not allow time to do its work? Would outraging other people's feeling be called non-violence?'

Bapu: 'Yes; If I call evil an evil and in order to convince you of the evil, I suffer, is it violence?'

Vakil: 'Satyagraha is for winning the hearts of people. Are you satisfied that Satyagraha offered here has been of that nature?'

Bapu: 'I am. You may enlighten me to the contrary.'

Vakil: 'What is the object gained by posting volunteers at all gates? Do you know the amount of inconvenience caused?'

Bapu: 'No'.

Vakil: 'I would have won the hearts of other people by omitting other gates.'

Bapu: 'The Satyagrahis are doing violence to themselves, not to you. Is it a comfortable position to be baked in the sun? In the case of my wife the same thing happened. Your sorrow comes from the belief that wrong is right.'

Another Vakil: 'Are there no *chandalas*?'

Bapu: 'Yes.'

Vakil: 'Is there re- birth?'

Bapu: 'Yes'.

Vakil: 'Are not they born with the stigma?'

Bapu: 'You may say so.'

Vakil: 'Does not Hinduism allow me to say so?'

Bapu: 'Hinduism does not permit you to regard a human being as low. You cannot be permitted to say so.'



Bapu: 'I grant that difference of birth is due to difference of action, but you may not regard him as low. But you are entitled to go away from anybody you like.'

Answer: 'In case of this temple, we removed ourselves to a corner and had a temple. Why should they come here?'

Bapu: 'You are in a confused state. You said you drove them, you said you went away, you again said they allowed themselves to be driven away.'

Vakil: 'There is a right for caste-Hindus to enjoy use of roads exclusively.'

Bapu: 'Are you prepared to submit to a referendum taken of *savarnas* of Vykom?'

An Old man: 'These two or three lawyers' vote must not be taken.'

Answer (puzzled): 'We may abide by a decision in this matter. But we don't want our religious matters to be decided by a public vote.'

Vakil: 'Will you appoint an honest man to help me to take vote?'

Nambudri: 'In modern days, may be, we have no sense of Hinduism.'

Bapu: 'We will abide by a hostile decision and not you. I make another offer. If you can produce Shankara's authority, which can satisfy any impartial Pandit in India in support of unapproachability, I withdraw Satyagraha from Vykom.'

Nambudri: 'Not text; but commentary,'

Answer: 'Malabar is granted to Brahmins by Parashuram. How will they produce a document?'

Bapu: 'Can I offer fairer terms than this? It is a most sporting offer.'

Answer: 'No; you must take the opinion of temple-goers.'

Bapu: 'Now, that is most unreasonable! I make a third offer. Let us decide it by arbitration. You name your arbitrator, I my own; Dewan to be our Umpire.

'I want to save Vykom against itself, as I want to save Hinduism against itself. I would go on making offers, because truth is resourceful. If you can find any other way, you would find me your slave.'

They said they would think over all the three offers.



An old Nambudri then thanked Gandhiji. Gandhiji told him: 'I offer you half a couplet:'¹

“शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पंडिताः समदर्शिनः”

The Old man: 'But पंडिताः (Pandits). Pandits are those who have become one with God. We are not such.'

Gandhiji: 'I wish you became such at least in this one matter.'

At the public meeting held in Vykom Gandhiji said:

"You will please excuse me for not standing up to speak to you; and I hope you will excuse me for being a few minutes late. I can only give you my assurance that my delay was not due to anything on my part. I was occupied the whole day with the mission that has brought me here.

"It gives me great pleasure to see such a large assembly here, because it enables me to talk to you of the purpose of my mission.

"At the outset I wish to thank all those who presented me with addresses yesterday. At the time the address was presented, a letter was delivered to me protesting against presentation and assuring me that it did not represent the opinion of all people in Vykom. I gladly accept the protest and the assurance of it. The very fact of the signatures means that they did not accept the address. Nor does it surprise me that the address did not carry the feeling of all Vykom. I know that you are unfortunately divided upon a big vital question. So far as I am concerned I shall be happier without any address whatsoever. But when I do receive, I get a topic to talk about and this does so in a particular manner. I thank those who have presented it to me this evening. That too deals with the subject that has brought me, and that is the subject of untouchability and unapproachability and Satyagraha in order to rid this place of them in a particular way.

"As you are aware that struggle from its commencement has commanded my deep admiration and sympathy. It is possible that the conductors may have made mistakes in the campaign. Who is there in the world who is infallible? But I am satisfied that mistakes committed were not deliberate. Satyagraha, like the name itself, is a new doctrine or rather a new presentation of an old doctrine. The question of untouchability is one of those questions which lends itself to Satyagraha in a peculiar



manner. For Satyagraha is a method of suffering—not suffering imposed upon those who oppose you, but suffering upon yourself.

"Now the position taken upon by Satyagraha in Vykom is that roads passing by the great temple should be open to untouchables and unapproachables. The claim is based upon humanitarianism. Any road which is open to the public or, so far as Hindus are concerned, any road which is open to caste Hindus should be open to those who are thrown out of caste and considered untouchables and unapproachables. In my humble opinion this is a natural and just claim.

"As you know, ever since I have set my foot on the Indian soil after a Long exile in South Africa, I have been speaking frankly, fearlessly, and freely on the question of untouchability. I claim to be a Sanatani Hindu. I claim to know sufficiently of Shastras for my own purpose and I venture to suggest that untouchability and unapproachability, as they are now practiced in this holy land of ours, have no place in our religion. I venture to suggest to those who are professors of Hinduism, who hold Hinduism dear as life itself, that they must understand that all Shastras should submit to the test of reason under our age of education and comparative theology. Any practice that supports itself behind custom and authority is bound to fail. In my opinion untouchability is a blot on humanity and, therefore, on Hinduism. It cannot stand the test of reason. It is in conflict with the fundamental precepts of Hinduism.

"The first among the three principles I am about to enunciate is सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः², the second is अहिंसा परमो धर्मः³, and if अहिंसा means love, non-violence—it is the law of life, the greatest law of life—, then I suggest that untouchability is in direct conflict with that truth. The third is, God alone is, everything else is illusory. (ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या) And if God alone is truth and everything else is nothing, it is impossible to reconcile unapproachability and untouchability with this grand doctrine.

"I have come, therefore, to reason with my orthodox friends. I have come to plead with them and by their courtesy and goodwill I was able to wait on them this afternoon. They gave a patient hearing and listened to me. We argued. I appealed to their reason and humanity and I appealed to the Hinduism in them. I am sorry to confess to you, I was not able to produce the impression I expected to produce on them.



"But despair is a term that does not occur in my dictionary. I shall despair, when I despair of God, myself, and humanity; and as I believe in God and that we are met together and as I believe in humanity, and that, in spite of all our quarrels, I live on, so I believe in the possibility of the solution of our quarrel.

"I have made three sporting offers to these friends of mine. In the name of and on behalf of Satyagrahis of Vykombathur, these offers are binding on me; but I have left them free to reject the offers. I have pleaded with them that they should accept anyone of the offers even by way of a trial and I have not hesitated to enter into this unilateral contract, as I believe in the truth I stand for. For, I have come here not to precipitate or enhance the quarrel, but to bring about peace and good-will between both the sections.

"Though I may seem at times to be fighting, my purpose never is to fight but to end fighting by bringing about peace at the shortest notice. An English friend, when I embarked upon non-co-operation reminded me that my non-co-operation was skin-deep and I was pining for co-operation. I confessed he had read my heart correctly. And so it is with my orthodox friends. I assure them, Satyagraha is there, but to be called off as soon as they wish it. It is for them to make a sporting offer, as soon as they feel; let them beware of meddling in truth. Satyagraha has always a minimum and that is the minimum for this struggle. Right of way is such a simple demand. There is no mental reservation behind the struggle. I have repeatedly told Hindus of India what removal of untouchability means to me and these who are engaged in that holy campaign. It does not mean breaking up *varnashrama-dharma*. It does not mean imbibing inter-marriage. But it does mean the common religion between man and man in a civilized society. It does mean that places of worship should be open, if to anybody, to all who are Hindus.

"But I grant that if there is a particular class of Brahmins who want to build a temple to exclude non-Brahmins, they have a perfect right to do so. But if there is a temple that is open to non-Brahmins also, then I say, there cannot be a fifth class that can be excluded. I see there is no warrant for such exclusion in Hindu Shastra. Similarly public schools should be open to all. So should it be with watering places, wells, lakes and rivers. That is the whole of my claim on behalf of those who are engaged in the struggle for the removal of untouchability and unapproachability.



"Let me however clear the position so far as Vykom is concerned. The present Satyagraha is mainly directed to get the unapproachables the right of entry to roads used by Mussalmans and Christians. Satyagrahis are not fighting for entry into temples. They are not fighting in connection with schools. Not that such is not their claim. It is their claim. But I am presenting to you the implications of the present struggle.

"But since Satyagraha is a method of conversion and love, it need not use the slightest coercion. I, therefore, gladly endorse in its entirety the remarks made by the Dewan Bahadur in his address to the Assembly. And if I find that the Satyagrahis in Vykom, in denial of their faith, use violence or put pressure on others, you will find me, on proof being given me, entirely dissociating me from Satyagrahis so-called. But so far as Satyagrahis keep within the terms I posited, so long I shall think it my bounden duty to offer all help a humble individual can render. I plead, therefore, with all the force I can command, with both Brahmins and non-Brahmins to support the movement in all its bearings and to stand on the right of justice, if the means adopted are fair and just.

"I am glad to be able to bear my testimony to the happy relations subsisting between the police authorities and the Satyagrahis. They have shown how a gentlemanly battle can be carried on without vexation and without a hard word used on any side.

"I know prejudices die hard. Untouchability is an error of long-standing. I have, therefore, to say to my Satyagrahi friends that they have to exercise patience. Time will always be on the side of those who wait upon it. Public opinion, I hope, even of Vykom is on their side. Public opinion outside Vykom is on their side. World opinion is growing strong on their side and if Satyagrahis will only play the game, will have patience, and be able to endure slow and silent suffering, victory will be

theirs. The Government of Travancore, so far as I can see from the Dewan Bahadur, is holding the scales even between the two parties. I know that my Satyagrahi friends have shook their heads, when I said that the presentation by the Dewan Bahadur was not exceptionable. Whatever may be the truth, credit will be yours, if the two sections meet and find a reasonable solution without the interference of the Government. The Dewan Bahadur himself, so far as his opinion was concerned, told the orthodox people where his opinion lies. He invites them to move with the times—to recognise the time spirit. I hope my orthodox friends will listen to the sound advice given by him. In any



avail I will give them my best assistance. No matter what they do, I shall only do according to the behests of the Hindu religion as I know it. I recognize no one on the face of the earth as my enemy. I shall, therefore, love them and I shall pray to God that He may guide their steps, open their eyes and understand the writing on the wall and hasten to do justice to these down-trodden countrymen of ours and I also pray to God that if I have misread Hindu Shastras and misread humanity, He may open my eyes and give me strength to acknowledge my errors and apologize to my Hindu friends.

"One thing more and I have done. Whether there are differences between you and me on untouchability, I hope there is no difference as regards another matter which concerns the poorest of the land. I refer to the spinning-wheel and Khaddar. You owe it to the poorest in the land to find a sacred corner in your home for a spinning-wheel and to wear Khaddar and place a few coppers in the pockets of the poorest of your countrymen and women. I will say this repeatedly until the prince and the peasant, the Viceroy and his page, dress themselves in Khaddar from top to toe.

"And now about Hindu-Muslim unity. You have much to teach to the rest of India. I am happy to testify that all are living in perfect harmony and amity in Travancore. I hope India will copy the admirable spirit which actuates you.

"I thank you all for patiently hearing me and close with the Hope—and fervent hope—that things may end here as they should."

Gandhiji then visited the Ashram and met the Satyagrahis. He examined the working of the Ashram in every detail, looked into the account books and inspected the kitchens, store-room, and latrines. He made a searching enquiry of each and every volunteer, gave him detailed instructions and asked them all to prepare a monster petition with thousands and lakhs of signatures stating that the *savarnas* do not want the present custom to continue. Whether this may bring about an immediate result and open the roads or not, it is certain to raise high the tempo of public opinion; the volunteers who move about for taking signatures will thereby propagate Khadi also, and, by showing that public opinion is strongly against the present custom, will either strengthen the hands of the Government for making the change or put it to shame for its hollow pretence.

On the next day, d. 11.3.1925, he gave a Long exposition on the Satyagrahi's *dharma* :



@. "I am sorry that I shall be going away today without having a chat with you which I would regard as complete and satisfactory. But it seems it is not possible to do more. Those who are here are of opinion that I ought to see in order to step up the movement, more places than Vykom. I have yielded to the advice, but my own conviction based on past experience is that the success of the movement depends more on yourself than on outside support. If there is nothing in you, if there is not much in you, any augmentation of the enthusiasm brought about by a puny visitor like myself will be no avail. But if I had not come here and there had been no enthusiasm on the part of the public and if you had been true to yourself, there would have been nothing wanting. Your work would have commanded all enthusiasm that might be needed for a cause like this. Therefore, if I could have spent a larger time than this, it would have been more profitable. However, that could not be done in the teeth of the friends who are guiding me.

"But I want to tell you as briefly as I can, what I expect of you.

"I would then ask you to get rid of the political part of the programme. Political consequences of this struggle there are. But you are not to concern yourself with the political consequences. If you do, you will miss the result and you will miss the political consequences and when the real heat of the struggle commences, you will be found wanting.

"I am, therefore, anxious, even if it frightens, to show you the true nature of the struggle. It is a deeply religious struggle for Hindus. We are endeavouring to rid Hinduism of greatest blot. The prejudice we have to fight against is an age-long prejudice and the opening of the road which we hold to be public in Vykom to unapproachables is a small skirmish in the big battle. If it was to end with the opening of the road in Vykom, you may be sure I would not have bothered my head about it. If, therefore, you think the struggle ends with opening the road, you are mistaken. The road must be opened, has got to be opened. That will be the beginning of the end. The end is, all such roads being opened in Travancore. And not only that, but we expect that our effort may result in the cemeterioration of unapproachability and untouchability.

"That will require tremendous sacrifice. For our aim is not to do these things by violence to opponents. If we import violence and compulsion in matters of religion, we shall be committing suicide. Therefore, we should carry on this struggle on lines of strict non-violence by suffering in our own person. That is the meaning of Satyagraha.



The question is whether you are capable of any suffering that may be imposed upon you, or may be your lot, whilst you are on this journey. And even whilst you are suffering, you may have no bitterness—no trace of it—against your opponent.

"It is not a mechanical act at all. On the contrary, I want you to feel like loving your opponent and the way to do it is to give the same credit for honesty of purpose which you would claim for yourself. I know that it is a difficult task. I confess that it was a difficult task for me yesterday, whilst I was talking to those friends. I confess there was selfishness behind the talk. I told them so, but now I credit them with honesty of purpose. I was thinking of them this morning and yesterday and this is how I did it:

"What was their selfishness or self-interest? It is true that they have their ends to serve. But so have we. Only, we consider our ends to be pure and, therefore, selfless, but who is to determine where selflessness begins and selfishness ends? Selflessness may be the purer form of selfishness—I say so not for argument, but that's what I *feel*. I am considering the condition I found from their point and not my own. Had they not been Hindus, they would not have talked as they did yesterday.

"And immediately we begin to think of things as our opponents think of them, we shall be able to do them full justice. I know it requires a detached state of mind. It is a state very difficult to reach. Nevertheless for a Satyagrahi, it is essential. 3/4ths of all the miseries and misunderstanding will disappear, if we step into their shoes and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with them quickly or understand them and be charitable.

"In our case there is no question of agreeing with them as the ideal is different. But we can be charitable to them in the sense that they actually mean what they say. They do not want to open this road to untouchables. Whether it is their self-interest or ignorance that tells them so, our business is to show them that they are in the wrong and that we shall only do by our suffering.

"I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer, where prejudices are hard. It has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding. Therefore, there must be no trace of coercion in our acts. We must not, therefore, be impatient and we must have an undying faith in the means we are adopting. And the means we are adopting just now are that we approach the 4 barriers and spin away from day to day and we must believe that there through the roads will be opened.



"I know it is a difficult and slow process. But if you believe in the efficacy of Satyagraha, you will rejoice in this slow torture and suffering and you will not feel the discomfort of your position as you go and sit in the boiling sun from day to day. If you have faith in the cause and the means, even the burning hot sun will cool for you. You must not be tired and say 'how long?' and, with all that, never get irritated.

"That is only a small portion of your penance for the sin in Hinduism. I regard you as soldiers in this campaign. It is not possible for all of you to reason out this for yourself. You have come to the Ashram, because you have faith in the management. That does not mean faith in me. For, I cannot manage. I am directing it so far as ideals and general directions are concerned. Your faith, therefore, must be in the managers for the time being. So far the choice is yours. But having made your choice and come to the Ashram, it is not for you to reason why. If we are to become a powerful nation, you must obey all directions that may be issued to you from time to time. That is the only way either political or religious life can be built up. You must have determined for yourself certain principles and you must have come in obedience to those principles.

"Those who remain are taking as much part as those who go to the barricades. Every piece of work in connection with the institution is just as important as any other piece and, therefore, the work of sanitation is just as important as spinning before the barricades. And if, in this place, the work of cleaning closets and the compound is more distasteful than spinning, it should be considered far more important and profitable than spinning.

"Not a single minute should be wasted in idle conversation or idle curiosity, but we must be absorbed in the work before us; and if anyone of you works in that spirit, he will see there is pleasure in the work itself. Every bit of property, everything here, should be regarded by you as your own property and not property that can be wasted at pleasure. You may not waste a grain of rice or a scrap of paper. And similarly in connection with our time. It is not yours. It belongs to the nation and we are trustees for the use of it. I know that all this will sound hard and difficult for you. My presentation will sound hard. But it has not been possible for me to present the thing in any other way. For, it will be wrong on my part, if I deceived you or myself that this is an easy thing.

"Much corruption has crept into our religion. We have become lazy as a nation, we have lost the time-sense. Selfishness dominates our action. There is mutual



jealousy among the tallest of us. We are uncharitable towards one another and if I did not draw your attention to these things, it will not be possible to be rid of them.

"Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. I can only hope you will realize the importance of what you are doing. And if you have, your path will be easy, easy because you delight in difficulties—and you will laugh in hope, when everybody is in despair.

"I believe in illustrations poets have given in religious books. For example, I literally believe in the poem of Sudhanva being thrown in a pot of boiling oil and smiling away when he was thrown into it. For, to him it was a greater torture to forget his Maker than to be boiled in it. And so it can be tortured in a lesser measure, if we have not Sudhanva's faith in this struggle.

"I have done, and if you have any questions to ask, I shall answer them."

@ Q: 'How Long to continue the struggle?'

A: 'It may last a few days or forever. I embarked on the South African struggle, fancying it would be over in a month. It lasted exactly 8 years.'

Q: 'Is each one of us expected to be carrying on Satyagraha here?'

A: 'As many as necessary should certainly remain here, and it is better to have here as many as possible. For this reason: Life is a training, this campaign is a training for us. Selflessness is a kind of double-distilled selfishness. You are here for your own sakes. You are growing here, training here. No matter how Long, but if you leave, you may go in response to a call in consultation with the manager.'

Q: 'Are we to understand that we should completely absent ourselves from our own duties and forget them?'

A: 'I would like to put the thing in another way. Nobody comes here, neglecting his duty as he conceives it to be. He, for instance, who may have blind parents and whom he only can serve has no business to come here; and if he does, he neither serves himself nor the nation. His service consists in looking after his blind parents. Therefore, those of you who have come here have come because you know that you could be spared from other work. But it does not mean you can never be relieved from work here to go elsewhere. But you cannot judge for yourself; it is the manager who can judge. But a thing like this can happen.



Supposing you had no difficulty when you came, and you find now suddenly that there are difficulties, I am afraid I must tell you that if your duties require you here, you may not leave them, no matter if your father or wife may be dying. At a time like that there is a conflict of duty. But the way is clear. Your *swadharma* (one's own particular duty) is that you should be here and, if the manager decides that you cannot be spared, you should be content that your wife should not be spared, or your parents, in distress. Such is life's battle.'

Q: 'We don't find the orthodox relenting. We feel diffident.'

A: 'It is the wrong way of looking at the thing. I have told you that each one of you is here, because you are growing, purifying yourself and you should rejoice in your growth, in your discipline, and therefore, you should rejoice in your suffering. You must not think of the opposite party. Whether they are relenting or not, you cannot control that result. But you can control your act. You are, however, entitled to believe that some day this wall will crumble, if you do your duty. But what does it matter, if it crumbles today or years hence, so long as you are delivering your stroke with a single aim from day to day? But I can give you one assurance and that is, there is no other way that is quicker. And when I say there is no other way I do not mean squatting down and spinning, but I do say the manner of Satyagraha may be the quickest in removing this wall of prejudice. The application of Satyagraha may certainly vary. But at the present moment I cannot think of varying it. But surely to feel that you are living here must be its own satisfaction, because you are privileged to undergo the discipline that corporate life of this character brings.'

Q: Can we not send a batch of 50 people to sit there?'

A: 'Not at the present moment, because that would be forcing the pace and without our meaning it we may be importing violence in it. I do not think such a thing impossible, but at present it is certainly impossible; for two reasons—and they are decisive—that we are young in our application and understanding of Satyagraha. Not one of you including your leaders is an expert in Satyagraha and, therefore, they and you have got to act most cautiously. I, therefore, think a large number going there can result in misunderstanding.

'Secondly, you have not got sufficient numbers; and I have always said that enough of spade work has really not been done. And enough spade work



means creating public opinion. A great deal must be done by way of consolidating public opinion. It is claimed that public opinion is on our side. I believe it is correct to a certain extent, but it has not been rendered effective, and effective public opinion means tremendous organisation. I see no such organization here or anywhere else for that matter in India. You have now laid the foundation and as you will build upon it, you will find that public opinion is on your side. But you will antagonise it if you force the pace. You have only began the thing.

'If I were here and had a band of workers intent upon this work, I would make of this place a model in sanitation. Is it not a pity that you do not know Hindi? I would expect you to make up your Hindi in 5 months. I would introduce a study of Sanskrit. I would study the view of the opponent, study what they say regarding the authority of the Scriptures. You are not doing any of these things yet. I do not know how far you are efficiently organising spinning and weaving. If so, you should make this place self-supporting. Whereas today your expenses are 15 per head, you can reduce them.

'When you have sufficiently built your character, you should be able to command all help necessary in Vykom and Travancore. But today you are unable to do so. I am trying to find that help, but I assure you I don't Like it. Not because it is much trouble to me, but because it is not good for you. It does not encourage self-help; and I undertook to find substantial help because of my faith in this struggle. But my faith does mean that you will yourself say sometime, 'We are not helpless. We will have no help from Gandhi or any other part of India.' And when you have sufficiently purified and illuminated yourself, you will understand that you should live on what Little Vykom can give you, or starve. There must come a time when you will reject offers of money from outside Vykom.

'And in saying this I am asking you to do what I have done myself. In Champaran (Behar) I had offers of money from everywhere. But I rejected all these offers except from a private friend. At the time of the mill-labour strike in Ahmedabad, I rejected offers of thousands of rupees. At Kaira⁴ I accepted certain help from friends and we did not spend even half of what we were given. From South Africa I brought back 3 or 4 lakhs. I cannot recall a single battle I



fought in which there was a debit balance and got money in every case with a minimum amount of trouble and fuss.

'And do not think I was able to do so because I was a 'Mahatma.' Mahatmaship was thrust upon me when I came here. But I recall days when I had far less help than you. But I had one thing you have not—unquenchable faith in my cause and truth. And when you have got the same faith in the truth of your cause and your means, you will reject your present help and say, 'We shall either do or die.' Then you will have shown infinitely greater suffering than the Sikhs in Guru-ka-bag.⁵ That suffering was of little consequence in comparison with the suffering you should put up here. And when you are convinced that you have that truth in you, you will find more than enough to occupy your time and more than enough in your Self. So for the present moment you should do nothing sensational in the shape of sending more people. On the contrary, you may do your work so that you may not have surfeit.'

Q: 'Can we adopt fasting?'

A: 'No. Fasting in front of barricades cannot be adopted. You can adopt it for self-purification; e. g., a fast per week or semifast. But it is not for world consumption—fasting not against any one but against ourselves.'

Q: 'Suppose a man fasts in the spirit that he should not live while this injustice lasts. Would it not be injustice to stop him from fasting?'

At this stage 37 volunteers signified their determination not to accept outside help, i.e., outside Kerala.

Bapu: 'If your determination is through anger, it is bad. If it is for purification, it is all right. But you make your resolve to refuse all outside assistance, and not parade it.'

Rajagopalachari: 'Could this thing (fasting) be allowed to the point of death or violent injury to the body?'

Bapu: 'I would not recommend it to this body. Do not evoke the charitable spirit in them (people) for feeding you. Since the condition is that this movement would be withdrawn, if there is no support from Kerala, we should close the movement.'



Q: 'If any of us fasts unto death?'

Bapu: 'I shall advise people to let you die, if you die fasting in order to evoke pity in anyone. It would be a foolish, criminal, sinful, violent act. It would be proper for us to stop that act. A fast unto death is a very rare thing. It cannot be undertaken by everybody. That thing requires tremendous penance and sanity. You should go in a cave and say to God. 'I am either foolish or you must be harsh. Save me or kill me ' Fast against God, don't fast against man.'

1. Quoted from Bhagwadgita V—18. The whole couplet runs:

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि |
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पंडिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

—"The men of self-realization look with an equal eye on a Brahmana possessed of learning and humillty, a cow, an elephant, a dog and (even) a dog-eater."

The *Gita* According to Gandhiji by Mahadev Desai, p: 218.

2. There is no *dharma* other (or higher) than Truth. The original text is नास्ति सत्यात्परो धर्मः| (Mahabharata, Shantiparva, 156-64), which carries exactly the same sense.

3. Non-violence is the greatest *dharma*.

4. Vol. I of this series may be referred to for all the three struggles.

5. A reforming Sikh sect—Akali—wanted the property of all Sikh temples to be managed and owned by a Central Committee and not left in the hands of individual 'Mahants', owing to their misuse of the properties. After a large number of them once went to this Guru-ka-bag, the Mahant closed the entrance and fired upon them killing many and wounding many more.



Quilon

Left Vaikom by boat in the evening and reached Quilon the next morning (d. 12.3.1925). It is one of the four or five big cities of Travancore. There is even a mill (spinning and weaving) there, whose agent is a gentleman from Ahmedabad. There was the usual item—the municipal address—here also. The public meeting was quite a big one and it was here that for the first time Gandhiji declared his fascination for the women's dress in these parts and appealed to them to chant the very easy and extremely helpful *mantra* of Khadi. As the town is a stronghold of Nayars, among the municipal addresses so far given, this was the first to refer to the local situation in these tragic words: "We consider it a piece of our good fortune that you are setting your foot on this soil for the first time, but the fact that an unfortunate custom prevailing in our State has compelled you to do so is for us a matter of deep pain."

Varakala

Further to the south of Quilon is Varakala. The creek ends immediately after leaving Quilon and a hilly tract, by no means inferior in charm to the preceding water-and-land strip, begins. And the climate, being dry, is definitely better than the one we had till now. During this ride in a motor car, we met with the pleasant sight of countless kids, with a slate and a book in hand, proceeding towards the schools of their tiny villages.

Varakala is known for its salubrious air and the Maharani (the Queen) spends some part of the year here. At her pressing invitation we stayed there as her guests. In her talk with Babu, she admitted that the custom (of unapproachability) was bad, even wicked, but nothing could be done by force against the people's will and everyone must have freedom. "Will you give the same freedom to thieves and dacoits? Won't you protect society from them?" asked Gandhiji and the question perplexed her. At last she said, 'Everything depends upon public opinion. Show us the backing of a strong public opinion and the roads will be opened at once.'

She liked very much all the three alternatives Gandhiji had suggested to the Nambudris.

Shivagiri, the principal *mutt*, of the Guru of the Thiyas, is situated in this same town on the top of a beautiful hill. Speaking before hundreds of Thiyas who, equipping



themselves with a purificatory bath, and holy ashes smeared on their forehead and other parts, had assembled there, Gandhiji said:

@ "Her Highness' sympathies, so far as she herself is personally concerned, are entirely with those who are trying to seek redress. I am free to tell you that she considers that roads at Vykom and similar roads elsewhere should be open to all classes, but as the head of the State she feels powerless unless there is public opinion behind her; and unless, therefore, public opinion in Travancore is organised in a perfectly legitimate, peaceful, and constitutional manner, and unless it is expressed in an equally legitimate, peaceful, and constitutional manner,

though ever so emphatic, she will be powerless to grant the relief desired. I for my part entirely accept that position. It is for you and me to break down the opposition of blind orthodoxy. You will not feel the glow of freedom and liberty, unless you yourselves take a leading part in breaking down that opposition.

"The orthodox friends whom I saw flung the law of *karma* in my face—and rightly—i.e., everyone gets what he deserves. That is, we deserve what we have inherited. Hinduism believes in heredity and so do scientists, and Hinduism is science reduced to practice. But that very science, that very Hinduism, teaches us to undo the law of *karma* and that undoing is done by doing more *karma* of an opposite character. If in my past birth I did something which was wrong, it is possible for me to undo the result of that evil, by doing something which is contrary to the evil and even as it is possible for one to do better than the past *karma*, so is it possible for blind orthodox people now to heap bad *karma* on bad *karma* and earn a reward which they would not like. The law of *karma* is no respecter of persons.

"But I would ask you to leave orthodoxy to itself. Man is the maker of his destiny and I, therefore, ask you to be the maker of your own destiny. I am myself trying to become a bridge between blind orthodoxy and those who are victims of that blind orthodoxy; and in so far as it is possible for me, I am trying to become one of yourself; and, therefore, when I was talking to Her Highness this morning I described myself as a scavenger, as he occupies the lowest rung of the ladder among the depressed classes. I am not ashamed of calling myself a scavenger and I ask our Bhangis not to be ashamed of their calling themselves Bhangis. If true to his salt, the Bhangi is a sanitarian. I describe myself as a spinner, weaver, and farmer also. The orthodox say that the suppressed classes should remain suppressed, because of vices inherent in them. It is for you and me to show that no vice is inherent in man. That which is



inherent is virtue. Immediately he realizes his own potentiality, he becomes almost divine and I would wish every one of us to become what he should be and not remain what he is.

"It gives me much pleasure to find among you so many educated men and women, doctors, lawyers and other professionals, but I must confess I am not satisfied. It is good, but not good enough. What will tell in the end is individuality—our character and not Letters. I would, therefore, ask you to cultivate the best in yourself and you will find that no strength of orthodoxy, however invincible, can stand before your inherent strength. There are innumerable instances throughout the length and breadth of India, where those that belonged to the suppressed classes have not only come to their own but commanded reverence from the highest of the Brahmins; and I want you to do nothing less than the highest of the depressed did before you. I want you to regard yourselves as trustees of Hinduism.

"I know that at the present moment there is a wave of impatience going on not only in Travancore, but throughout the length and breadth of India, among the depressed classes. But I assure you it is wrong. You cannot achieve enduring reform by impatience. And if you must be impatient, you should be with yourself and not with the wrong-doer. I have presented India with the same prescription in connection with the conduct of Englishmen towards us and I have no other to offer in connection with the conduct of orthodoxy towards us. And if every vice attributed to us is eradicated, you will find that orthodoxy will have no bottom left to itself.

"You will ask, and properly, what has virtue to do in temple-road entry? But look beneath the surface. There is in the mind of orthodoxy religion mixed up inextricably with the use of certain public roads. The position taken up by them is wrong, unsound, immoral, sinful. But that is my viewpoint, your viewpoint, not that of the orthodoxy. There was a time when our ancestors offered human sacrifice. We know it was diabolical, irreligious, but not so to our ancestors. They knew no better and had made of vice a virtue and we would be doing them grave injustice, if we judge them by modern standards. If we are to judge them rightly, we should step into their shoes and see how they would have felt and did feel. They had to give up and they gave up human sacrifice. This is not in justification, but a circumstance in favour of our ancestors, that they knew no better, and so would I have you to judge the blindly orthodox in our own times. They know no better and, I tell you, I am speaking from the bitter experience of domestic life. I have not been able to break the wall of prejudice that surrounds my



own dear wife and I refuse to be impatient with her. I must carry her with me by showing her the greatest consideration, the greatest courtesy, and the greatest civility. Whilst I must remain absolutely strict with my conduct, whilst I must become impatient with the wrong that may be lurking in me, I should be patient with her. You will not expect me to do otherwise. Similarly, I expect you not to be impatient with the orthodox. That is the secret of a true religious life.

"Swamiji (Narayan Guru) said to me yesterday that religion is one. I combated that view and I combat it here. So long as there are different human views, so long will there be different religions, but the secret of a true religious life is to tolerate different religions. What appears evil to us in certain religious practices may not seem necessarily evil to those who follow the practices. I cannot, I dare not, blind myself to existing differences. I cannot rub them off the slate, if I would. But knowing those differences, I must love those who differ from me.

You will find an exemplification of this law throughout the natural world. No two leaves, under whose shadows we are sitting, are alike, though they spring from the same root. But even as leaves live together in perfect harmony and present to us a beautiful whole, so must we, divided humanity, present to the outsider just looking upon us, and present to Him Who watches us from above, a beautiful whole. That can be done when we love and tolerate each other. And so even when I see the deep black ignorance of blind orthodoxy, I refuse to be impatient. And so I present to the world the law of non-violence and I say that a man who wants to lead a religious life on the earth and a man who wishes to realize himself on the earth in this incarnation must be non-violent in every shape and form and in every one of his actions.

And I am here to tell you that had Vykam Satyagraha been carried on in an absolutely non-violent spirit and had it received your support as it should have received from you, the battle would have ended Long ago. I have given my meed of praise to them. They have done well, commanded my admiration, but that was only one side of the picture. I would be untrue to you, if I did not present the other side. But applying the same law of non-violence I have refused to condemn them. They have done their best and I ask you to do better. They have done physical violence to nobody, but their thoughts and minds were not non-violent. I found it in my discourse with them. They feel bitter toward the orthodox people, are angry with orthodoxy, and they distrust their motives and the motives of the Government. I say all these things are beneath the dignity of Satyagraha. I will take the Government at its word. I will believe



orthodoxy when it says, it does violence to their religious sentiment when I pass by that road. But by giving him (the orthodox) the same breadth, as I would claim for myself, I disarm his suspicion and opposition. I place myself in a most favourable position by insinuating myself in his estimation and thereby I expect to open the eyes of his understanding.

"I want you to take up that attitude mentally, because I believe that thoughts are more powerful than deeds. Deeds are indifferent caricatures of thoughts. A student of psychology has no difficulty in analysing deeds and tracing them to their sources and finding out how noble and manly a man is, often-times how equally degraded a man is. My object in saying all this is to reiterate the principle that we must attain our own salvation, we must be self-reliant entirely. Set aside every other task before you and apply yourself to finishing this particular Satyagraha.

"It is a test case and the way for you to do it is to feed the noble band of Satyagrahis and to feed it in every sense of the term. You must be ashamed of receiving money from me or from any other person in another province, if possible, even from outside Vykom. You must find not only physical food for them, but also dedicate yourself to the cause and not allow a ceaseless flow of Satyagrahis to be dried up. You must not forget those young men. You must not be satisfied with a few young men, brave lads, sitting day in and day out in the baking sun. You must take your due share in the cause, do the penance of being baked in the sun.

"And what is more, it is a sacrifice which you must approach with a sacred heart. Your character must be above suspicion. You must be truthful and not indulge in luxuries. For the present, cut down your luxuries to the lowest point and cut yourself from every tie. Having taken leave of your elders, turn your backs towards them. They may not expect you to help them even in time of their need once you have gone from them. You will then find for yourself that you have carved a status that no power on earth can deprive you of.

"All cannot do this, but all can do social amelioration. There is the drink evil. You must tackle it. I do not know of other evils. You must remove untouchability amongst yourselves. You must go out to them who are still lower down. Befriend them and help them.

"Take up the gospel of spinning and Khaddar. I have urged, it is necessary to take up spinning in right earnest and wear the produce. I understand that not Long



ago every one of you, every woman was a beautiful spinner and thousands upon thousands knew weaving. Both are noble callings. In spinning alone, I am convinced, lies the salvation of India. Individually, spinning is not a profitable occupation, but as a National occupation it is profitable. Therefore, I call it a *ragee* (a coarse kind of millet, the staple food in parts of India) for India.

I was gladdened beyond measure, when Swamiji told me he would spin himself and he has given me the assurance that he would not allow any of his disciples to appear before him unless he was clad in Khaddar. I expect all the educated among you to feel that it is a privilege to spin and wear Khaddar in Travancore. I expect you to go amongst your womenfolk to persuade them to wear Khaddar. You do not go in for heavy (costly) saris in Travancore. You do not go in for a variety of colours. I am charmed with the spotless white dresses for women in Travancore. A few yards suffice for you, men and women. You must feel it a shame and degradation that you must have to fall back on Manchester or Ahmedabad. That would be your contribution to the cause of this Satyagraha.

"Do not be frightened that it is a Long-drawn out battle. His Holiness said that we might not see the end of this agony in this generation. He thinks I shall have to appear in another incarnation, before I see the end of this agony. I hope to see it in my lifetime, in this age, but not without your assistance. Assist me to the full measure of your ability and do it until this wrong becomes a thing of the past. Do your duty manfully and I undertake to show to you that the 'fifth class' (untouchables were called 'panchamas'—'the fifth class' also) is entirely eradicated. God grant the necessary strength and determination to His Holiness to infect you with a proper understanding of all this and may God grant you wisdom and strength to carry out the sacred task you have undertaken.

"I tender my thanks once more to His Holiness for his kindness and hospitality. I thank you once more for the admirable patience with which you have listened to me, but the best reward I can ask for is translation of all you have listened into action."

Proceeding further to the south from Varakala, we came to Trivendrum, the capital of Travancore. Gandhiji wanted to see the Dewan Saheb here. When he met him, the Dewan Saheb stated that legally the Temple authorities had the right to close that road against untouchables and the State was bound to protect that right or to rescind that law. For the latter step, they should have the backing of public opinion, which both the Dewan Saheb and the Maharani thought they had not. Gandhiji



assured them that if they were not aware that they had that support of public opinion, it would be tangibly shown to them in a short time.

Gandhiji had there the *darshan* of the Rajamata. The 'Rajamata' means the Maharani's sister and mother of the minor Maharaja. She herself had sent an invitation to Gandhiji to be gracious enough to visit her and give his blessings to her son. That invitation convinced me of her deep religious spirit. When the subject of untouchability came up she expressed her very deep regret and said that it was an intolerable custom.

But these visits became in the end a subsidiary matter. Meeting the people and visiting schools and colleges grew to be the chief part of his work here. Among only the one hundred thousand of this town, there are four colleges one of them for girls and one law College, the like of which there is only one and that at Madras. As for schools, there are as many as 7 or 8 full-grown High Schools. But that is but natural. The literacy standard (i.e. ability to read and write) in Trivendrum is 750 for men and 350 for women per 1000. As he was the guest of the Maharani herself, the State Officers met Gandhiji without any fear or constraint and even Englishmen did not high-hat him.

The moment I refer to 'Englishmen,' I am reminded of the painful and astonishing fact that even in this evidently well organized State the Principals of the colleges and of the institutions for girls and women are either English or Anglo-Indian. Cannot that State procure competent Indian Principals, where the standard of education is so high and where you find a number of lawyers and barristers—one of them is even a High Court Judge at Madras—even among untouchables? Just as the exuberance of educated men and women makes one stand aghast, so this appointment of foreigners as heads of educational institutions is equally surprising.

Yes, but the jail Superintendent and the Jailor were both Indians. And what a cite of ethereal beauty has been selected for this jail! It is built upon the highest hill in Trivendrum. When you stand up on its ground, you see undulating thickets of green trees stretching for miles and miles on one side and the vast expanse of the Arabian Sea on the other. And the jail presented a spick and span sight. I went there alone, not with Gandhiji and it was an unexpected visit. There was, therefore, no question of making everything look neat and tidy by way of preparation for a some body's visit. The Superintendent kindly showed me round the whole jail. Not a single patient in the jail hospital! The Superintendent chuckled as he said, "They call it a sanatorium!"



Though not a matter of pride for us, the State has every reason to feel elated, as there is no other place where you can have such fresh air. The jail ground alone for that matter takes up 100 acres!" There is room for only 300 prisoners in the jail, all others are only sub-Jails or lock-ups. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to infer that the crime rate may be very low here—though the very large State revenue accruing from alcohol and other intoxicants may support the opposite conclusion. But I give up thinking over this matter, since I have not examined the figures of the different kinds of crimes committed in the State.

The royal family belongs to the Nayar community. According to its custom of inheritance, it is the king's sister's son who succeeds him and not his own son, who gets neither the throne nor anything else by way of heritage. The present Maharaja has been installed on the throne in virtue of that custom.

On the whole, it seems to me that the sentiment of honouring a saint, played as great a part in all this honour given to Gandhiji by the State, as the idea of honouring a distinguished leader. That firm faith creates a paradox in Hinduism. The maxim, 'Religion is our power and light' (धर्मोऽस्माकं दैवतम्), has penetrated into the working of this State in a thousand ways. The royal insignia itself exhibits the motto, in as much as it consists of two elephants standing and facing each other and between them is the holy Conch to which they bend their heads in submission. That Conch represents Padmanaabha Deva, 'The Holder of the Conch and the Wheel (Sudarshan Chakra)' i.e. Lord Vishnu. Then there is a temple of Padmanaabha in Trivendrum. The idea behind all this is that the whole State belongs to Padmanaabha Deva, whose subordinate agents the king and his officers are. You will find this Conch wherever your eyes are cast. Even the coins of the State bear neither the image of any king nor the sword, which kings usually impress on them as a sign of their valour, but only the figure of the Conch. In the 'Atithi-bhavan' (Guest House) also you will find tables, trays, jars etc., all Conch-shaped. And this Conch is inevitably present even in the beautiful designs made of sea-shells and Conches that decorate the gardens of the mansions of the rich in the town.

But such terrible injustice against untouchables side by side with this environment filled with devotion for Lord Padmanaabha! That is the paradox in Hinduism which I referred to above. The Brahmin is such a *persona grata* in the State, that partiality towards him has itself become the stay and support of this unjust discrimination against untouchables. Let the royal family be Nayar by caste, but Nayar



girls have got to marry only the Nambudri Brahmins! Let alone other instances, even in the jail a Nambudri is provided with all the implements necessary for his daily *sandhya vandana* worship at the twilight times) and allowed to cook for himself!

But even this custom which owes its existence and support to this favouritism is certain to be effaced when the public conscience is roused. Gandhiji had to deliver nine speeches, if not more, in this one town of Trivendrum! The first to insist on a speech from him was the Principal of the Science College. Gandhiji went there and spoke on the limitations of modern science. He suggested that public weal and non-violence must be the controlling and guiding factors in the pursuit of science. The students were treated to a very delightful discourse as it was interspersed with suitable anecdotes from his own life. That whetted the desire of the school-mistresses of the adjoining girls' school and they pleaded earnestly for a visit to their school. Gandhiji went there too and gave what can be better termed a very interesting class lesson than a talk.

"Now tell me, what do you want me to talk about?"

No reply.

"If you feel shy like that, I shall run away. Out with it. Let's have a talk on the subject you want."

A girl, with looks graver and soberer than her age warranted, said: "Give us a discourse on our duties."

"Now, that's too much, my dear! Can I discuss such an abstruse subject? Suggest some other."

Another then got up. "Tell us about our duties to our country."

"Even that is hard. Suggest still another"

Now that was like asking the girls to solve riddles like telling them, 'Guess what I am thinking of.' Of course, the poor, girls were perplexed. But one of them bravely stood up and said, "Then tell us something about yourself."

"But you all know things about me," Gandhiji grinned as he replied. "Haven't I become very famous already? And if I myself said something about me, I would only indulge in self-praise! Try again."



The poor girls were now at the end of their tether. But two or three would not confess defeat. They bawled out, "Say something on anything you like."

Gandhiji, therefore, said, "All right. Suppose then I say something on spinning?" The whole class roared with laughter. "Do, do," cried out many voices all at once. And now I leave it to the reader to conjure up the picture of the delightful chat that followed. But by way of a tip, let me give a few headings. "Do you know from where you get your bread?" "Haven't you, kitchen-stoves at your homes?" "Have you an inkling of how the poor man fares?" "How will you show your sympathy for the poor?"

These were all High school girls. Hardly had he returned to his stay when he saw a hundred college girls, with their professors, waiting for him. What else would they get from Gandhiji except a talk on the same subjects?

He then visited the biggest High school. There also Gandhiji conducted a class.

"Which history do you learn? You must be learning the history of India at least?"

"Have you heard of a writer on Indian History called Hunter? I wonder what should be done with your teacher, if you do not know his name." Then Gandhiji gave the figure of the average annual income of an Indian as estimated by Hunter. That led him to dwell upon the stark poverty of India and to ask the boys how many of them were spinning at home. When he came to know that not a single one of them was spinning at home, he broke out (the whole talk was carried on in English, "It is tragedy that out of thousands of students not one cares to spin and in a city like Trivendrum there is not a single spinning wheel. Now get the meaning of the word 'tragedy' from your teacher." With these words he returned.

A public meeting was a had-to be. About twenty to twentyfive thousands were present but pin-fall silence was kept up throughout. Perhaps there is no part of India that can come up to Travancore in the perfect quiet observed in meetings. Gandhiji said:

@ "I am grateful to you for your addresses. I hope you will not expect me to give a detailed reply to all points raised therein. I appreciate the address presented to me by the Khilafat Committee and I mention that address in order to mention my great sorrow that one of the Ali Brothers is not with me in this tour. Both were so occupied with important activities that it was impossible for them to accompany me.



"I would like to mention the address on behalf of the Hindi Prachar Sabha (an association for the spread of Hindi). Each time I come, I feel embarrassed. Each time I feel that if masses are to be converted, it is impossible to do so through English. North is isolated from South and South is isolated from North by refusing to learn Hindi. Whilst English is a language of interNational diplomacy, it cannot possibly be the language of India. It will be wrong to expect the masses to learn that difficult language, English, but it is easy for you, educated Hindus of South, to learn Hindustani. Let me inform you that Tamilians and South Indians whom I had the privilege of knowing in South Africa had no difficulty in learning Hindi. I hope you will avail yourself of the opportunity to learn Hindi without a farthing.

"As you are aware, the object of my visit is to express my sympathy to Satyagrahis who are fighting against heavy odds at Vykom. It was my wish also, if I could wait upon Her Highness, The Regent and also upon Dewan Bahadur. I had the honour of doing so. Both gave me a long, patient and courteous hearing and I must express my thanks to Her Highness and Dewan Bahadur.

"I had also the privilege of waiting upon His Holiness Swami Narayanguru and when I saw him, I sank my head in humiliation that even he could not pass along the roads in Vykom. I had the privilege of being his guest in that magnificent *mutt*, magnificent because of its beauty. I appreciate the beautiful sanitary appointments about the place. I heard some of Puliya boys reciting Sanskrit as only a few Sanskrit scholars are doing. I had the honour of meeting many distinguished Ezuva brothers. They are as capable and as clean as the highest in the land, and it hurt my sense of religion, humanity, nationalism, that they could not enter the roads in Vykom.

"It is a matter of the gravest reflection on the part of every Hindu who belongs to the *savarna* section. He will realize that with all religions and creeds, Hinduism is in the melting pot. Apart from scriptural authority Hinduism like other religions will have to submit itself to the acid test of reason. Error, no matter however immemorial it may be, cannot derive sanctity, and even a Vedic text if it is inconsistent with morality, with justice, will have to go by the board.

"I have endeavoured to understand our Shastras to the best of my ability. I have supplemented my power, my kinship of Shastras, with the learning of others who have been kindly assisting me, and I can discover no authority whatsoever for untouchability and unapproachability as we know them today. I have not hesitated to call it inhuman, immoral, unjust, and I have no hesitation to repeat it today.



"If I discovered that untouchability and unapproachability were an integral part of Hinduism, I should have no hesitation in renouncing that faith. Whatever may be said to the contrary, I regard myself as a Sanatani Hindu and, saturated though I am with Hindu lore, brought up though I am in Hindu practice, my whole soul revolts against this brutal practice. And I ask every Brahmin and every non-Brahmin who is not classed with untouchables to be impatient with this wrong as I am. The late G.K. Gokhale¹, when he visited South Africa, used to say that if we Hindus had been treated as a class of untouchables, we had reaped the fruit of what we had done in becoming *pariahs* of the world. When I remonstrated to my numerous English and other European friends in South Africa against locations to which the highest of us were confined, they reminded me rightly of what we were doing with the *pariahs* in India.

"I propose to tell you something of the discussion I had with orthodox people in Vykom. I assure you that I approached them in reverence, I approached them with an open mind. I had a Long discussion with them, but I am sorry to tell you that I was not able to impress them with the gravity of the situation, nor were they able to convince me that they were at any stage of their proceeding in the right.

"I placed before them 3 proposals for their acceptance. They arose out of the discussion we had. They said that *savarna* public opinion was against the claim on behalf of untouchables. I straightway offered them a referendum either in Vykom or the whole of Travancore restricted only to *savarna* Hindus. I did so because I was confident, as I am confident even now, that the great body of *savarna* Hindus do want the reform and are not blindly orthodox. I am sorry to inform you that the spokesman would not accept the proposal. I told him that on behalf of Satyagrahis I would hold myself bound by the decision of the referendum and would leave them free to reject the verdict if it was against them. But so far as I could understand the spokesman, he rejected the proposal. He said, and I think very properly that the verdict of a majority cannot possibly bind those who had settled convictions.

"I, therefore, asked him to produce the authority on which he based his settled conviction. I was anxious to know whose authority he would produce and to my great and intense surprise he said he would produce the authority of Shankaracharya. I breathed free because what little I know of Shankaracharya led me to believe that he would never tolerate untouchability and unapproachability. He promised to send me the authority. I am still without it. I offered to get that authority from him and submit it to Pandits in India, who are authorities and authentic authorities, and told him that



though Shastric authorities and injunctions do not bind me, in this present case, I would hold myself to be bound. And thereto I told my orthodox friends that whilst that decision also was binding on me, they were free to reject it, if unfavourable to them.

"But if on searching the library they could find no such authority whatsoever, I gave them a third offer. I undertook on behalf of Satyagrahis to nominate one learned *shastri* as an arbitrator and asked them to nominate one *shastri* on their own behalf and nominate Dewan Bahadur as the umpire and suggested that both should be held bound by the award given by him.

"Those offers are still open to them for acceptance and I ask them for acceptance and I ask you the *savarna* Hindus of Trivendrum and through you the whole of the *savarna* community of Travancore to insist on the removal of the wrong done to untouchables and compel (the authorities concerned) by the same pressure of public opinion to open the roads of Vykombathur to untouchables.

"I then waited on Her Highness and placed all these three offers before her and the whole of the case on behalf of the reformers. I did the same thing with the Dewanji today and I am glad to be able to inform you that both appreciated the proposals I have made and showed sympathy for the reformers and both have promised to the best of their ability to help the reform movement apart from legislation. They have promised, in any way open to them to help reformers to mould public opinion in their favour.

"So far as legislation is concerned they have shown me their difficulty and subject to correction by my legal friends here, I must say there is a great deal to be said in favour of that legal difficulty. But from what I have understood from them, I am sure that if public opinion could be consolidated and organised, they will help the reformers when that consolidation and organization is complete. But lawyers know law's delays and I can also understand the difficulty of a constitutional monarch anticipating public opinion.

"Remedy, therefore, as I have told my Satyagrahi friends, lies with them. But it lies equally with you. I know that I cannot ask everyone of you to suffer with the Satyagrahis, but if you find that they are true to their faith, that they are consistently truthful, non-violent, and honest, I hope you can do a great deal by standing by them and cultivating public opinion.



"You will allow me to say that you have not done all that can possibly be done by you. I would ask you to do infinitely more than you have done in your popular Councils and the Legislative Assembly. I have invited Her Highness to help us in organising a referendum, but there is nothing to prevent you from having a referendum by organising public opinion; and you know as well as I do that blind orthodoxy will not stand the fierce light of criticism, of local criticism, provided it is sympathetic and non-violent. You have, according to the census return, a population of 60,000 Brahmins, nearly 8 lakhs non-Brahmins and 17 lakhs of untouchables. The untouchables I am happy to find are educated side by side with all other communities. They are, thanks to God and to the advancement of the State, realizing their consciousness. It is impossible to give them adequate education and refuse them the rights of common humanity. I can see before me in these circumstances a disruption of this beautiful State, if untouchability is not eradicated in the quickest possible manner.

"And whilst I am addressing you, I take advantage of this meeting of mentioning another matter of vital importance i.e., the spinning wheel and Khaddar. As I stated at Quilon I have fallen in love with the women of Travancore. Their spotless, beautiful, borderless, white dress has captivated me. Its whiteness is to me an emblem of their inward purity. But it has distressed me to find these fine and noble women of Travancore as also the handsome men of Travancore, dressed in Manchester or Ahmedabad calico. If I were a citizen of Travancore, I should be ashamed of myself if I dressed myself in calico imported from outside Travancore. Not very long ago every home in this beautiful land had a spinning wheel. Among Ezuvas even today there are a thousand weavers. You have it from official records that India's population is idle for 4 months in a year and no State or nation can exist for any length of time where farmers remain idle for 4 months in a year. I ask you, therefore, to reinstate the spinning-wheel in every home and to dress yourself in Khaddar which is the product of the spinning wheel. It will save lakhs of rupees and it will give the peasants of Travancore a supplementary occupation.

"I congratulate the Travancore Councils on having passed the spinning resolution in connection with Municipal schools, but from what I have been able to see, I am afraid you will be hard put to it, for getting the spinning master for whom the Dewanji is giving an advertisement. When I asked for a workable spinning wheel mere toys were thrown in my face.



"I am amazed and agreeably surprised at the tremendous progress in education the State has made both among men and women. I ask you to study the problem I have presented to you; the problem of charkha (spinning-wheel) and Khaddar, and if you fail to find a flaw in it, I ask you to have sufficient energy and love to re-instate charkha in your home. Let the spinning wheel be the link to bind you to the masses. I will not rest satisfied until the Viceroy and his page, Her Highness the Maharani and her door-keeper, are dressed from top to toe in Khaddar and I wish that I could infect you with the faith that is in me. You will soon find that it will solve the problem of the deep poverty of India.

"Finally, in one of the addresses presented to me a mention was made of Her Highness of having abolished animal sacrifice. I tender you and Her Highness my humble congratulations on this great step. I myself do not believe in taking animal life for bodily sustenance, but I regard it as positively, monstrous when an animal is sacrificed in the name of God, or for God's service, for the required sacrifice is not of animals but the sacrifice of base passions in us.

"I thank you once more for all the addresses presented to me and shall never forget the patience with which you have listened to me. But the real and substantial reward I crave from you is active co-operation with the workers' band at Vykom."

Then came the Municipal address as a matter of course. The box in which it was encased was a piece of fine artistry. It was made of ebony and ivory work was embossed on the lid and the sides. The lid had, of course, the usual conch and elephant, but the four sides represented beautiful aspects of life in Travancore. On one side were the woods of Travancore, on the second the temple, on the third that beautiful lake, Lamba Sarovar, and on the fourth a forest of cocoanut trees with some brave climbers up at their tops to fell down cocoanuts.

In reply to the address Gandhiji said:

@ "I tender my apology for coming 10 minutes before time. Coming before time is as bad as coming after time. I have to rush through the programme of what little I have now to see of Travancore and its condition. I can heartily endorse your sentiments in connection with the Royal Home. As I have been saying to friends, the severe simplicity of royalty in Travancore has bewitched me. I know personally of so many princes in India. I must confess I was totally unprepared for the simplicity of life



that rules the royalty of Travancore and I felt I would be guilty of discourtesy, if I gave no pithy expression to what had so enraptured me.

"At Madras I stated that I loved to myself a scavenger. "Were there any slums?" was my inquiry. I wanted a ocular demonstration. It was impossible to go through the whole town. I have not been able to find many dirty spots, but two spots were found execrably dirty near two houses.

"As a nation we do not know town-life and hence we don't know a proper drainage system. The municipal councillor should regard himself as a custodian of the health of the citizens he represents. Many varieties of disease are due to dirt, filth and filthy air, and bad, dirty, undrinkable water. At Trichy (Tiruchirappalli) when I went there, I witnessed from the window of the house I was staying in an awful sight on the bank of the river early morning. You understand what I mean. I asked Dr. Shastri if people drank of that river whose sacred water was so violated by the people and he told me of the fatal consequences of drinking that water. I sank within me when I found that Tirchy citizens had neglected the problem of pure water supply.

"I, therefore, ask you to stick on the cleanliness of your town. India is one of those places on the face of the earth where none need die of disease, because we have got the hot sun. We need not be afraid of it, if we treat him kindly. But we resist his approaches, deny ourselves sunlight, and stifle ourselves in dungeons, never taking a breath of fresh air. I was glad therefore that people lived in cottages scattered about in this fairy land.

"But I do not know that you have done enough in cleanliness. I must draw your attention to one fact which is endangering the health of the children. And that is defective milk supply. And we have bad ways of drawing milk.

"I am a lover of municipal life. It is my misfortune that I was not able to devote my whole lifetime in it.

"But I have studied the history of a municipal corporation. South Africa is a magnificent land with a magnificent climate. It has got some very noble people and they knew where the world current is going; and though the horizon there is so dark, so impenetrable, I see many a silver lining. Such is the hope of many people in South Africa also.



"But whatever their views in connection with colour, I had learnt a great deal from their management of the corporation. Ugly sights turned into gardens. Johannesburg is a beautiful Town—beautiful for its houses on which fortunes have been Spent—but not beautiful for life. The mines are not good, but they know how to conserve life. When the black plague was raging, they spent money like water and reduced to ashes their noble market as infection was reported to have spread from there and rid the area of infection within 24 hours. I call it sounder municipal economy and soundest sanitation, as it was best to take time by the forelock.

"I dance on the political platform so often, but it is not a dance of joy. There is a sharp distinction between municipal and political life. The line of distinction is subtle, but the line is there. We are often obliged in India to identify ourselves with its political life, but ordinarily, life throughout the municipalities of India should be concentrated in the health of citizens, proper feeding, education of citizens etc. I do not share the belief that municipalities should have only control of education. They should have their share in the all-round welfare of children.

"They should have control over the police also. It is a staggering thing that they have no control. I have come from two corporations of South Africa, whose willing worker I was. They had entire control of the police of their town. That is the municipal life we must aspire after. Municipal work should not be confined to lighting of streets. If I was a minister of a well-ordered State like this, I would endow every municipal corporation with the control of police functions and thus guard the city against robbery and thefts.

"Why are thefts committed? People are not thieves by nature. There is something wrong in the surroundings that turns them into thieves.

"Take the few random thoughts for what they are worth.

"I congratulate you for your spinning-wheel resolution. Make it a point to make it a success by introducing it in every school under your care. If you want to identify yourself with the masses, there is no instrument like the spinning-wheel to tie you to them. I urge this upon not only you, my Indian brothers and sisters, but also upon European friends. They are earning their livelihood in the Travancore State. Is it too much for them to patronise Khaddar? Is it too much to do in India as Indians do, so long as it is not morally wrong? It is not morally wrong for one to prefer products of the country he lives in, to prefer to put a few coppers in the hands of starving millions.



Every yard that you buy puts a few coppers in their hands. Even fine Khaddar is available. I hope, before the year is out, we shall very nearly approach Dacca muslin, 'Shabnam.' In Andhra finest yarn is still produced—better than the finest Paris muslin. Andhra muslin will soon beat it hollow. India is a land of beauty, it is full of art, exquisite artistry. Preserve it with pride and earn the blessings of the poor, for blessings of the poor adorn a nation."

The speech at the Law College was one that even a layman interested in law would like to listen to. Hundreds of lawyers and thousands of outsiders, both men and women, attended the meeting. The sight of unless of his old profession inspired Gandhiji to wax eloquent and he delivered a very long speech.

@ "I am obliged to you for the address. It seems it is left for lawyers to draw upon their imagination in order to ascribe virtues which I was never guilty of possessing. You have referred to my brilliant academic career. Let me give you then a bit of my past life, on which I don't look with shame.

"I never had a brilliant career. I was all my life a plodder. When I went to England—you will be surprised, but it is the truth—I couldn't put together two sentences correctly. It was my first acquaintance with a steamer, it was my first voyage. On the steamer I was a drone. I didn't know whether I would not commit a grammatical mistake or mispronounce a word. Before I started, I was presented with an address by schoolboys not because I had a brilliant past, but because I was the first to sail for England. I stammered and stuttered and shook and could make no reply. I had no mental weakness, but I had not the courage or audacity to say even 'thank you.' What was said was in Gujarati. We had not, in those days progressed so far as you have, and forgotten our mother tongue, and yet that was my plight. I finished my 3 years in England as a drone. Wherever I went, I could not speak. Seeing a lady I blushed, as I did not know how to speak decently, how to talk on nothing I never knew in my life. So long as you flatter somebody in your address, you are a finished drawing-room man. Thus closed my academic career.

"Thus my next voyage. I wanted to be an apprentice to Sir Pherooshah Mehta. He knew the Penal Code and the Evidence Act. He knew them by heart. I did not know them. I went to the late Mr. Frederick Pincott, a Conservative friend of India and a member of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. I poured out my sorrows. He comported himself like a father to me. He had a silvery white beard.



"What shall I do" I asked, "I tremble at the word 'summons.' I cannot handle a case." He gave me sound advice and comfort.

"Dear boy: You don't want to become Sir Pherozshah Mehta?"

"Not by any means. I do not even hope to touch the hem of his garment."

"Your bar is crowded there," he said.

It is nearly 40 years ago now, but I know what it felt like then to be a briefless barrister.

"Application is the word. Don't dread to think of law. Have absolute mastery of facts. Understand human nature. Do these things and you will make a fair show of yourself."

"He gave me 3 books in that memorable interview. It was so striking that I remember the names of these books. Two books were Lavator's 'Physiognomy' and the third 'Physiognomy' by Mr. Shemel Pennik. I learnt nothing from them. But I was always a believer. I respected him (Mr Pincott) for his good wishes. So I read them with as much interest as a young man can. I knew the substance of his remark: 'Know your client and not be bamboozled. Opponents you will know, but not your clients. You flatter their whims and yield to them and a lawyer yielding to his clients loses his client and his case.'

"I accepted this golden advice. I never relied upon my client. I cross-examined him. I criticised him and squared with him. I said, 'Give me the black side first and leave the white to itself.' I told him, 'If you have no case, please go away from my office.' in order not to be misled by him. Another deduction I drew was not to practise in order to make money, but to help the poor and distressed and those suffering from injustice. Distinguished lawyers like Brougham have stated that it is not for you to judge your client's case. No. I think it is your duty to shift your case and throw it overboard, if unclean. Keep your conscience clear. Don't sell yourself for a mess of pottage. Tell your client, 'You have paid me money, leave me alone, don't try to lead me.' If you take that attitude of aloofness, you will have a successful career and have no compunctious visitings of conscience in after-life.

"I have spoken alone of lawyers and their ways. Why? Because I know of all their snares. My conviction is yet unadulterated. I knew the beautiful service a lawyer can render if he wishes. I also know the national cause served by many a distinguished



lawyer. Sir Pherozshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, were no mean but tallest among the lawyers, and were free speakers who would not be dismayed by any Governor.

"But the pattern I placed before myself was another. I am speaking not of the life of Sir Pherozshah Mehta, though he had gigantic common sense, unerring instinct of fastening the eye upon weak or bright spots, and nerves peerless. The pattern I want to leave before you is Manmohan Ghose. He was a friend of the poor. He disdained charging fees when it was a poor man's case. He befriended those distressed and tyrannised at the hands of the indigo tyrants in Bengal. I want you to study such lives. I want you to do better. Do better than those from whom you have received inheritance. Be poor men's friends and then only you will justify the legal profession. Today the majority of lawyers have only one end in view, livelihood and how to shine. But lawyers ought to serve humanity and country and not to increase litigation.

"When I look upon my legal life, I shudder to think of people at many of the law courts. Judges are not dishonest or are not such as don't do justice. They cannot fight lawyers' delays. It is inevitable in the system itself. Even when they do get justice, they have to pay through the nose. 'It is the longest purse that wins. Because I found that the saying was true and it was difficult to get justice, I saw I had a better thing in life to do. But I do not ask you to go so far. Put your clients first. Though the system is rotten, you might be able to do something for them.

"I have presented all students in India a choice. Use your learning for service. Don't think of £. s. d. Learning must not be prostituted for earning a livelihood. It should promote our moral growth to enable us to know ourselves, to know that there is a Maker who watches us.

"If you accept that humble advice, you will need to learn some other occupation, some manual occupation for this body, so that the body should be fed. Mind requires not fish or fowl. But the body should be sustained by bodily labour. Tolstoy says somewhere that he was the greatest man who thought of the charm of bread-labour. And the Bhagvadgita says, 'Don't eat sin. Grind your body and you would shine better and digest better. It is no good—your tennis court. Dig deep in fields and lanes and you will strike treasures.

"As a symbol of bodily labour of sacrifice, I have discovered a priceless thing, the spinning-wheel. They worship Gandhi the speaker and don't think of his work of scavenging. When I consented to come here, I had in mind this home-thrust. I never



disfigured my life, when I handled that (lawyer's) profession and so I say if you want to serve yourself and your neighbour, you will treasure my advice. You will find India's deliverance not from platform oratory, but from the spinning-wheel. India suffers from dire distress and its cause is idleness. I call him an idler who reads pages after pages of novels or Bentham's Theory of legislation. There may be a time for it, but there should be a time for bodily labour. If you can give 2 hours to golf, why can you not for the spinning-wheel? An Englishman said, spinning is a glorious hobby. My head bowed down to him. But the spinning-wheel is much more than a hobby. It is India's link between the masses and us. They see the spinning-wheel in my eyes. They see that I have something loving and beautiful for them. They derive comfort from me, because they think of me as a labourer and poor man.

"Be lawyers, but have a warm corner in your heart for the poor and distressed. I speak of right as a lawyer that you should think of them and take the spinning-wheel. I pity the lawyer dressed in Manchester calico. You who want to be in the forefront, how do you want to lead them? Do you want them to chop logic or grass? Take the scythe or the spinning-wheel to them. Can you feed them by your law books? Every man who spins for half an hour per day feeds at least one man per month. Don't fling a few coppers, but provide some slivers for them, so that God might bless you."

1. A distinguished economist, mathematician, political leader and founder of "The Servants of India Society" which bound its members to life-long national service on a modest honorarium. He visited South Africa to help Gandhiji, who, it may be said, loved and admired Gokhale at first sight and called him his political *guru* ever afterwards.



On the Way to Kanyakumari

14.3.1925

Having gone as far as Trivendrum, is it possible to avoid Kanyakumari, only 57 miles away? On the way lay Nagarcoil, another big city of the State and a labour centre. An invitation from such a big city was quite expected, but even the tiny villages and suburbs that stood along the route at every few miles would not fail to give Gandhiji an address. Receiving scores of such addresses, Gandhiji reached Nagarcoil. At Alwai, the spinning-wheel was conspicuous by its total absence; at Trivendrum there did turn up a lone enthusiastic spinner who had brought with him wonderful slivers, numerous bobbins made of tiny cocoanut sticks and ivory discs filled to the brim with super-fine yarn, and a spinning-wheel ; but on our way to Nagarcoil we came across a noteworthy place, Balarampuram, where thousands of untouchables had collected and where not only lots of spinning-wheels were working in their schools for untouchables but numerous pieces of cloth also were being woven from handspun yarn for sale in a shop nearby.

There was such a mammoth gathering at Nagarcoil, that at first it seemed it was impossible to hold a meeting but, to our agreeable surprise, we saw on return from Kanyakumari that that heaving sea of humanity had calmed down into the silence of a still lake.

There is a pilgrim-centre, Shachindra, on the way. An amazing sight met our eyes there. There was a crowd of about a thousand untouchables standing near the limit of the road which surrounded the local temple on all its sides. They had their address in hand, but how could an address be accepted and a reply made in all that uproar? Gandhiji stood quietly in the car for about 10 minutes and silence spread through the crowd. A man then complained, "*Savarnas* do not let us cross this road." "But where are the *savarnas*?" Gandhiji inquired, because when he arrived there, the crowd of *savarnas* which was standing just near the untouchables, got so mixed up with that of the untouchables that there was an indistinguishable medley of *savarnas* and *avarnas*! Nothing wrong, if in a fit of enthusiasm they mix up, even touch each other, but immediately the occasion that spurred the enthusiasm ended, the *savarnas* would revert to their touch-me-not-ism to keep up their prestige.

Gandhiji has written an article on Kanyakumari.¹ I have, therefore, lost the chance to give my pen a free flight of frenzy in the description of the place. But may I



be presumptuous enough to add a touch or two to the picture Gandhiji has drawn? Gandhiji says that Kashmir and Hindukush form the crown of Mother Bharat. But I, for one, regard Mt. Kailas (the abode of Lord Siva) as her crest. There is wonderful propriety in thus installing Siva, the Lord of Kailas, at the head and making that Virgin, Kanyakumari Uma,—who conquered even Lord Siva Himself—sit at the lotus feet of Mother Bharat. That apart, even a child can see that when you touch the feet of Mother Bharat as well as when you reach her head, one and the same quality of moral grandeur—that of *tapasya*—gleams upon your mental sight. Even I did not have the *darshan* of that austere anchorite Uma.² I did, however, circumambulate the sanctuary of Her image, in the dark with the aid of an oil torch. But on returning I heard that *savarna* Satyagrahis were not allowed even to enter the temple and 'Satyagrahis' means those who are offering Satyagraha at Vykom!

On his way back from Kanyakumari Gandhiji addressed the monster meeting already referred to at Nagarcoil:

@ "I am deeply grateful to you for all the addresses presented to me and the sentiments you have expressed in them. I am sorry that one of the Ali Brothers is not with me in this tour, but it was not possible for any one of them to accompany me this time.

"You have referred to various things to which my activities have been devoted. One of them has brought me to Vykom and therefore to Travancore. I have said so often and repeat it here that untouchability and unapproachability are a great blot on Hinduism and every Hindu has to hang his head in shame, so long as the blot remains as it is. I, therefore, ask you, all those who are considered to belong to *savarna* division, to extend your hearty support to those who are engaged in fighting the evil. I have said so often, if untouchability was discovered by me as an integral part of Hinduism, I would disown my religion. I wish I could induce every Hindu, man and woman, to feel as keenly as I do on this question.

"I have just now arrived from Kanyakumari and visited the temple, but my heart sank within me, when I understood that those who were considered untouchables and unapproachables could not be admitted to it. I refuse to believe that that God, whom Hindus worship in common with the rest of mankind, is a respecter of persons. I ask you, therefore, not to rest content until this blot is entirely removed.



"You next mention the question of the poverty of the masses and I venture to think that it is the spinning-wheel and spinning-wheel alone that can remove the growing poverty of India; and I was distressed to discover that this part of the country, which was known for its spinning and weaving, was one in which the race of spinners had died out. When I ask the princes and middle class people, men and women, boys and girls, to spin half an hour everyday, I ask them to do a penance for the sin committed by us in consigning the spinning-wheel to flames. Not until the princes take up spinning can we ask the thousands of poor in India to take up the spinning-wheel, nor would it be possible to make the spinning a profitable occupation, so as to abolish the pressure of Japan and Bombay. If we really feel for the masses, if we really want to remain in touch with them, it is our bounden duty to purchase a spinning-wheel and purchase and weave the yarn they spin. Every yard of Khaddar you buy means from 2 to 3 annas in the pocket of poor people. I, therefore, hope that every one of you present here and everyone of those not assembled here, to show his affection for me, shall commend my message to all and lose no time in taking to the spinning-wheel.

"Equally important for us is the question of Hindu-Muslim unity, meaning unity among all the inhabitants of India. But I need say nothing on that question, for it is fortunately no problem with you. I tender my congratulations to the Municipality for the efforts it is putting forth to render the place perfectly habitable and sanitary for the residents. I thank you once more for the addresses and pray to God that He may give you wisdom to accept the very simple message I am delivering to the whole of India.

"A friend reminds me that I should make a mention of the address of the students of the Scotch Christian College. I know that there is an indivisible bond between the student world and myself. No matter where I go the students and the poor are always with me and the students are often kind enough to listen to the bitter truth I sometimes tell them. I know that although they listen to me patiently, they do not always follow out what I tell them. Well, in the hands of students lies the future destiny of India and I ask them to understand their education in terms of villagers. I ask them during their vacation to go to villagers, study their lives and make common cause with them and take part in their sorrows. I venture to suggest to them that that will be practical education. Let them translate to practise lessons they might have learnt on sanitation. Let them take the spinning wheel and spin in the midst of villagers to show them what they mean. Let them take a few yards of Khaddar as they go to



villages and teach them the economics of Khaddar. Let them learn the uses of a few simple medicines and take them in their pockets and distribute them to villagers when they are sick. Let them examine their tanks and wells and if they find, as I know that they will find, that the water supply is tainted, let them take steps to make it pure.

Let them take a broom in their hands and not speak to them but give an object lesson by removing dirt with their own hands. I may assure them that the little work done in a village will be more valuable to them than their studies."

Gandhiji went back to Vykomb from Trivandrum by the motor route on 15.3.1925, so that he could visit Changanur and Kottayam—both Christian centres. He had long talks with the Christian friends there. They all wanted to know from Gandhiji why he poured cold water on their eagerness to help the Satyagraha at Vykomb. Gandhiji made his stand on the matter very clear by his question, "Do you, or I ever think of intervening in a dispute between Shiya and Sunni Mohammadans?" He meant, as it was an internal quarrel among Hindus, non-Hindus need not interfere; but he asked them to help in the solution of the question from the political angle.

18.3.1925

In a letter to Gandhiji the Sanatani Nambudris of Vykomb had requested him to meet them on his return to Vykomb, so that they could furnish him with the religious sanctions he had asked for in support of the ban on Vykomb Temple roads. In his reply, Gandhiji had thanked them for their letter and stated that he would be glad to go through it, if they could provide him with an authentic extract from Shankaracharya that supported the custom of unapproachability as at present practiced by them. Hence, Gandhiji saw them again. The Nambudris produced a book called 'Shankar-smriti' (the code of Shankar) and pointed out writings from the book which state that a *rajaswala* (a woman in her menses), a close relative of a newborn child or a recently-dead person, a *chandala*, etc. cannot go near a sacrificial *vedi* (a fire place) and they must keep a certain number of yards away from a newly-built house where an entrance ceremony was being performed. But there was absolutely no mention of a temple; nor was there anything that stated that the present Thiya, Pariahs etc. were the same as 'Chandalas' mentioned in the book. When Gandhiji said that he did not want a text on unapproachability in general, but on unapproachability as was practised today, the Nambudris had then to resort to the plea: "There is no text that sanctions



the present custom word by word. But we draw the inference of the present custom from those texts." And then added: "Our usages, moreover, are even anterior to those texts and we are not going to change our usages because the text is found to be inadequate."

@ Gandhiji: Yes; they are free, I am bond man. But tell them this is not a secret conclave and I will publish all these things to the world and ask the Government to take steps making the orthodox position quite uncomfortable.

It is on the general question of unapproachability (i.e. distance pollution) that we have got these texts; not as regards particular roads.

Answer: These authorities are proper so far as the general question of unapproachability is concerned. It is true they do not refer to roads.

Gandhiji: All authorities stated here are on a par with Manusmriti and Yagnavalkya-smriti; you must show such texts from which your present position can be deduced. We run away with ourselves and distort the texts that are found. I am away from my mother and wife, if they are *rajasvala*, you don't ask them to run away. You cannot ask the Thiyas to run away, you may run away from them."

Answer: "How will the temple run away?"

Bapu: This text, therefore, does not apply to temples. And it has yet to be proved that Shankara-smriti is an authentic work of Shankaracharya.³

Rajaji: "Do you now agree to refer the texts and authorities to a learned man? Are the texts authentic and do they support the contention of the orthodox in Kerala that certain people because of their birth can be prevented from entering public roads?"

Gandhiji: "(to Kerala workers) Intellect divorced from the heart is a prostitute. Take the referendum yourself. You cover this land with meetings and get up petitions. Supposing you produce signatures of 30 thousand Brahmins out of 60 thousand, it will be sufficient they (the State Government) were prepared to support the Resolution, but they thought that they should pass legislation; and legislation through the legislative Council or by Proclamation was not justifiable without public opinion behind it. They are trying to find means of giving you relief, but are helpless. Let us now put them (the Government; since they had stated that



the public did not back the Satyagrahis) in the wrong by taking the referendum ourselves."

A meeting of the Pulayas was held in the Ashram premises on 17.3.1925. They gave an address to Gandhiji at the meeting. Gandhiji then fired a volley of questions: "How many among you can read and write?" "How many are drunkards?" "How many extract toddy (a liquor fermented from the juice of a kind of palm trees)?" "How many have their own lands to till?" "How many eat dead flesh?" "How many take beef?"

Then addressing them he said:

@ "It gives me much pleasure to meet you here and to receive your address. It gives me pleasure to secure your address because thereby I form a link between yourself and me. I have come here to this part of India in order to take part in the suffering of those who are trying to get rid of one aspect of untouchability. Many Hindus consider it a sin to touch you. I claim to be a Hindu myself, but I regard it as a sin to say and think that it is a sin to touch you. It may be wrong to touch a man who is dirty, it may be wrong to touch a man who is suffering from a contagious disease, and it may be wrong in a way to touch a man who is suffering from any disease or some such thing, but it may never be sinful to touch such people suffering from a disease and it may never be sinful for me to touch a man suffering from small-pox, if by touching him I can relieve him of pain and administer medicine to him.

"But I do not want to tell you why those who call themselves caste-Hindus do not like to touch you. But I do want to tell you how to command respect of every one. They justify their not-touching on the ground of your being or remaining dirty, on your drinking, or taking the flesh of dead animals, or eating beef. I know it is even then wrong to justify untouchability, for there are many caste-Hindus who are very dirty, who drink, and eat beef, and in many other respects do much coarser things than eating beef and drinking wine and yet they are not regarded as untouchables. Such is the injustice which man does to man. But I want you to so conduct yourselves that there may be no justification whatsoever for the grounds I have mentioned. I would, therefore, ask you to give up beef. Never take a dead animal's flesh. It is often unhealthy to eat such flesh. If you will take my word, you will not eat flesh at all. God has made these animals, not that we may eat them, but that they may adorn nature. God has given us vegetables, fruits and nuts and grain to eat. That is man's food.



"Similarly, I would like you to give up drink. Man forgets himself when he drinks. He loses his reason and he does things in a drunken state which if he were sober, he would be ashamed to do. A drunken man is worse than a beast and it brings him no pleasure to drink. The one result of drink is misery, as everyone of you can see. Every religion worth the name interdicts taking liquor. When we are thirsty, God has given us fresh water to drink. If you want more, drink milk. If you want something sweet, drink hot water and sugar. It will give you more nourishment. If you want spicy drink, drink water with pepper etc. Try it for yourself and think of me and think what an old man told you this afternoon and if you do that, I know you will bless me because it will do you good.

"I notice many of you don't take your bath every day. I can see it from the condition of your hair. It is dirty and dusty and if you were sitting in a closed room, I know you will smell bad. It is wrong not to bathe every day. It is necessary at least once every day to wash ourselves well. Those who keep long hair—men and women—should keep their hair in a proper condition, comb them. Your clothing is also dirty. Water costs nothing. You must wash your clothing every day and you will notice that nobody finds a word to say against you.

"Just as the body, so you have to keep the hearts also clean and therefore the Hindu Shastras have given us an incredibly simple remedy to clean out hearts. Early in the morning at four o'clock, men and women and children should get up, wash their faces, repeat the name of God and ask Him to keep our hearts pure and enable us to keep us away from all sin. Ask God to enable us to keep us so pure, that we may never steal or do any wrong to anybody. And so also at the time of going to bed, ask of God to preserve you and keep all dirty dreams from you.

"I do not know by what name you worship God. Perhaps you never think of worshipping Him who has made you and me. But I give you a simple name used throughout in India. And if you do not know a simple name, repeat the name of Rama—a word simple to pronounce and yet it is of deep meaning and true. Many great saints who lived several hundred years ago worshipped Rama and became free men. They knew no other name. I hope these very simple little things will go deep down into your hearts.

"There is one thing more and I have finished. Perhaps you have not heard the name of Khaddar. You require very little clothing to cover your limbs, but I would like you to wear, not foreign cloth nor cloth made in mills, but cloth made by your hands.



If you do not know, learn it. Education is free here. Begin sending your children to school. I shall pray to God that He may enable you to remember all that I have said and to follow it. Thank you for coming here. May God make you happy."

This is the latest situation regarding Vykom:

Before Gandhiji left Vykom, the Police Commissioner met him with a proposal. He said that if the Government removed the wooden fencing and withdrew the police cordon the Sanatanis would cease to think that their stand had the support of the Government. Therefore, if the Satyagrahis gave a private undertaking not to cross the limit and enter the forbidden road, but to continue to sit where they did at present the Commissioner would withdraw the police cordon and the wooden fencing. Gandhiji thought over the proposal and, on reaching Alwaa, replied to the effect that there did not seem to him much substance in the Police Commissioner's proposal; never the less he was prepared to make a trial for some time, on one condition, viz., if that quietly sitting Satyagraha did not melt the hearts of the Sanatanis within a reasonable period, the Satyagrahis would cross the forbidden limit. They might then be tried under the ordinary criminal law. Gandhiji, therefore, demanded that (besides removing the fence and police cordon) the Government should withdraw its special order prohibiting the crossing of the limit. The Police Commissioner wired his reply stating that the above Government order would be withdrawn on the 7th April and the Satyagrahis, in return, should abide by the condition of not crossing the limit (for some time).

Gandhiji also has wired to the Police Commissioner accepting the understanding and sent instructions to Satyagrahis to abide by it.

This gives the Government an opportunity to show to the Sanatanis that the Government does not support them; if, moreover, the Sanatanis did not soften within a month or so, the Satyagrahis would cross the limit and they would be tried under the ordinary criminal law. That would make a test case. If the people's party win the case, all the roads in the State will be opened even under the present law. If it doesn't, the Maharani may change the law. In the meanwhile, steps are being taken to take a referendum of all *savarna* Hindus.

The manuscript diary records the following speech, but without mentioning date or place:

@ "Brothers and sisters,"



"This visit gives me more pleasure than to a town like Madras. Though I do not weave so nicely as you, I still have the privilege of calling myself your brother. I describe myself as a farmer, spinner, and weaver. But though I do not know the art of weaving, sizing, etc., I sent two sons to learn the art to perfection. They have learnt it in order not to make money, but in order to render service to people like you.

"I see that many of you are not dressed in Khaddar, though you weave yourselves. There are many sisters not dressed in Khaddar and it pains me very much. Supposing you were doing something like this that you baked bread for Madras and got cooked food from there. Now, would you like it? You would reject such a suggestion with scorn. But today such is our unfortunate position that we weave cloth, but buy our own clothing from the market. I hope you will henceforth leave that evil, bad practice.

"I understand that there are here still a few looms that weave handspun yarn. Millspun yarn is not turned out by your own sisters, handspun yarn is turned by your sisters. They may not belong to your caste, but they are your sisters and you should take pride in weaving their yarn in preference to other yarn. It is true, it is difficult to weave handspun yarn, as it is not as other yarn, but it will be strong if you take to weaving handspun yarn and no other. Will you wear handspun and handwoven? (Men raised their hands and women also.) What will you do for your coloured saris? Or will you wear white, like your sisters in Malabar?"

Vykom may as well be said to be the northern top of Travancore, though a little further north there is Paarur and to its east is Aalwaai, both of which were left out when we went to Vycom. When, therefore, we revisited Vykom on our return from the southern tour we went to Paarur and arrived there at 4 a.m. on 18.3.1925. That route also is a water-way on a lake of shallow depth formed from an inlet of the sea, that runs parallel to it till in the end it meets the sea. This lake, therefore, behaves saucily like a child that indulges in pranks as it stands by its mother's side. It tosses the tourist up and down like the waves of a sea. With this exception, the scenery of the coast line present him is as fascinating as before. But near Aalwaai, the boat has to turn into a narrow creek and cross that many miles long but only 25 to 30 feet broad and shallow ditch.

We then reached the town (Aalwaai) by a motor car.



1. Vide Appendix—I.

2. Uma—'O. don't!' as the poet Kalidas interprets the word. In order to please Lord Siva, whom she wants to marry, this daughter of (Mt.) Himalaya goes through penances so severe that her frightened mother exclaims 'O don't!', in order to stop her from them. But she remains adamant and goes without eating even leaves of trees—becomes 'Aparna' (without leaves)—till Lord Siva appears before her and marries her.

3. Every reader may not know that the title 'Shankaracharya' descends on every successor to everyone of the four (and more) 'gadis', installed in India. So 'Shankara-smriti' may not mean the one written by the first Shankaracharya.



Aalwaai

Aalwaai reminded me of the descriptions of Venice we read of in books. Venice is formed of a cluster of small islands. But in Aalwaai even many houses stand individually on separate islands and everyone of them looks like a castle protected by the thick row of cocoanut trees that surround it. Only a boat can take you to your friend's house.

This is the first place in these parts where we had the *darshan* of a domiciled Parsi family. The family has settled there for the past 200 years and carries on an extensive and lucrative business. Their deep love impelled everyone in the family to come to Gandhiji. There are some Gujarati Hindus also in the town. The whole business of the town clusters round the products of three trees: cocoanut, banana, and *ketaki*. The fruits of the first two as well as things made from their other parts, and mattresses etc. woven from the third, are the town's articles of commerce.

The *swadeshi-dharma* (use of things made locally) is kept here with perhaps greater vigilance than anywhere else in India. All the three meals here are made of only local products—rice and pulse—curry flavoured with cocoanut chips, and for fruit they have their bananas. Their plates and bowls that hold their victuals are made from banana leaves and even the bowl of their *kadchi* (a ladle) to serve their curry etc. is nothing but a half of the hard shell of a cocoanut. This strict Swadeshism is due to the belief current here that a Nambudri must never use a single thing made in a province other than his own and the Nayars have adopted the Nambudri culture completely. Even the cloth for the Nambudri's wear has got to be made in Travancore only. But those same Nambudries who have rigidly clung to most of the 64 *aacharas* (rules of conduct) laid down for them have cast to the winds this particular *swadeshi-dharma*, regarding the make of their clothing.

But that is straying away from the subject into a dissertation on the Nambudri's practices, and they are so complicated that once you enter into them, it is difficult to come out of the maze. Let me, for instance, give in passing, two out of their 64 *aacharas*, which are the dos and don'ts for them. Among the dos, some rules of cleanliness are very hard to keep, but one of the don'ts viz., a Nambudri must not spin, seems rather strange. It is possible that the prohibition was imposed at a time when all around him were spinning and it was thought that he would lose his prestige if he also spun like the rest. But there is another custom which is not only strange but queer. Only the eldest son of a Nambudri family is allowed to 'marry'! This rule is rigidly



observed even today, with the result that the younger sons contract *sambandhas* (contacts or relationships) with Nayar girls. They are only *sambandhas* and are not called *vivaahas* (marriages). Another outcome of the rule is the fact that late marriages are very common among Nambudri women, and some have to remain spinsters all their lives. The question then naturally arises, if Nambudris can form *sambandhas* with Nayar girls, how does their pristine Brahminhood continue even afterwards! But man has always found out clever devices to silence the uneasy questionings of the mind and that is easily done in this case, since the *varnashram-dharma* has now come down to nothing more than sanctions and taboos with regard to dining with others and touching them. A Nambudri may carry on a *sambandha* with a Nayar woman—nothing wrong in it—but must not dine with her. And the children are not admitted into Nambudri families, but must stay with their mothers. And then there steps into this muddle the law of inheritance prevailing among Nayars. Thus there is no end to the tangled skein of the situation. I must, therefore, end this side-story right here.

At the time fixed for the public meeting in Aalwaai, there was such a heavy downpour that no meeting could be held. Only, the Municipality gave its address and the people presented a purse to Gandhiji. It must be added here that all the purses presented to Gandhiji were given by the people with a clear knowledge of the fact that they were to be used for the Vykom Satyagraha.

Replying to the address of the *Adwaitashram* of Aalwaai given in Sanskrit Gandhiji said,

"I thank you for the beautiful address and for the excellent pronunciation of Sanskrit words with which an *antyaja* boy read it. I am sorry I cannot reply in Sanskrit, but even if I were a Sanskrit scholar, I would not have replied in that language, because unfortunately we, Hindus, have neglected Sanskrit and we cannot now expect the masses to understand it. But in order to align myself with the Sanskrit atmosphere here, I would have spoken in Hindi, if that were possible. But then you would not have understood Hindi! And that shows how tragic our situation is. I wish the managers of this Ashram made an arrangement for teaching Hindi so that every student might understand it. It is necessary that we should understand our limitations. It is beyond our power today to bring back the Sanskrit climate, that is, to use it for all our day-to-day work. But it is not at all difficult to use Hindi for the purpose.

"You have as your motto: 'One race, one religion, one God.' I had a talk with Sri Narayan Guru Swami on this point and you have besides given the first place to the



motto in your address. I am, therefore, compelled to refer to it in my reply. I think the ideal you aim at through that motto is too high for mankind to realise. I can understand the principle of one God. No matter if we worship that one God through a myriad approaches. He responds to our devotion. But I feel that humanity cannot do without a variety of sects and religions, as long as it lasts, since our minds differ with every individual. If we cast a glance at Nature's phenomenon, we find it filled with infinite varieties and it is through that diversity that God, who is One becomes many,¹ i.e. assumes countless forms. I think it is going against the trait of Nature to wish that at any future period in the world's history, the whole of mankind will follow one religion and hold one view. According to my limited *shravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*,² I feel that mankind cannot do without the *varnashrama-dharma*³ and hence varieties in religion and thought seem to me to be unavoidable. Our aim, therefore, should rather be tolerance than uniformity. If it ever happens that we all hold the same view, where then is the scope for generosity,—that excellent quality of the mind? But to hope that all will think alike one day is to hope to see a chimera.⁴ The only thing, therefore, possible for us to achieve is to bear with one another's views. From my Muslim friends' point of view, I am a born idolator, a believer in *avataar* (God's descent on earth to relieve distress) and re-incarnation. I have but to cultivate tolerance for Muslims who do not believe in idol-worship, in the possibility of God's *avataar* and perhaps even in re-incarnation. Being a believer in the concept of an *avataar*, I cannot accept the view that Jesus and Jesus alone was the Son of God. But I must put up with my Christian friends who believe that only Jesus and no other was the Son of God; in the same way Mussalmans and Christians should not feel angry at my prostrations before Kanyakumari or Jagannath (—Lord of world, mis-pronounced and misspelt as Juggernaut). I see the age of tolerance coming in my own life-time, since, at the root of the *dharma* of non-violence, at the root of the *dharma* of truth, lies this same attitude of tolerance. Like God, truth is a diamond of countless facets. I must not, therefore, hold the fanatic belief that mine is the only correct view of truth and no other's is. I feel that the age is now coming, when we shall follow in practice the *dharma* of mutual tolerance and love. If, therefore, I do not succeed in persuading Sri Narayan Guru Swami to accept the motto of 'Tolerance', I shall satisfy myself by interpreting his present motto in my own light.

"But let us now leave this discussion of an abstruse subject and come down to a homely topic. If it is beyond us to have the ideal of 'One race, One religion and One view,' we can for the welfare of the land, hold before us the ideal of doing one thing



every day without fail. When shall we learn to link up ourselves with the poorest of the country by wearing Khadi? It is easy to gain the power of this *mantra* at least—this *mantra* of identifying our own interest with that of our poor neighbours. Instead of talking high of love for the whole world, it is quite enough if we have the natural love that proves its existence by implementation, when we wear the cloth spun and woven by our own neighbouring sisters and brothers and give up the calico made in far-off Ahmedabad, Japan, or England. Sri Narayan Guru has assured me that he himself will spin henceforth and will not be accessible to those that do not wear Khadi.

"We must act upon this *dharma* of love and non-violence in another thing also. It is our inviolable duty to free our country from the sin of regarding our own brothers as untouchables and shunning them. A *savarna* Hindu defended himself by pointing out to me that Ezuvas themselves consider those lower than they as untouchables. There is no question that that attitude shall have to be given up. He added moreover that the question of untouchability would be solved automatically, if only the Ezuvas and Pulayas gave up drink. I don't think that that was a proper defence, but we must take advantage of this advice and do what is our duty to do. We need not retort that *savarna* Hindus also drink privately. Let us see our own faults and remove them and that is enough. I hope in this Sanskrit (— (1) civilized or cultured and (2) permeated with Sanskrit language) atmosphere, you will take to heart what I said in brief and proceed quickly towards the ideal of that *dharma* which Sri Narayan Guru Swami is cherishing."

I have already written something about the Ezuvas and made a passing reference to their education and culture. The reason for their remarkable progress in education lies in the three facts that all the schools in the Travancore State are accessible to untouchable children, the latter take full advantage of this open door, and out of the 4000 villages in the State there may not be a single one without a school. Travancore, therefore, bags the claim of having the highest literacy standard in the whole of India. The number of educated men and women goes up to 380 and 175 per thousand in this State and no province under British rule or no other Indian State can claim that record.

We made this whole trip in the South along the Western Coast only by a car or a boat. Proceeding in the morning from Quilon to Trivendrum we came across a very pleasing sight—hundreds of children going to school with not even a baby of 3 or 4



without a book and a slate in hand and there was quite a large number of untouchables among them.

The *antyajas* of these parts have shown themselves as possessing a very sound organizing power. This capacity to knit together found among the *antyajas* of the whole of Tamilnad—not of Travancore only—surpasses that seen among them anywhere else in India. *Antyajjas* have their own barbers, *dhobies*, even ironsmiths here. Have the *antyajas* on our side formed such a phalanx? Sri Rajagopalachari has admitted *antyajas* in his Ashram at Pudupaalayam and that has raised a commotion in the surrounding villages. But he told me that it was possible that the Ashram might be boycotted by all but the untouchables, but the latter had assured him that in that case they themselves would provide the Ashram with carpenters, ironsmiths, barbers, etc.

The *antyajas* in Travancore seem to be even more organized and self-reliant. It has already been stated that there is the *gadi* of their Guru installed at Varakala. The Guru has built his *mutt* on a hill that presents an entrancing view. Everything is spick and span about the *mutt*. The Sanskrit pronunciations of a boy of the school conducted there were so faultless that they would put even a Brahmin child to shame. At a prayer meeting at the *mutt*, two children recited *mantras* from the Upanishads with an intonation astonishingly perfect. As for Malayalam schools under the Guru's charge, their number is legion. Narayan Guru Swami possesses, over and above a large number of gardens, 25 lakhs (hundred thousand) in cash, presented to him by only Ezuvas. Then again at Aalwaai, about 60 miles from Vykomb, there is another *mutt* of this same Swami. As it stands on a beautiful spot on a bank of the river there, that Ashram too is a sight to see. There is a school, called *Adwaitashram*, that teaches Sanskrit there.

Swamiji wishes to open a number of such schools. A good many *brahmacharis* also look up to him as their Guru and wear the *sannyasi's* ochre robe. In short the Swamiji has tried to completely imitate the ways of Brahmins and imitation itself shows the greatness of the thing imitated. Both Brahmins and Thiyas therefore stand to gain thereby, but if the Brahmins do not wake up to the demands of the marching times, they will be put in a very shameful situation.

On the other hand there is need for a curb on Thiyas also. Deep down in them there lies, it appears, a desire to attack their own religion. It is likely that they may be nursing the feeling of giving up their own religion, as their fellows of the faith not only do not wish to accept them into their fold, but have a positive aversion for them. Hence, some of them see nothing wrong in propagating a separate religion of their



own. At Madras Gandhiji had even to make an *antyaja sannyasi* repent for his speech. The latter gave a clear threat that if caste Hindus did not take heed and mend their ways, a number of *antyajas* might go over to another religion. Gandhiji rebuked him severely for the threat, impressed upon him the fact that *antyajas* were not obliging anybody by continuing to remain Hindus and, said, "To be a *sannyasi* and hold out threats to browbeat others is to put God to shame." The *sannyasi* was so deeply touched by the reproof, that he immediately discarded his ochre robe, presented himself before Gandhiji in white Khadi and expressed his regret for the speech.

When Gandhiji asked Narayan Guru Swami, 'What is your religion?' he did not give a direct reply, but said, "Not a single religion. I believe simply in one religion, one race, and one God." The address which the children of his Adwait ashram at Aalwaai gave Gandhiji was in Sanskrit and the very first sentence in it also stated, "We, the representatives of the Adwaitashram, established by Sri Narayan Guru Paramahansadeva (highest yogi is called Paramahansa or Paramahansadeva. Sri Ramakrishna was called Paramahansa), with a view to spread the *arya*-truth (a Buddhist word) of 'One race of mankind, one religion and one God' beg to offer you our hearty welcome." Then in the appreciation of Gandhiji's virtues it was stated that he had Jesus' spirit of renunciation, Parthasarathi's (Arjun's) skill in defending *dharma*, Shakyadev's (Buddha's) non-violence, Shrimad Shankaracharya's intelligence, Rantidev's⁵ compassion, and Mohammad the Prophet's steadfastness. One Thiya worker, it was reported, gave the name 'Mary' to his daughter and 'Mohammadali' to his son.

Our tour in Travancore ended with the visit of Aalwaai. We then went to Trichur, a town in the Cochin State, simply to see the retired King of the State. He had sent two or three telegrams earnestly requesting Gandhiji to spend at least one day with him. Not one day, but one hour was given to him. The Maharaja repeatedly emphasised one thing: "Custom is always more powerful than everything else—reason, philosophy or equity, and we are slaves of custom." "We are slaves" are the very words he used and when he uttered the words he felt as happy as a man who called himself 'an humble servant of God'! That was the first time we met a man who deified custom and worshipped that idol! One of the sons of that same Maharaja was educated in England and has now returned. He keeps even a spinning wheel and is an excellent spinner! When the Maharaja was asked, "Is there any justice in allowing a Christian or a Muslim



to pass by your palace and forbidding a (Hindu) Nayadi?', he countered, "How is it injustice to ban Nayadis just because we can't stop Christians or Muslims?"

But the Maharaja's son condemns untouchability. He even gave Khadi in charity to the Nayadis in honour of Gandhiji's visit, and remarked, "I hope this atrocious custom ends soon." But what has been carved on the tablet of memory most deeply is neither the gigantic meeting at Cochin, nor the meeting with the quondam Maharaja, nor with his son, but the tragic darshan of the place. Even the famine-stricken skeletons at (Jagannath) Puri may not present a scene so tragic and heart-rending. The latter are, after all, hungry and starving, but there are thousands who come forward to feed them. But these are the despised, the abominated, those treated as the cast-away as the refuse of the species. Their sight impels one to sink one's head in shame. The programme fixed for Gandhiji included a welcome address by the Nayadis. The whole thing must have been the work of that enthusiastic Prince of Cochin. But who among the Nayadis could muster sufficient courage to approach Gandhiji—a caste Hindu—and hand him the address? Too timid and embarrassed to bring it to him, they all kept at a distance, as if they were ashamed of their birth and their existence on earth, and were shying at their very shadows. Gandhiji asked them to come near him. But would they or could they do a thing they have never dared till then to do? They had to be bodily lifted and put in the car. Squirming and ill at ease, they seemed from their scared looks as if they were dreaming some awful dream. Like a prisoner who feels himself at sea, if he is brought out into the light of day after long years of confinement in a dark cell, these people lost their bearings at the contact with a human being not of their class. Then these abjects, these spirits that seemed to belong to another world but had a human body, were taken out of the motor and carried up the hill; and they *ran* away into their caves.

From Trichur to Palghat. What a terrible strain a journey on these roads means has not been told. But only today's itinerary, given by way of a specimen, will show what kind of a tour this one in South India was. Early at 4.30 a.m., meeting at Paarur; then to Aalwaai by car; 3 Meetings there; then at 11 a.m. by train to Trichur; meeting with the Maharaja, procession, and 2 meetings there; start for Palghat at 3 p.m., reaching there at 7.30 p.m. by a motor ride along the roughest possible hilly road; an extremely ill-organised public meeting there—owing to the jostle of the crowds, it was 8 p.m. when Gandhiji could reach the rostrum!—torrential rain; women's meeting at 9 p.m.; theological debate of pandits, from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m.; visit of the Shabari Ashram



of Krishnaswami Iyer, 2 a.m.; rest at the station at last at 2.30 a.m. This is the relentlessly non-stop programme of 22 hours in one day, but there were many such in the Southern tour. This instance has been given only to show what amount of work people take from Gandhiji.

1. एकोऽहं बहुस्याम् "I am One, let Me be many." That is an explanation of creation as given in an ancient text.
2. Three stages by which truth is revealed to a man. *Shravana*—listening to religious discourses, *manana*—reflection over what was heard and *Nidhidhyasan*—complete concentration or absorption in the thing contemplated.
3. Of course, in its original untainted form, Gandhiji receded very much from his early position in later life, by discouraging the differences on the ground of heredity. He encouraged inter-class marriages, and approved the *pratiloma* marriage of his son—a Vaishya (husband of a lower caste) with a Brahmin girl (higher caste) a practice condemned in Smritis which say that such a couple and their progeny are 'Chandalas' (who are the 'untouchables' according to the Smritis) and later on he gave his blessings only to a mixed marriage between an *avarna* (an outcaste), whether a bridegroom or bride and a *savarna* (a caste-man) . Vide infra; p. 129
4. Gandhiji uses a popular Sanskrit simile आकाशकुसुमवत्—as impossible as the existence of a flower growing in the sky.
5. When he was just on the point of breaking his fast of 48 days, which he had to undergo because he gave away his food to the poor every time, some starving beggar approached him. The king gave away the food to him and died.



Religious Debate

I am not going to give here more than a skeleton of this debate which lasted late till the small hour of 1 a. m. Gandhiji began it with a brief statement of his view. Then one Shastri, who was also a lawyer, gave his arguments in English in favour of retaining untouchability and at the end another Shastri pleaded for its removal in Tamil. It must be said to the credit of the Sanatanis (orthodox) of South India that at every place we visited, they were invariably courteous, modest, and well-restrained in speech and deportment. This advocate for untouchability dwelt for a long while at first—for about an hour and a half—upon self-realization or knowledge of the *atman*, upon purity of the heart, upon regarding every human body as a temple of God, and so on and so forth, and then at last gave quotations from the Smritis in support of his stand. He could not give any saying from the Smritis that directly supported the present ban against the use of roads by untouchables, but declared that the present prohibitions were only the natural deductions from the restrictions which the Smritis impose. He stated that the whole structure of untouchability was based on this one sentence of Manu: चांडालश्चपचानां तु बहिर्ग्रामा-परिश्रयः¹ And then he entered into some practical arguments: "Once give them leave to pass by you or your temple and tomorrow they will walk on your decent trunk roads, fish and flesh in hand."

Gandhiji asked him the definition of a 'Chandala' (as given in the Smriti) "All those who contract *pratiloma* marriages and their descendents,"² he stated. "Is there any text that shows that those whom we speak of as untouchables today can be termed Chandalas?" asked Gandhiji. He said, 'No', in reply.

The reformist Shastri also gave a reply full of deep erudition. It is interesting to recall his history. The Shastri was a believer in untouchability at the time when Gandhiji started his campaign. He began to search for authentic refutations from the Shastras to give a fitting reply to Gandhiji's challenge. But the search ended in the conversion of the Shastri himself into an opponent of untouchability, since all the texts that he came across turned out to be those that demolished the custom of untouchability as at present in vogue! In his reply he stated that the untouchability enjoined in the Shastras was confined only to certain acts and some physical states; that an immediate bath was all that was needed for purification from that untouchable state; that just as a woman in her menses remained untouchable for four days, an *antyaja* did so for only that short time during which he did his dirty work; that there was absolutely no mention of the fifth class (the present *panchamas* the fifth class) in the Shastras; that



untouchability or unapproachability applied only to objects, not human beings; and that nobody was a fallen soul from his very birth, but only his attitudes and acts degraded him—a Brahmin became a Shudra by bad acts and a Shudra became like a Brahmin by good deeds.

Gandhiji put several questions to this Shastri also about that last statement, but if I enter into the narration of those questions and answers, this report would grow too long. It must be added, however, that the whole theological discussion was very enlightening.

1. It means: Roundabout habitation (परि:=roundabout, श्रय:= residence) outside, or on the outskirts of a village (बहिर्ग्रामा) of Chandalas and

Shwapachas (=dog-eaters).

If what a Sanskrit scholar told me was historically correct, viz., Chandalas were front-rank soldiers of a king to protect his village—and their 'round-about' and not *en bloc* habitation seems to support the view—then it is logical to infer that they were not unapproachables during that *smriti* period. For, soldiers have got to be settled on the outskirts of a village, and not outside—away from—it, to enable them to protect it properly. Then even this text does not support unapproachability, if not untouchability also, because Chandalas formed only the outermost ring of the villagers—translator.

2. Vide *supra*; footnote p. 122



Khadinagar

Our next halt was at Tirupur on 19.3.1925. It is a veritable Khadinagar (a Khadi town), with rows and rows of Khadi shops. The production of Khadi in rupees is five lakhs and the number of handlooms at work is one thousand. But Sri Santanam said that if Khadi could be sold out immediately it was produced, the number of persons wishing to spin was so large that the figure of production would go up to 50 lakhs in rupees. Each and every Khadi shop-owner invited Gandhiji to his shop and presented some Khadi and some cash. The Committee had organised an excellent exhibition of spinner women. There is a village, Induvanapallam, about 3 miles from Tirupur, where all the looms except two or three weave hand-spun yarn. When we visited this village, we saw all the processes for producing Khadi, including that of sizing going on there. All the processers were clad in Khadi, but not all the weavers. Gandhiji made the latter take the vow to wear it.

The municipality in its address called Gandhiji '*Khadi-raj*' (king of Khadi) and welcomed him in 'Khaddar-capital.' Gandhiji in reply said:

@ "I thank you for all your addresses. I am sorry that the Ali Brothers are not with me owing to their pre-occupations in Delhi and Bombay. The municipal address calls this the Khaddar Capital and calls me the Khadi king. I am certainly flattered by that description given to me, and I do feel that if any place can be called Khadi Capital, Tirupur deserves to be so called, but I am quite aware of my limitations. I realize what a poor Khadi king I must be, for it (your address) only shows 10,000 wheels and 1000 looms and the sales do not amount to 50 lakhs a year. When you realize what the Khadi king aspires after, you will realize what humility must cover him when you give him these figures. But that is not the worst of it. I was told that though the district produces Khaddar of Rs. 50 lakhs, not more than 10 per cent is used here and when I look about this meeting I realise how true the remark is. During my visit to local Khadi stores, I was given this sample book by the Bhandar (emporium). I do not know whether all of you know what Tirupur is capable of giving you in the shape of Khaddar. You have different kinds of cheques, a variety of colours, and all Khaddar is by no means too thick for wearing in this climate. There are many here who are capable of weaving 20 counts and even finer counts. You can see here a variety of *chintz* also and also spotless white calico and those who like borders can get the borders too. Yard for yard the price of these is no doubt greater than the Bombay or Lancashire calicos. But when you compare the durability of both, I am sure you will find this cheaper. I also



present you with the universal experience of those who habitually use Khadi. Their tastes are so turned that they begin leading a simple life.

"But whatever it may be, do you not owe it to those poor men and women in villages that you should wear their wares? Your love is indifferent if you think of Punjab in preference to your parts. If everyone of us saw to his neighbour's needs, there would be no starvation in India. The Khaddar message is an inestimable message. I would ask you everyone individually to adopt Khaddar if you have not already done so and I would ask you everyone to reinstate the spinning wheel. Without voluntary spinning we cannot cheapen Khaddar and it was because of the immense possibilities of the spinning wheel that I could venture to place before the Congress the Khaddar franchise.

"I saw sisters spinning. I have visited also a model weavers' village. If you had seen them working at the spinning wheels and seen what happiness it has brought their homes, you would soon be converted to Khaddar. I have heard that for want of patronage the Khadi Board cannot provide thousands of these women with work. I ask municipal councillors to visit these villages and realise what work is necessary.

"I am glad you are not pestered with problems of untouchability and unapproachability. I am convinced they are no part of Hinduism.

"Regarding Hindu Muslim unity, I must say that it is impossible to reach the fullest height this nation is capable of, unless we realise the unity of all communities.

"The fourth thing is temperance. Throughout my wanderings in Travancore and Cochin, I was told that drink had destroyed many a home. I hope you will tackle the problem if it is there.

"I thank you once more."



Rajagopalachari's Ashram

From Trichur we went to a small village, Pudupalayam, in Truchengod county. Sri Rajagopalachari has founded an Ashram at that far-off village and that has brought it to light.

The story of the local zamindar Sri Ratnasabhapati Gavandar deserves to be recorded in the history of the non-co-operation movement. When Sri Rajagopalachari was carrying on a thriving business as a lawyer, one of his clients was the father of this zamindar. One day he said to Rajagopalachari, "If you make my sons proficient in English, I shall present you a village." Rajagopalachari refused, but the lawyer and the client grew into close friends since then, and in the end the zamindar's sons began to look up Rajagopalachari as their father. When Rajagopalachari renounced his practice, the eldest son, now grown-up, treated the erstwhile lawyer with even greater reverence. Sri Rajagopalachari then made him first of all give up drink, then bad company, and finally led him on to the use of Khadi. When that stage was reached, the zamindar requested Sri Rajagopalachari to found an Ashram at one of his villages, Pudupalayam. He presented him for the Ashram a charming orchard with trees, that were and are a feast to the eyes. So Sri Rajagopalachari established his Ashram there and is now the zamindar's neighbour. This 'Ashram' means nothing more than four or five huts with walls of mud and roofs of palm-leaves. It is in those small cottages that learned men and lawyers, like Santanam, Narayan, and others, as well as adepts in Khadi, like Sri Eluvaliar and Sri Lankapati are living in company with four or five untouchable children. The Ashram collects cotton, prepares slivers and weaves the yarn spun by the hundreds of women who stay roundabout, take away the cotton stocked in the Ashram and bring its yarn in return. This yarn is mostly not of less than 20 counts and the Khadi woven out of it is excellent in quality. All the rules of Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati are kept there and the monthly food expense does not come up to more than 10 rupees per head. The whole family of the zamindar neighbour, Ratnasabhapati Gavandar, came up to Gandhiji in the evening. He has a large family and those present were seven or eight women and four or five men. Addressing the women Gandhiji said, "These are all foreign clothes I suppose?" Sri Rajagopalachari had not till then introduced them to Gandhiji sufficiently well. He now did so; "Everyone of them spins and weaves and wears only self-spun Khadi." On the next day (d.20.3.1925) Gandhiji paid a return visit to the zamindar. Even at his palace the zamindar was conducting a veritable Ashram. Gandhiji saw all the women sitting in the



garden and absorbed in spinning excellent yarn. No visitor could fail to be struck by the perfect cleanliness and simplicity of the house. I was shown a strong big chest, filled with hanks of yarn in two separate heaps—one for giving away to the Congress and the other for the use of the family's clothing needs.

Sri Rajagopalachari has admitted 5 *antyaaja* boys in the Ashram and that has already started a commotion in the surrounding villages. "Has it not shocked the zamindar and his family?" Gandhiji asked Rajagopalachari. "It, certainly, was a shock," replied Rajagopalachari, "but he understands that untouchability is a sin and continues to come to the Ashram and help it. Only, he is possessed with some fear that the villagers might grow furious. But the Ashram has been started for the very purpose of reforming the people by putting up with their first reaction of resentment."

Gandhiji spent two days in the serene atmosphere of this beautiful spot. Before leaving it on the third, Gandhiji explained the aims and objects of the Ashram to the villagers gathered in a public meeting there. The usual cymbals etc. were, of course, played upon during the hymns, but a harmonium was also used. Gandhiji said:

@ "It is a great pleasure to meet you in this out-of-the way place. I was desirous to hear your music. Song plays an important part in the development of national life.

"But there is song and song; and that makes all the difference in its different varieties. There is song that ennobles and song that degrades, and when you get a real good song full of devotion and fervour, it ennobles. Such are our devotional songs all over India.

"In olden days we had our own stringed instruments. Today the harmonium has displaced those noble instruments. I wish we could revert to the stringed instruments. They produce a deeper melody and, so far as I am concerned, produce a far more ennobling effect on me than a harmonium, and in a place like this I was unprepared for the jarring effects of harmonium.

"But, unfortunately, anything that is new seems to please us at the present moment and we seem to dislike everything that is old. If, however, we are wise, we would use our discrimination. Everything old and ancient is not necessarily bad, not everything ancient is necessarily good. For example, sin is as ancient as world itself, but no one has yet been found to contend that because it is ancient it is good. Similarly truth, though it is as ancient as God Himself, is ever good and never bad.



"I would like to talk to you of one good thing which was ancient and we have lost and one bad thing which is ancient and we have retained. When I look at all of you—at the sisters—I find many with foreign clothes on. I would like you to consider what the wearing of foreign cloth means. More than a hundred years ago everyone of our forefathers wore Khadi, everyone of them had a spinning wheel in their home, and just as today you have a kitchen and a cooking stove, so you had a spinning wheel in every house over which women spun. The village weavers wove the yarn that our sisters spun and we clothed ourselves that way. If everyone spends for himself 8 rupees per year and if there are 500 people here, we spend Rs. 4000 a year. Today you are sending nearly 4000 rupees away from your village to Manchester, Japan or Bombay. On every case it is bad. In ancient times, therefore, we were doing what was good and right for our country and which kept it from hunger. We have changed it and the result is in a famine year we don't know what to do. I would like you every one to take a vow not to use henceforth anything but Khaddar. I would ask you also to introduce a spinning wheel in your homes. That will be our *Kamadhuk* (wish-fulfilling cow).

"I observe with the greatest pleasure that our friend Ratnasabhapati Gavandar has introduced a number of spinning wheels in his house. It was a noble sight for me to see the ladies of his house spinning away when I had the pleasure to visit his house. He had the cloth woven out of yarn thus spun. He and his people were clothed in Khaddar from top to toe. God had given him plenty of money and it was not for money that he took up the spinning-wheel and Khadi. But he has done it for the sake of his country and religion. But we are poor, we should do the things for our own sakes.

"Now a gentleman has given me some money with which to buy cloth and food for the poorest of the poor. I do not believe in distributing food even among the poor, if they have strong arms and feet to work with, nor do I believe in distributing clothes, when now people can work for them. In my opinion our rich men do wrong philanthropy when they distribute food and other things to please their fancy. Such charity is to be reserved for those who are disabled, blind and old and infirm, those who cannot do work. Therefore, in consultation with Sri Rajagopalachari I have come to the conclusion that this money should be used in distributing cloth to the poor at less than the ordinary bazaar rate for such cloth. Ordinarily, I must confess, yard per yard Khadi we produce is dearer than bazaar products and many people here tell me that they would gladly purchase Khadi at the same rate as the bazaar cloth. I,



therefore, make this offer to you that those of you who are poor and cannot wear Khadi, shall pledge themselves to use Khadi henceforth. To them Khadi will be given at less than the bazaar mill-cloth rate and if there are more poor people than can be supplied out of the money we have I will get more money.

"That is the good that we have given up and which we should restore. I must now talk to you about the thing we are refusing to give up. That bad thing is untouchability. It is one of the greatest curses that is damaging our country and religion. Claiming to be a Sanatani Hindu, I tell you our religion does not countenance untouchability, as we practise it today. Untouchability is a sin, if Bhagwadgita is one of our great books. There are only 4 varnas or castes, not five. There are, undoubtedly, some verses (in other books) which do refer to untouchability, but not the untouchability of today. But that untouchability is applicable to certain occupations and to certain states. When my mother or my sister or my wife is sick, I may not touch her, while the sickness lasts. When my mother cleans her other smaller children, she is an untouchable until she has had her bath, and so is the scavenger who cleans my closets, until he has cleaned himself after cleaning the closets. Untouchability is a temporary state to be practised only in respect of such occupations that involve dirty work, but it is a crime and a sin to regard a person as untouchable because he is born in a particular community. And after all what the Shastras require of us is that all we have to do in case of touch is to bathe. But the untouchability of today has degraded a fifth of the human race. It carries with it the suppression of our country. It has set up a system of superiority and inferiority. The so-called caste-Hindus treat the untouchables with contempt. They sinfully give them bad, dirty food. They simply let them use bad public roads. They sinfully degrade them in every way imaginable. I venture to say that there is absolutely no warrant in our Scriptures for such inhuman treatment. It is contrary to humanity, to religion, to *ahimsa*, to say that a caste-Hindu may not serve one who is stung or bitten by a serpent or a scorpion. On the contrary, my religion teaches me that if I see my son and an untouchable boy bitten by a snake, I must prefer the untouchable boy and serve him to save him. God will never forgive me if I forget the untouchable boy. There is no way of self-satisfaction except the way of complete self-abandonment. I ask you to shed this bad habit, no matter how ancient it may be.

The third is the drink curse. I know that many in this Presidency are given to this habit. Everyone in this company who is prone to drink habit will, I hope, give it up in



its entirety. Drink makes a man forget himself. He ceases to be a man for the time being. He becomes less than a beast and he is unable in his drunken state to distinguish between his wife and sister. He loses control over his tongue and other limbs. It never does the slightest good. I hope, therefore, you will combat the curse with all your strength.

"Now it is in order to rid you of the disease of untouchability and drink and to clothe you in Khaddar that Rajagopalachari has placed himself in your midst. He has a band of able, intelligent, self-sacrificing young men to assist him. Sri Gavandar has placed at his disposal his beautiful garden. They have left all of them their remunerative callings in order to serve you. Already within a few months hundreds of spinning wheels have been revived. Several hundred women are receiving cotton from week to week. They have turned it into yarn and brought it from week to week for being woven into cloth. This is at your disposal for being woven as Khadi.

"But he and those few men cannot render you much assistance unless you assist them. This is a poor district suffering from famine for the last 3 or 4 years and I assure you there is no insurance so effective as the spinning wheel to remedy famine and you can help it in a variety of ways. Those well-to-do can spin half an hour every day. You can learn carding and spinning at the Ashram. You can take away cotton, card it, and deliver the yarn free of cost. That will enable Rajagopalachari to sell Khadi at a lower rate than today and for you it costs nothing but half an hour's labour. Those of you who are fairly rich can supply him with cotton, and if you can give him, each one of you a little, Khadi can be supplied even cheaper than Manchester. Those of you who cannot afford to give cotton may give cash. The Ashram is public property. You have a right to see it any time you like. It is in your midst and so long as you find that it is a healthful activity and serves your district, you are bound to serve it in every way.

"Since he (Rajagopalachari) and I and many of us regard untouchability as a crime, we do not observe any untouchability in the Ashram whatsoever and they ask you by their conduct not to regard any man untouchable and regard him as touchable as your brother and sister. But they do not ask you to intermarry or interdine, though the members of the Ashram themselves or I do not observe the restrictions as to interdining. I think it is impossible for them to observe the restrictions as to interdining. The analogy between their like in our Shastras is that of a *sannyasin*. Their endeavour is to leave behind the life of a *Grihastha* (house-holder). Let there be no mistake. They do not claim to be full-blown *sannyasis*, since they have separated themselves from



the general body of people and devoted themselves entirely to the service of the country. It is, therefore, not possible for them to distinguish between men and women. They must train all classes of people who come to them. All must follow the order of the Ashram—all rules about sanitation, cleanliness, devotion, clothing etc. In these circumstances they cannot possibly, without doing violence to the inmates of the Ashram, make any discrimination, but they do not ask you to copy them in these matters, because you are not subject to the rules and restraints of the Ashram. You are living the life of *Grihasthashram* (house-holder's life). You are entitled to follow rules about inter-marriage and inter-dining. All that you may not do is to treat the untouchables with contempt.

"And mind, this Ashram stands for teetotalism.

"All these things you can have from the Ashram. In my opinion the country will not come its own if you have not thousands of such workers for the country. I ask you, therefore, to appreciate the existence of the Ashram in your midst and render it such service as you can and receive a thousand-fold in return.

"Thank you for giving me such a patient hearing."



21.3.1925

Address to a meeting at Tiruchengodi:

@ "As I saw this morning at the Ashram women streaming in, and being served with cotton, I felt that millions of women like them had, and could have, no other occupation than the spinning wheel. If it were not for our satisfaction, satisfaction with our own lot, pauperism in India would make life a terrible burden to us. Just picture to yourself an India with fully 1/ 10th of her population living only on one meal a day which consists of a piece of bread and a pinch of salt and you will have a conception of the misery of India. It is not a picture drawn from imagination, but it is the statement of facts collected by the inexhaustible energy of the Grand Old Man of India.¹ It was he who first introduced us to statistics which were first prepared by English administrators and which showed that India was growing poorer and poorer. Now the remedy for removing that distress lies in our own hands. We are responsible for that distress. We gave up the use of cloth that was woven by our weavers and yarn spun by our own sisters. We began to adopt calico from Japan, Manchester, and lastly from Bombay and Ahmedabad and in doing so we did not care to understand as to what happened to our neighbours. We did not stop to think that the use of calico of these mills deprived the poor labourers and agriculturists given to spinning during their spare hours of a portion of their livelihood. It was the crime for which we have paid heavily and are still paying. But happily it is not yet too late. If only we will cease to be callous and indifferent to the suffering of our countrymen, we will yet awake and remove the suffering by taking to the spinning wheel.

"I have been visiting the Khaddar centres of South India and I am told that if people of this Presidency patronise Khadi of the poor of the Presidency, it was possible to place in their hands a few coppers per day. Everywhere they complain that they are obliged to turn away women who come to take cotton because they are not able to sell the cloth produced. I plead with you therefore—any one of the men and women who are able to hear my voice—that you will purchase the Khadi woven by your men and spun by your sisters. It is the easiest service you can render to the motherland. If you will be only good enough to be satisfied with Khaddar, you will be able to help your countrymen and in order that we can reach the fineness of yarn necessary for fine Khadi and in order that we can produce Khadi at cheap rates, I ask you to give half an hour to the country and spin on the spinning wheel. It is an incredibly simple and certain solution of the problem which has been engaging the best of our men for the



last part of a generation. You are unable now to complain of want of means to learn spinning or to secure Khadi. You have in your midst an Ashram established which is devoting the whole of the energy of the best of the youths of the country to the propagation of Khaddar. You have but to walk there and you can get your spinning wheels for nothing; you can have spinning wheels, you can have Khaddar to your satisfaction.

"Equally important is the question of untouchability, if we want to save our religion. I am not tired of repeating that untouchability is a curse. As we practise it today it has no warrant in our scriptures. It is contrary to humanity and reason. It is a denial of God. God never made man in order that he may consider his brother an untouchable. I do not ask you to dine with anybody, nor to give your daughter in marriage to anyone you don't like. But I do ask you not to consider anyone untouchable, if he was born in a particular community. God will cease to be God, if he will create a single person with the hallmark of inferiority. Go to the Ashram, look at the Panchama boys. A little touch of kindness, a little touch of humanity and love, has made them one flesh with the whole Ashram. They are as intelligent, as lovable, as anyone in the Ashram. They are as pure, and as God-fearing, as the highest Brahmin in the Ashram. Let us ,therefore, shed our arrogance and save Hinduism from an impending ruin.

"Then the problem of drink. Let us copy the noble example of Sabhapati Gavandar. It gave me great satisfaction and comfort to find his brother only a moment ago pledge himself heart and soul to temperance and Khaddar. It gave me the greatest joy to see the women of the family spinning away at the wheel. They needed no money. They spin for the sake of the country. So I ask every man and woman to spin today.

"I thank you once more. Bear in mind what I have said and translate it into practice."

After a very strenuous and exhausting journey of many days, we got at last this Ashram as haven of rest. In spite of the people's differences with Sri Rajagopalachari on untouchability, hundreds of men and women come to the Ashram, even drink the water supplied by the Ashram, and have the best of feelings at least at present. Only God knows its future, with Whom it lies!



1. Dadabhai Nauroji, one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, one of its Presidents. and the first Indian M.P. in Britain. He was a well-known economist. Gandhiji refers here to his book "Poverty And Un-British Rule In India"—probably the first publication of its kind, revealing the plight of India under British rule.



27 to 31st March and 1.4.1925.

At the Sabarmati Ashram

2.4.1925

The Third visit of Kathiawar

Botad

This tour differed from the last in some respects. While the earlier was made in response to many Princes' invitations, this one was undertaken to comply with the people's wishes. It was quite in the fitness of things that the first town visited was Botad. Not that the 'caste Hindus' there had invited Gandhiji, but it was Dudabhai's¹ native place and that was enough to induce Gandhiji to go there first of all. After a long stay at the Satyagrahashram, Dudabhai is now here conducting the local *antyaaja* school. It was a very small school when he took charge, but he has developed it into a school of 90 students. The social gathering of the school was held in the *antyaaja* locality itself. The children sang beautiful devotional songs and carried away pieces of Khadi as prizes. There was a sprinkling of caste Hindu townsmen at the gathering, but it was rumoured that Brahmins and Sanatani Hindus had decided to boycott Gandhiji's visit.

Gandhiji said: "Let me first of all know how many among you are *antyajas*. They may raise up their hands." Then addressing the gathering he said;

"You know, I am sure, the reason for my coming over here in Botad. It is Dudabhai's invitation. His daughter, Laxmi, stays with me at the Ashram. She is my adopted daughter. I ask you all to measure her with a critical eye. See for yourselves whether her stay in the Ashram has elevated or degraded her. I don't mean to say that she is now a paragon of virtue, but you yourselves will know how her contact with us has affected her and I hope you will give her pass marks. Somebody tells me that, with regard to the caste-Hindus' attitude towards *antyajas*, this town is the worst in Kathiawar. It has been reported to me that Brahmins of Botad have resolved to see that no caste-Hindu attends this meeting or goes to the station to receive or see me off. But I find that there is a fairly good number of caste-Hindus here. The whole town cannot be stigmatised as bad, because Brahmins have proscribed my visit. One has to go to Travancore to know the full implication of the name '*antyaaja*.' Excommunication



owing to supposed pollution reaches its last limit there. But we do not wish to gain anything by creating hard feelings. The boycott declared by Brahmins has left me unmoved. They are human beings after all. There are many among non-Brahmins also who believe in untouchability. Had I had the time, I would have even gone to them (Brahmins) and discussed the question. Neither with a Brahmin nor with anyone else, we have any quarrel. Let him who regards untouchability as his *dharma* act accordingly. If you (*antyajas*) have *tapasya* (austere penance) and goodness, a time will come when they will see what crime they have been committing against you. Your *dharma* as well as your faith in God are put to a test through your boycott by them. There is only one straight and narrow path for me to take, viz., to walk in the world, head bent in humility, not out of fear of anybody but as a mark of respect for everyone. And yet I have never been a recluse, but lived in this same world and my link with it is indissoluble. That shows, there is no doubt as to what course you should take.

"But you are lacking in cleanliness. You should follow Laxmi's example. Does she not remain clean internally and externally? You should remember Rama every morning and pray to him, "O, Lord! Deign to wash the dirt inside me, as I wash the outer dirt of the body. Who else can cleanse our heart, our soul? Without the Indweller's help it is impossible to clean up the inner being. Others (some caste-Hindus) have begun now to live with *antyajas*, but I see that *antyajas*, are still not free from faults. It is definitely wrong to take the stand: 'Whether we are addicted to bad habits and drink or not, it is our business, not other people's.'

"May Dudabhai live long and may this school have many more pupils still on its roll! Through these blessings, I express my hope that Dudabhai 's contact may raise you morally. Prahlad² had to undergo terrible sufferings, but he never grew angry. Do but your duty and, take it from me, you have conquered the world.

"You must adopt Khadi. This is the age when people fawn upon those who know English, but the time is now coming when they will *salaam* labourers.

"Botad is the first town we are visiting in this tour. I pray to God that he may give you the wisdom to accept the advice I have given. To drive out untouchability is your first business. It is impossible that untouchability can ever be anybody's *dharma*."

The boycott of the Sanatanis can only be termed as extremely temporary, for, after Gandhiji's return from the '*antyajaja*' locality, he was taken back into the heart of



the town and a very large meeting was held in the Darbargarh (royal mansion) courtyard. Gandhiji said there:

"My only object in coming over to Botad was to see the *antyaja* school. This big gathering is a God send.

"And that is excellent, since it gives me an opportunity to give my message to you all. I did not resent it at all when I was told that the Brahmins here were angry and disapproved my activity. But I was hurt, as that is an impediment in the work that is sacred in my view. I am certain, however, that the boycott by all the Hindus of Botad would not have enraged me. I would have taken that total boycott as only showing that far greater *tapasya* was required of me to make my message heard.

"But I cannot give up my *dharma* because the world shuns me. He alone is really a *dharmi* (a man of religion) who stands like a rock on his belief, his duty, or his principle. That is *dharma* for which a man may sacrifice his all, for which he prepares himself to die, but does not care if the whole world condemns his *dharma* as a sin or a sham. That man alone is a *dharmi* in its true sense, who has such deep faith in himself that it impels him to immolate his all at the alter of his principle. My faith in myself as regards untouchability has gone to that depth and that is what makes me proclaim with the beat of drums that untouchability is dirt, is sin, and that there is no resurgence for India till it is uprooted from the land.

"The sparks of the hell-fire of our sins have fallen upon our neighbours also. Not Hindus only but the whole of India is affected with it. How preposterous that we kick out a fifth part of our own society! I call it the fifth part of our body, since that is the figure of the untouchables given to us. As for the Hindu scriptures, I pored my eyes out but nowhere could I find any reference to the 'fifth class'. There are indeed a few *shlokas*, here and there, which say that a man should take a bath after touching a particular individual at a particular time. I am asked not to touch a woman in her monthly sickness. Does it mean permanent untouchability? Where is the mention of anybody becoming untouchable forever, since his very birth? The untouchability enjoined in them has only the sense that we may catch a contagious disease, if we touch any and every body cavalierly and that should not be done. But the Western medical science is replete with such taboos. And a man like Dudabhai! He sings devotional songs and teaches children. It is a sin to regard such as he an untouchable. It is a crime, it is irreligion, to dub the scavenger, who serves us by cleaning our latrines,



an untouchable. So long as all such evil practices persist in India, she cannot live in peace and happiness. I request you all to throw out this sin from your mind.

"Your boycott of me may do you some harm, but me it can't ouch. I have nothing to lose, while it is possible that you may be the losers, for you will then deprive yourselves of the services of a man like myself. That is why I want to say to the *mahajan*³ of Botad that they should think twenty times before deciding to keep aloof from me. To abuse an *antyaja*, to kick him, are signs of irreligion in us.

"I do not see Khadi on your person. Why discard Khadi, of all things? Is it right that our women have to go so far as to Viramgaum to gin cotton in factories, instead of remaining at home and producing Khadi? Is not every woman of Kathiawar our sister, our mother? But you don't wear the cloth made from the yam they spin and that is the limit. I wonder what you lose by wearing Khadi. Is it that your skin has grown so tender that it cannot bear the touch of Khadi? I have called those sisters sitting over there. They have brought their boxes filled with Khadi, examine it, buy it and lessen their burden."

Ranpur is the base of operations in Saurashtra. It is from there that, through his paper *Saurashtra*, Sri Amritlal Seth fires his volleys all around at the Indian Princes. He has stationed himself there because Ranpur is the one red spot (i.e. under British rule) in the midst of the (yellow) Indian States of Kathiawar and he sees nothing wrong in ensconcing himself there with the only object of serving the subject—people of the States. On behalf of the people of Ranpur, Saurashtra gave Gandhiji a welcome overflowing with love. Within only two or three hours at their disposal, the people treated us to a number of hymns sung with cymbals; they had, besides, kept ready for presentation to Gandhiji a purse worth the price of 50 maunds (2000 lbs.) of cotton. But, in the excitement of their enthusiasm at his presence, they did not care much to hear him.

After thanking the people for their addresses, Gandhiji said: "I don't think anybody here expects a long discourse from me. Let me say only this, however. If, for the present, we can do one single thing in this Kathiawar of ours, we can even then stop to some extent the increasing poverty of the people. As to what that thing is, you have referred to it yourself in your address, though in a different manner. The more I move about through the country the more I realize that, unless we succeed in our activity of the spinning wheel and Khadi, there is no hope of releasing ourselves from this impoverishment. Untouchability also has got to be banished. I congratulate you



for the Hindu-Muslim unity that prevails here. If you assimilate in your life all those qualities which you have praised in the address, you will be able to increase the value of your work a million-fold."

1. The reader may be reminded that Dudabhai was the first 'untouchable' to be admitted into the Ashram as an inmate. The step turned out to be a severe test for Gandhiji, as not only did the local supporters of the Ashram withdraw their help, but even Kasturba (Mrs. Gandhi) and the Manager of the Ashram (his nephew) were at first opposed and there was real domestic trouble. But the Providential help of a hitherto unacquainted rich man and Gandhiji's firmness coupled with loving persuasion quelled the outer and inner storms.

2. Son of Hiranyakashipu, an anti-divine king, whose order, not to take Lord Vishnu's name but worship him as God, was disobeyed by this child. All attempts to torture him and kill him were made, till at last Lord Vishnu took

the Man-Lion Form and killed the tyrant.

3. Like Panchayats in villages, this is a corporate body, recognised by hoary custom, of the elders of different communities. Each community also has its *mahajan*. They were a check upon the despotism of the king. In Indian States their power, though much reduced, could still be felt.



Songarh

From Ranpur to Songarh. Ever since the session of the States' People's Conference at Bhavanagar, Muni Sri Kalyachandraji was waiting for Gandhiji's visit there. He wanted to show to Gandhiji that Jain monks also did not think it a lapse from their asceticism to ply the spinning wheel. Unfortunately, I could not wait to see the Ashram there and was deprived of the privilege of listening to Gandhiji's profound speech on the *Ashrama dharma* and the duties of a recluse, but I heard from Gandhiji himself, later on, that it was a delightful surprise to him to see the neat order prevailing there and the anchorites' depth of faith in the spinning wheel and Khadi, even while leading the *sannyasin* life. They say the 'Spinning-wheel School' there had a lock made from yarn. Can there be any more artistic idea than this for giving a concrete shape to their vow of 'non-possession?'

Madhadaa

Gandhi next went to Madhadaa, where Sri Shivjibhai has made not only a museum of *ashramas* and *sadanas* (homes) but also built a temple with an image of Bharat Devi in it. As we reached there late at night and left in the early morning, Gandhiji could not have the time to inspect all these *ashramas* and *sadanas*. But what is essential for the public to know is the fact that at the Udyogashram (Industrial Home), all the processes beginning from ginning and carding cotton to weaving cloth are taught and that Shivjibhai was complaining that the people were not taking a satisfactory advantage of the facilities given by the institution. Whoever wants to learn the whole art of producing cloth can do it there free of cost.

Shivjibhai stated in his report, "Accepting Gandhiji's message, I started this Ashram and buried myself in the spinning wheel; but the monetary help that Gandhiji said would come of itself is still as far away as ever it was". Though it was already late, 11 p.m., Gandhiji took this impatience as a sign of the atmosphere prevailing everywhere and gave a regular discourse upon the duty of a public servant.

"There is an 'Udyogashala' (industrial school), a 'Sevashram' and a 'Yogashram' here. A speech is out of place at any of them. An industrious man is too busy for a talk. If a man be a Yogi, he would not utter a word. And take it from me, when *seva* wags its tongue, it loses all its value.



"Bhai Shivji complained that the Ashram could fare well, if it possessed a lakh of rupees and flung in my teeth my statement that if a man began to spin in earnest, money would flow to him of itself. He never asked me how long he should spin in order to attract money, but expressed his surprise at the absence of its flow, though he had been spinning for so much time. Within 3 or 4 months of starting a work, the man who had faith in it would never chafe at getting nothing from his effort. He would rather think that the work done so far was only the faintest beginning. It is only a sign of want of faith, if, in this country of brave beginnings and short-lived enthusiasm, we take it for granted that fruit will fall into our hands shortly after starting an activity. To those who would interpret my words, I say, 'Don't take them to mean that you can expect the result within a definite time, and you are entitled to give up the work if the time-limit is crossed without any tangible result.'

I can quote numerous experiences of my life, both bitter and sweet, when I felt utterly done up and everyone seemed bitter against me, but when all of a sudden and quite unexpectedly there fell a shower of money. And when I fixed the time-limit of Swaraj in a year', God felled me down with a hard knock. He told me, "Who are you to fix time-limits?" It is true that it was a conditional time-limit, but even though I stated that condition, I should have first gauged the capacity of India and it was nobody else's fault but only mine in wrongly measuring that capacity. All the same my faith today is any number of times deeper than in 1920-21 and it is from that faith that my present tranquility and happiness stem. Those who want to share my serenity should acquire my faith. You have called me the man of peace, but my friend, Mr. Shastri, and the Government regard me as the harbinger of war and strife. It is true that I chant the *mantra* of non-violence, but if abuses are hurled and murders committed in my name. has that non-violence any meaning? I see that the people's mind catch in a perverted form what I say and do. That makes me wonder 'How queer must my non-violence be that it has such a distorted reflection!' In spite of all such obstacles, do I not stick like a leech to the *mantra* of non-violence? I believe in going on with my work, regardless of other people's views. That is why without the fear of getting crazy I cling to it.

"I shall hear with composure both the encomiums of those who interpret my message rightly and the castigations of those who misunderstand me. A man's welfare lies in his steadily pursuing the path that he has deliberately chalked out for himself. I have always had undying faith in dogged persistence. A warrior knows no fatigue. He would only wish to die in harness; and if he saw no victory in sight, he would have the



faith that his departed spirit would see the victory, if he died for the cause. You should cherish the faith that, no matter if death comes from your perseverance in *tapasya* and if the Ashram itself crumbles to the ground, Gandhi's mantra of faith in one's self is the right one and that your *tapasya* will bear its fruit in the next birth.

"Lord Krishna has promised us in the Gita that no work done is ever wasted. We are but His instruments. If we get the fruit of the work done by us, we may put it to a good use; and if we don't, we may dance with joy. We must understand that tremendous effort is necessary to achieve anything. This I say at the age of 56: 'I had imagined myself safe and well protected from error after going through innumerable austerities, but experience taught me that I was not yet so and that brought me to my senses immediately.' I remind you of the saying of a wise man of England. He used to say that nobody should be regarded as wise and happy so long as he is not dead. All is well with him, if, at the last moment of death, his soul attests that God's name remains unforgotten in his heart. But if, just before closing his eyes, he regrets that such and such a work remains undone, that his children are not yet well set in life by marriage, or that his son has not returned from England, then there is no *sadgati* (ascension) for his soul. It is not good for him, if he forgets God at the time of his test. If the name of Narayana does not accompany the passing of the last breath, all that was done earlier is lost."

Referring to the Ashrams with different names, Gandhiji said:

"Udyogashram'—what a fine name this is! Everything is really contained in that single word '*udyoga*' (industry). Since a confluence of *gyana* (Spiritual wisdom), *seva* (service) and *karma* (right action) is aimed at, we should hold before ourselves the ideal of a synthesis of all the three, instead of having separate names like 'Udyogashram' and 'Sevashram.' And for that purpose the novice in Yoga must be told, 'Don't lose your faith in God even for a moment, be very serious in your pursuit and never think of hoodwinking Him.' Don't believe that the people of India are humbugs. They are not. They are, on the contrary, 33 crores of gods, if only we identify ourselves with them completely. But if we don't, they may seem to be even ghouls. For getting such a divine husband as Lord Shiva, Parvati had to undergo *tapasya* for thousands of years. If that was so then, remember this is the Age of Kali (Iron Age). If you think you will be able to bring the holy triad of *gyana*, *seva*, and *karma* here within a short time, you are only cherishing a fond delusion. Showing what a patience a man should have in order to gain *moksha* (release from life and death) Shankaracharya says



that a man can gain it only when he has the tenacity of purpose needed for emptying an ocean with a piece of straw. Now when Pandit Lalan and Shivjibhai have settled here with a desire to attain *moksha*, they should keep greater patience than shown here.

"If they wish that rupees should rain on them, let me tell them that money is after all filthy lucre. What is needed is *sadbhava* (good feelings for all), one of the highest qualities of the soul, and it is that that is difficult to imbibe. When the feeling arises in Shivjibhai's or Lalan's mind that people are chary of giving money, they may take the fact to mean that there is some defect in the firmness of their own faith, in the true vision of their Self. Instead of believing that they had the real vision of the Self, they should think it was only a hallucination they had seen. If we get conceited and vane with just a little superficial observance of *brahmacharya* if we start giving sermons to the world on the strength of a very elementary stage in non-possession, would it not be absurd and even harmful? To me for one, *brahmacharya* seems to be growing in extent and connotation every moment and now I feel that I have not made such a progress in its observance as can enable me to give its complete definition. The same thing can be said of the definition of truth. I have not yet grown so saturated with truth, that I can give a full definition of it. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is also a similar virtue. The sage who discovered and wrote about that quality failed utterly to find a word of a positive sense, and he declared that there was no limit which could confine its sense. It was hence that he coined the negative word '*ahimsa*' (non-violence). He came to the helpless state of those sages who described the Absolute as 'neti', 'neti' not this, not this). Those who want to do *sadhana* (spiritual pursuit) of an Ideal, must first understand this thing and then start their *sadhana*.

The spinning wheel means everything—livelihood, right action and (spiritual) knowledge. I referred to livelihood, because Shivji is not going to live upon air. You cannot live in India of today in that way. It is from your own labour that livelihood has to be obtained. Even if a man wants to be a *Yogaarudha* (established in Yoga), he can do so by turning the spinning wheel. You cannot serve Pattani Saheb through the spinning wheel, but if you want to serve the 26 lakhs of farmers (of Saurashtra), you have no other go but to ply the wheel. Take these my words as written under the seal of Destiny."

It was nearing 11.30. p. m. at night. But would Shivjibhai let the meeting end without hearing Pattani Saheb? The latter had come to the town specially to meet



Gandhiji before proceeding to England. He addressed the villagers in their own homely language:

"Were this an assembly of 'the educated', I would not have stood up before you like this—bare-headed. But here I am standing before people like 'Amba Patel' and 'Aunt Dhani' only.

"In order to show the kind of pleasure one derives from spinning I would say, it gives us the same pleasure that we have from ploughing a field. The tiller cannot understand that pleasure at first—when it is twelve noon with the sun blazing hot overhead, and the ploughshare gets so clogged in a clod that, in spite of strenuous efforts, the clod neither breaks nor loses its grip of the ploughshare and the farmer is compelled to make still more vigorous efforts, exhort his bullocks still more, till at last after a sweating toil the clod comes out and the plough proceeds. But when it rains and pours and there is a bumper harvest and the farmer reaps it and brings home the crop, then only he realizes the joy of ploughing his field. The spinning wheel gives you that joy. I also had just a similar experience at first. The wheel would refuse to turn properly, either by persuasion or pressure, and the thread would snap every third moment. But I had vowed to fast if I did not spin, and so it came to a choice between fasting or breaking my vow, if I did not persevere. Life would lose its meaning if a vow was broken and so I had but to persist. Repeated efforts thus taught me gradually the art of spinning and now my spinning wheel is always at hand in my sleeping room. When, owing to old age and the worries of my work, sleep eludes me, I do not now toss uneasily in my bed, but make a light and sit down to the wheel. Even 2 hours' spinning does not tire me and just as you people sing when you follow your bullocks to plough your field, I too croon my favourite hymns, as I go on spinning. That makes me remember God incidentally and all my heart-burnings and resentments leave me automatically. They say that those who have enough money and to spare need not spin, but I say it is all the more necessary for them to spin, as it makes them forget the worries attendant on responsible work. Of course, I cannot sing as many praises of the spinning wheel as Mahatmaji did. But it is simply preposterous that you should sow cotton seeds, prod your bullocks to produce your own cotton and then send it to foreign countries and wear foreign cloth. I am leaving for England, but I am going to be the same there also, as I am here. It will be a shame for you, if I continue to spin there and you don't here.



"Who is transforming a villain like myself into a good man? At the sight of the Bhagwat I used to wonder how one single brain could compose so many countless stanzas. But now I find that the moment one sutra¹ is produced, a series of others follow in its wake. As soon as I began to spin, others also did the same. I don't mean by 'others' outsiders or men; I mean she, my wife, who has now gathered around her 40 women and they all spin. The wives of my family have also joined the spinning club. It is 12 midnight now—no hour to indulge in a fib. I warn you, therefore, be up and start spinning right now. Otherwise, when I return, you shall have to account for what you did in my absence."

The next town we came to was Palitana (3.4.1925). There was, of course, the Thakore Saheb's invitation, but the people also were wildly enthusiastic. The Thakore Saheb presided over the public meeting and on behalf of the people he himself handed over to Gandhiji their address and a purse.

When he did so, the Thakore Saheb said:

"I thank you for kindly coming over here and complying with the cherished desire of the people. What has been written in the address about the ideals of truth and non-violence is significant. Nobody in the whole of India can come up to you in the observance of non-violence. By living what you preached, namely, truth and non-violence, you have taught to a people, falling from their high spiritual standard and giving way to despair, that those principles are not mere copy-book maxims meant for ascetics only, but are guides of conduct for the ordinary man also. And that has raised the hope that now at last thoughts of violence, and the desire to gain something by untruth and such other bad means will no longer find a place in our hearts. Your Khadi propaganda, moreover, has a direct effect on the people with regard to making the implementation of these ideals feasible. We see in you the embodiment of all these three qualities."

In reply to the address Gandhiji said:

"Your Highness the Thakore Saheb, brothers and sisters,"

"I thank you all for the address given to me. I take it that the fact that it was handed over to me by the Thakore Saheb is an indication of a greater honour conferred on me. I have been praised for many things in the address. It is no longer a novelty to me. Wherever I go, I find those same eulogies expressed in different ways. When I hear all these encomiums, they have only one reaction in my mind, and that is to urge me



to pray to God that the high qualities attributed to me may come true some day in my life.

"Let me state another thing on which these addresses are silent. They all refer to only one party, myself, but it should be borne in mind that there does exist the second party (yourselves). I see that whenever I am praised, those who do so and take part in such felicitations are themselves indifferent about the acquisition of the qualities attributed to me. It is my misfortune that wherever I go, I have to criticise others; but that is unavoidable. It is neither the people's blind faith, nor the princes' civilities, that would like to have. The latter may be delightful to the mind, but what I want is to be a connecting link between the ruler and the ruled. If I can be that, if I can make each of the two parties understand the motives of the other, I shall think that I have done my duties. With Englishmen also I hope to have the same relationship. It is my object to unite Englishmen and Indians into one bond of friendship. But it is impossible for me to achieve that object, if I cannot get sufficient help from the people. I am not saying that I should be helped by the Princes, because I am a people's man, a subject, and wish to remain as such. I can, therefore, understand more clearly the grievances and complaints of the people and may also hold greater hopes from them. Hence, I beg of the people that they make their lives fit in with the qualities they extol.

"I have often stated that just as the maxim **यथा राजा तथा प्रजा** (as the king, so the people) is true, so is the opposite one **यथा प्रजा तथा राजा** (as the people so the king) is also true. If the subjects become true to themselves, there is no possibility of the rise of any ill-feeling for the king. Kings are not bad by nature. But if the subjects grow idle and deceitful, what can the best of kings do? Just think! Our sages have not drawn a better picture of an ideal king than of Janaka.² Rama was a God-man, an *avatara* and has been worshipped as God. Let us therefore put Him aside in our consideration of an ideal king. But all the qualities of a good king were attributed to Janaka by the poet Kalidasa (*sic*). But if that Janaka's ways were not agreeable to the people of his time, what could that king have achieved? That shows that a king can do nothing, if the subjects do not support him actively. I found in Travancore that the Maharani was definitely prepared to do her part of the work, if only the people did their own. But, however much she may wish to do anything, the Maharani can do little if her subjects remain opposed. Suppose I alone took a vow to refuse to recognise untouchability; that alone is not sufficient to bring results. In saying all this in the presence of the Thakore Saheb, I have a slightly selfish motive to serve, because today you all raise me



to the skies, but if you don't do anything and if I chide you tomorrow, you will want to bite at me. In such matters more is expected from the people than from their king. How can a king get any good thing done from a people lazy and steeped in drink? I had a talk with the Thakore Saheb on the drink evil. He said there was no booth here, not even a teashop, and yet there were people who drank clandestinely. What can a king do when that is how things stand? Can any king make his people give up their addiction? The only thing one can expect of a king is that he should have no hand in the degradation of his people.

"That is why so long as the subjects of Kathiawar do not do their own duty, nothing can be done. Without the people's active support it is impossible for us to bring back the prosperity we want in Kathiawar. In order to enable us to see the return of those happy days, I expect more from the people than from the princes. If people give me, princes also will do the same. For that I stretch my hand for alms. There was a time when I begged for money, and people never stinted in giving it. Sisters used to immediately take off the ornaments they were wearing and give them to me. Brothers would give me diamonds and pearls. But today I ask for a different kind of alms and that is transformation in your behaviour. What I want is the disappearance of defects in your acts. That I don't get Wealth you can easily give. Thanks for the purse you gave me.

That too is certain to be put to use. But that alone cannot satisfy my hunger.

"You should have pity, compassion, in your hearts. The citizens of Palitana, which is a holy town, nay, one of the holiest places of pilgrimage for the Jains, do not provide that model behaviour to the country which they ought to. The sight of my sisters not only did not please my heart, but pained it. These sisters do not understand even the very common *dharma* of pity, of fellow-feeling. Whose is the disgrace for compelling the poor sisters and brothers of Kathiawar to migrate from their native land for the mere pittance of a few annas? Both of the princes and the people, I am deeply sad to have say. Were it in my power, I would never let anyone leave the land, even by imposing a law banning evacuation. Of course, for an enterprise let a Kathiawari go anywhere he likes all over the world. There is today not a single corner where you will not find a Kathiawari. Among these there are men of noble birth, Vaghers, Rajputs and others. Todd has written that the history of Rajputana is replete with Thermopoyles. Here also we find the land dotted everywhere with Thermopoyles. It is all right if people go to foreign parts for earning millions. Let them do so for getting



education also. But when a Kathiawari tells me, 'We have come here as we could not get any food to eat in Kathiawar', the thing cuts me to the quick. There is water-scarcity in Kathiawar. There was scarcity in South Africa also, but there the Boer *entrepreneurs* have drawn out water from artesian wells. I was myself a partner in one such farm. There was not a drop of water. But the experiment to water that field of 1100 acres by means of a well dug in a streamlet succeeded. It is right to go on digging to any depth till you get it. The deeper you go, the more is the quantity of water you have. Buried under stratas of the earth there are streams of water and minerals. But this about famine conditions was all by the way.

"If the occupation that was flourishing a hundred years ago in Kathiawar is not revived, banishment is the only way out for the poor. We have but to wear Khadi to stave it off. Use of Khadi, be it thick or thin, is the one salvation for us. I pray to both the princes and the people to observe this *dharma* that is common for everyone, that brings you no loss, that nobody is going to stop you from observing. It requires no costly machinery, and neither deep selfishness nor austerity. The only thing it needs is the mind, the wish. A single piece of cloth wrapped around you makes you perform a great *dharma*. What makes me surprised and perplexed is the question why I cannot get even this simple thing done by the people and the princes, though I am eulogised by them through such addresses. But I am one who listens to the Voice within and so I believe that that sad fact indicates nothing else but some defect in my own *tapasya*. But that does not make me give up my faith. If my *sadhana* is sincere and of the right kind, a day is sure to come when the whole of India will buy Khadi.

"Let me express here again my outspoken feelings ventilated even before Lord Reading and Lord Willingdon: My soul will know no rest, so long as kings and queens, officials and their watchmen, the highest among the people and the lowest, aye, even the scavengers are not clad in Khadi from top to toe. Because there is no other remedy but the wheel for removing our degrading poverty. That is why I have called it our *kamadhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow). I would ask even war-veterans to do this work of spinning. Rama never gave up His bow and arrows, but before Vishwamitra (His Guru) he put simply wooden sticks for fuel³. He never made an exception for himself, never did a single thing that his subjects had not done. The king can never capture the hearts of his people, so long as he is not intimate with every section of them. It is a must for the king to do that thing on which the lives of his subjects depend. That is why naval education is compulsory for the Kings of Britain. King George V himself took black



coffee and cheese on his cadet ship. Such a king alone can assimilate in himself the virtues of his subjects. It is because these people possess such qualities that the king is happy. He may be happy for ever, if he gives up the vices he has. One cannot say when he will throw out these vices, but whenever he does, the whole world will look up to him for his virtues. I wish our princes and people emulated both those qualities and the adventurous spirit of that nation. I wish we removed the defects we have. When the war was raging, professors and barristers of the land took up needle-and-thread in their hands. They used to sew blouses. I was taken up in an ambulance corps. Everyone who could not go to the Fronts in Belgium, France, and other places did at least this work. Experts had contrived to make it so easy that even a man who knew nothing of sewing could make blouses. I can quote many such instances, but let me content myself with saying that if what has been written in the address is true, you should imbibe all these qualities yourselves. What is it that has made you lethargic? What makes *antyajas* use mill yarn? Is it impossible to produce the required quantity of yarn in Palitana? I don't want you to patronise Ahmedabad. I want you to produce the finest possible Khadi right here.

"I visited the *antyaja* school here and I was grieved. It was a whole school, not a class merely, but not a single caste-Hindu competent teacher could be procured for it! Who stands to blame for this? The Thakore Saheb? You regard yourselves as religious men. But may not even a single man out of so many of you come forward to do that work? I should rather hope that Brahmins and Banias went to the *antyaja* quarter and said, "Don't worry. We will teach you." There was not even drinking water in the school. Thakore Saheb! It is your business also. Why should your subjects have to go without water? With terrible hardships these people manage to get some water by digging pits. Though there are wells in the *dharmashalas* (travellers' free lodges) here, no *antyaja* dare draw water from them! I wonder what kind of religion that must be, which provides water for a passing wayfarer but denies it to fellow-townsmen, the *antyajas*! Whoever cares to look into their conditions! And yet they are the very people that claim to be following the *daya-dharma* (*daya-mercy*) *par excellence*. How then are you entitled to be called Hindus?

"There is no place in our religion for the untouchability of the type that is in vogue at present. After pondering over the scriptures, after self-purification, after deep searchings of the heart, I have come to only one conclusion and that is, Hinduism, followed in the way it is at present, is heading only for self-destruction. That is why I



say, 'This is an S O S. Let us all beware!' It is the duty of both the king and the people to save Hinduism. The one right way to reform Hinduism is service of the *antyajas*. Without that purification, we shall not be able to wash out our dirt. That is why I pray to you, I entreat you, to bring the *antyajas* under your wings, to provide them with the means to be as clean as you have become before presenting yourselves at this meeting. If even then they remain dirty, you are free to say they don't deserve to be touched since they are still their old selves of dirt and filth. But I know it for certain that there are thousands of *antyajas* who keep themselves as clean as I. They have all the inherent powers that we have; they are not lacking in a single one of them. Ours is the sin, not theirs, that is responsible for the defects we see in them. That is why I ask you (caste Hindus) to take in hand that question and apply for a teacher's post in that school. One man did come forward but he demanded a salary of Rs. 150/- How is it possible to pay that very high salary? Ask for a salary enough to maintain yourself and open an *antyaj* school right tomorrow. No man should throw his rubbish near the neighbour's door."

When the function was over, Gandhiji introducing the sisters, Nargis Ardeshar Dadabhai Naoroji⁴ and Jamnabehn to the meeting, said:

"The heart of Dadabhai's grand-daughter is large enough to love all religions and she is gentle by nature. All the four sisters have dedicated themselves to the cause of Khadi. She says, she will show her samples of Khadi to the royal family."

Then, right in the style of an efficient salesman, Gandhiji exhibited his wares— Khadi pieces. "Here are nice tablecloths! Even the Thakore Saheb may not have them in his palace!" "See this fine blouse! The thing for one who won't have her baby wrapped in thick Khadi." "May be, there is someone with an eye for design. What does she say to this?"

And finally he said, "As an humble petitioner, as a poor man, as an *antyaj*, as a spinner, as a widow, I say, "Do please do this much at least. Increase your wealth only by fair means, not foul. May the hearts of the king and the people never nurse dirty feelings for each other at this holy place! May this be a place of pilgrimage in its true sense. This is nothing less than a "*Teerth-raj*" (king among pilgrim centres)! Here at least one can be purified. I am going there tomorrow (the Jain temples are situated up on the hills). I am going to see the temples in an attitude of reverence. I am both an idol-worshipper and idol-breaker. May both of you, the king and the people, become yourselves places of pilgrimage and may pilgrims be purified at your sight!"



Gandhiji wanted to serve two objects at one stroke by his ascent of the hill Shatrunjaya.⁵ He wanted to test his own physical stamina and to go round the impregnable castle of the serene and deep religious faith of the Jains which enjoins upon them to conquer a man of wrath by non-anger (or love) and a man of violence by non-violence. Five years ago he had found it necessary to use a *doli* (a litter) to reach the hill-fort Singharh, near Poona, 'but this time, as a happy result of his 21 days' fast, that same Gandhiji was not at all tired even after climbing up the Shatrunjaya barefooted and coming down!

We found here both the deep intensity of the Jains' faith in their religion and its undue exaggeration. The latter has gone so far as to make them quite careless about the preservation of the antiquity of the older temples. They have tried to enhance their beauty by adding more recent structures and even succumbed to the temptation of wishing to make their names immortal or gain cheap *mukti* (absolution) by getting the old temples re-painted and their own names carved as the builders. At the same time one cannot fail to be moved with feelings of admiration and devotion for the tremendous religious faith of those who have built such majestic temples in such a superb situation and installed into them the images of their "Tirthankars" who have attained *kaivalya* (the state of freedom from rebirth). Even now there are innumerable sisters who possess such deep faith as enables them to go up and down this Holy Hill daily for 99 days at a stretch. One sister was carrying an infant of 3 months as she was ascending the Hill. Her companions were uneasy as they thought she was taking a very great risk. But the sister was unperturbed and would say, "The Lord who granted the child, will bear its burden." One of these climbers was even a grass-cutter. She wanted to earn at one and the same time the merit of going up the Hill and of having Gandhiji's *darshan*. She lay aside her sickle and came up saying to her friends, "Grass we'll cut even tomorrow, but can you have the *darshan* of the Mahatma tomorrow?" Is it possible that the Arbiter of destiny, who keeps alive such religious faith even in this age, would let any spiritual harm be done to these people?

Gandhiji went to see Sree Karpurvijayaji (the ascetic) who surpasses all others in Palitana in keeping hard vows and severe austerities. Pandit Lalanji asked the Munishri, "Is the spinning wheel in any way a hindrance to an ascetic's vows?" Munishri: "I must say, it is. The muni who keeps *ahimsa* par excellence and is ever *jagrat* (vigilant) and *apramatta* (unfaltering) may not turn the spinning wheel. But those who do not claim to observe *ahimsa* so nicely can, of course, do it."



Gandhiji: "That means Lalan can ply the wheel only if he does not claim to be the strictest observer of ahimsa? I have never been able to understand how turning the wheel makes for a lapse from the highest ahimsa. One can understand a recluse who, unlike a worldly man, refuses to do anything for self-interest, but for public good he also may spin. Let us take an example. A Jain ascetic may not stir out at night, but if he confines himself to his resting place even when a neighbour's house is on fire and if he does not help him with water, it is not, I think, *ahimsa* but *himsa*. In the same way if a famine is ravaging the land and if the famine-stricken can get food only when they employ themselves in a particular work, then it becomes the *dharma* of the recluse to set an example by doing that work himself. Suppose the people are in distress for want of water, but nobody has the urge to take a spade and a shovel and dig a well, then there is no other go for an ascetic but to take up these implements and start digging in order to give a sermon on self-help by actual practice. It won't do for him to say merely, "Why don't you go and dig a well?" That is real *ahimsa* when, though you do not wish to drink a drop, you would gird up your loins, take a spade and a shovel and would not rest till you provide water to the people. You may not have the slightest desire to drink it, but there is no harm if you do so after quenching the thirst of others. In this way the recluse can do, nay, it becomes his *dharma* to do, many things with the only object of doing good to others. Similarly, when starvation is wide-spread at present, when it is possible for the wretched to get a crust of bread and when it has become the *dharma* of everybody to make the unemployed begin to spin, how is it all right for the recluse to refrain from spinning and merely preach spinning to the people? Why should the people do a thing which appears to the preacher as an unworthy action for himself? Hence, it has become the very *dharma* of a recluse to quietly sit at a spinning wheel and go on turning it. If anybody approaches him for an *updes* (a sermon) he may not even care to reply to him and continue to spin. He may not speak a word even after a second or a third request; and then he may, at last, break his silence and say, "Brother, I have no other sermon to preach except through this work I am doing." Hence, that has become the true *dharma* of *jagrat* and *apramatta* sadhu. It is possible that this work may tempt some sadhu to become selfish. If that happens, he only deserves the fall. He was only a burden on the earth by remaining an idler; but now he will be industrious and earn his livelihood. I accept the ideal of *ekantic* (one-pointed) *ahimsa*. But how lofty that concept is! At present Sadhus behave like worldly men. They eat and drink like all others. wear clothes and live in *upasrayas* (Jain monasteries) built for them by the people. It is, therefore, their



veritable *dharma* to play their part in the life of society they live in. They have but to contribute their due share in that common work for all which renders the highest service to the people."

Munishri: "That means, it is an '*apaddharma*' (the special *dharma* for a man under difficult times)."

Gandhiji: "No. Not *apaddharma* but *yuga-dharma* (the *dharma* for the present era). Today spinning is that *yuga-dharma*, and so long as an ascetic has to depend upon society for the progress of his life's pilgrimage, it is a must for him to propagate the *yuga-dharma* by his own practice of it. At present, it is society that has labored to produce the rice you eat and society that has made the clothes you wear. If a Sadhu sustains his life only on those grains that may have accidentally fallen on the ground, if he is entirely indifferent about his clothes and, discarding all contact with society, lives in some far-off hidden cave, then his case is different. Let him not observe the *yuga-dharma*. Apart from that exceptional case, I would give this same advice (to spin) even to *sannyasis*, since they live in the midst of society and are fed by it. The *guru* of the Thiyas in Travancore is a *sannyasi*. To him also I had this same word to say. I told him, 'Don't accept as your disciple anybody that approaches you without wearing Khadi. That will save you from the pressure of crowds also.' I wish, you also did the same thing. It is possible that imposters may get an encouragement thereby; but then did not hypocrites flock to Shrimad Rajachandra⁶ also? If pretenders spring up from the practice, the harm is all to them and none to us."

Munishri: "I have not thought over this matter so deeply. I shall discuss it after giving it due thought."

From Palitana we started for Amreli. On the way, at Gariadhar, some two or three Dheds stood midway and blocked the passage of our car. Gandhiji called them and said, "Well, what's the matter?" "Please be good enough to visit our Dhedwada (*wada*-locality) only for five minutes. We have the first right over you." Gandhiji burst into a loud laugh, "Yes, indeed. But when I have to give only 5 minutes to the village itself, how can I keep to the schedule if I give them to you? Go to the public meeting." A 'touchable' brother then said, "Yes, come along. No body will stop you." And really they all attended the meeting!



There was quite a similar incident at Lathi also. The *antyaja* locality was there at the entrance. Gandhiji said to the organisers of the public meeting, "But must I not go first to the *antyaja* quarter?" They said, "Yes, Bapu. Do go there first and then come to the bazaar," because everybody knew that it was the *antyajas* and specially two of them Ramjibhai and Gangabehn, who had drawn Bapu to their town. When every weaver refused to weave hand-spun yarn, it was these two, Ramjibhai and Gangabehn, whom Gandhiji found willing to help him. Later on they even stayed at the Satyagrahashram and then at Ramesara (a Khadi centre).

Is there any wonder if Gandhiji goes to their house—specially in view of the following earlier incident? Botad is the adopted home-town of Dudabhai, but his real native place is a village called Devrajiya, where only broken walls of his house are standing now. But when the motor was passing by that village, Gandhiji called for a halt and had the *darshan* of these delapidated walls!

But what was noteworthy at Lathi was another thing. The teacher of the *antyaja* school gave a brief but comprehensive report: 39 Dhed and 10 Bhangi children in the school; 2 out of 47 handlooms weaving hand-spun yarn; an account of the facilities of water through a well etc.; and then a request to Gandhiji to get a temple for *antyajas* built. In his brief reply Gandhiji explained why the Lathi of Kalapi⁷ became the Lathi of Ramjibhai:

"And why? Is there anything very extraordinary about Ramjibhai? But when everyone refused to touch hand-spun yarn, he it was who dared to use it, he and Gangabehn. And what did they lose? He has become famous all over Gujarat. And though he is a Dhed, he went right to Kashi-Vishwanath and taught weaving there. He could even go to Poona and see me in the jail. All that prestige of his arose from one single resolve—that of weaving hand-spun yarn. And Gangabai excels even her husband in the art of weaving. Though she is an *antyaja*, I worship her, since she, that stately woman, is pure and holy and believes in keeping her word. I am not going to encourage you in your request for a temple. I am going to tell the Manager Saheb also not to instigate you. I can get a hundred thousand rupees for you right now if I ask for it, but I am the last person to do so. If you want to have a temple, have it by self-help. I may provide for the satisfaction of the hunger of your body, but for that of your soul you have to make the exertion yourself. If I provide you a temple for no cost to you, you will only make it your ball-room-drink and dance in it. I have seen it done at Dhoraji. If, therefore, you really feel the want of a temple, make a donation list,



subscribe your amounts earned by the sweat of your brow, get Ramjibhai's contribution, and when the list comes to a respectable amount, request your Manager Saheb to put in the amount equal to your collection. If you do that much, I shall provide for a sum equal to the total contribution figure. Do this, if you are in dead earnest for having a temple. And as for the worshipping priest be particular to have only a real *Vaishnava*. There may be three trustees, either the Manager of the temple or the Thakore Saheb when he ascends the throne, myself, and any one whom you appoint; and the temple may remain yours so long as it is well-managed; when it is not, it will cease to belong to you."

This demand seemed to be a rather tough proposition. But a happy incident induced the people to accept it. As Gandhiji was getting up, a girl of 7 or 8 came to him for a caress. Gandhiji did fondle her, but his eyes fell upon the *hansali* (a heavy necklet). "Who would care to bear such an annoying burden! Give it away to me." She began to take it out and with a smile. Her father, the *antyaaja* schoolmaster, helped her. When a small gold button on the nose was also coming out, another girl, the former's sister, came up. Her *hansali* was also given away. And thus, with the 8 rupees presented to Gandhiji and the *hansalis* of these innocent and holy *kumarikas* (child virgins. They are revered by Hindus as the purest creations of the Divine), the fund for the temple was given a start. Everyone promised to do his bit for the erection of the temple.

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1. This is a pun on the word *sutra* which means (here) a shloka (stanza) and a piece of thread.
 2. He was called 'Bodyless' because of his complete detachment. He was God Rama's father-in-law.
 3. A disciple, no matter of what status, was required to bring wooden sticks to his Guru, for the latter's household use and *yagna*.
 4. Dadabhai Naoroji was called the Grand Old Man of India for his yeomen services. He was one of the founders and as well as Presidents of the Indian National Congress. His book 'Poverty and Un-British Rule in India' made a sensation when it was published.
 5. The name has a significant meaning, viz., conqueror of the enemies. The 24th and last 'Tirthankara' (He who makes his own self a place of pilgrimage) is called 'Mahaveer'—'The Great Conqueror' of the enemies like lust etc. lurking within.
 6. A very saintly soul, who was one of the four moulders of Gandhiji's life (Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Rajachandra). While the others fashioned his social and economic views, it was Rajachandra to whom Gandhiji put several religious doubts and whose answers kept him steadfast in Hinduism.



7. The little town Lathi is immortal in the literary history of Gujarat for being the native place of the Thakore Saheb, Sursinhji, whose pen-name was 'Kalapi' (=peacock). He had all the intense emotionalism of Keats and died early at the age of 26 for that reason, but gave to Gujarat a big volume of sensuous lyrics of the modern type.

Amreli

From Lathi we came to Amreli, where a lot of work was achieved. The Municipality as well as the Local Board gave addresses and purses, Gandhiji delivered many speeches, and, seeing the people's love and respect for him, gave them a bit of his mind too. He explained at great length the *mantra* of Khadi to the residents of Amreli since they were not patronizing the local Khadi Karyalaya. But the most important work done was the passing of the resolutions of the Executive Committee. Gandhiji has written a special article on it and I need not say anything more.

7.4.1925.

Dhasaa

Who does not know Dhasaa¹ today? It is needless to even explain to the reader Gandhiji's reason for his visit there. But the people of Dhasaa did not please Gandhiji's heart. Can this lack of lustre be due to the departure of their Darbar from their midst? Quite possibly, because they even prayed to Gandhiji: "We have fallen on evil days. Bring us back our Durbar." "But you have personally done nothing to bring him back.

What can I do? Did you walk out of Dhasaa in the wake of the Darbar? The subjects of Rama had gone mad after Him and left their hearths and homes to follow Him in wilderness. What did you do?"

After this retort in a personal talk, Gandhiji gave vent to the same feelings in his public speech:

"Before I came to Kathiawar this time, I had already made up my mind to visit Dhasaa. But your letter and the Darbar's message were an added impetus. I had come in high hopes. I have not given them up; but after coming over here, they have, if anything, grown dimmer, not brighter.



"The Government ousted the Darbar, because he served the people. But has he been ousted in reality? If he lost the principality of Dhasaa, he gained the bigger one of Borsad. When he was the Darbar of Dhasaa, hardly anybody knew him. But today the whole of India knows that from among the whole herd of Indian Princes there did come out at least one MAN, who sacrificed his all for India and that man was the Durbar. A king is a king even if he rules only a tiny piece of the earth. The Pandavas were the kings of India. But in order to keep up their royal position, they said to Duryodhana, "Give us but five villages, we will not fight with you then." But Duryodhana shook his head : 'No, not an inch of land.'" And so they fought (the Mahabharat War). Since that time we take it that the king of a village is as much of a king as the king of the whole world. All of us must, therefore, realize that though among the people there were some who sacrificed their all, yet among the princes there was only one who did so and that one, our Durbar. If you speak of the Durbar of Dhasaa to people outside Gujarat, they would stare at you in wonder for telling them this magnificent story.

"But has he really lost his kingship over Dhasaa? Why did I call him 'The King of Borsad?' The administration is that of the British Government there, but it is the Durbar's word that sways the people there. He would lose his kingdom only if you, the people, drive him out and tell him, 'Get away. There is no place for you in our hearts.' But I am afraid, it is you in fact who have pushed him out. The world would go to its doom, if a promise given to a person no less than a king is broken. That is *dharma* which keeps a man true to his plighted troth. That man would lose his head who gives a promise to his king and then breaks it. The king has the right to chop off his head. But the times have changed.

Now there are neither truth-speakers left in the world like Harishchandra who would sell themselves as slaves to keep their word, nor kings who are really fit to cut off somebody's head for breach of promise. The *antyaaja* brothers had taken the vow never to weave foreign yarn but that vow they broke. They had promised to give up wine and flesh and that promise they did not keep. That means it is they who drove out the Durbar. The son who does not keep the word of honour given to his father causes the latter's fall. These are definitely not the ways that could retain the Durbar in your midst.

"And what did you, the other castes, do? You also went back upon your solemn promises. If you really wanted the Durbar back, would you be in such a fallen state?"



How many sisters here have worn Khadi? How many of them spin daily? First give a becoming reply to these questions and then only you can rightly say you want the Durbar back among you. Let the Government snatch away the Durbar's lordship, but who can deprive him of the lordship which you have conferred on him? I can understand your obeying orders issued at the point of the bayonet by the Government. You may pay it the revenue dues also. But can your Durbar remain a banished prince, if you, the people of Dhasaa, obey his orders in other matters? What do we mean by '*Ramarajya*' (Rama's ideal rule)? Did Rama possess the sword? It was by love that Rama made His subjects captive. When he began his wandering in the wilderness, the subjects would not stay behind, but followed him. Rama had at that time but to say: "O people, accustomed to ease and comfort, how can you join us in these hard ways of life?" With such earnest pleadings, Rama sent his subjects back. But then they performed *tapasya*, kept vigils, and chanted 'Rama Rama' with their rosaries. And that prince of brothers, the King-designate, Bharata refused the kingship bestowed on him. For love of Rama he took to the *sannyasi's* ochre-robe, installed the wooden sandals of Ramachandraji on the throne, worshipped them by going round and round, and wore Rama alone in his heart. That is why we say: 'May I live in a state ruled by a Rama, have a brother like Bharata or Laxman (Rama's brother who joined him in his exile) and a wife another Seeta!'

"You can get the Durbar back, if you obey all orders sent by him from Borsad. And so, hear you all this my solemn declaration and vow: 'Let everyone, man or woman, start wearing only Khadi and spinning daily; let the *antyajas* weave only hand-spun yarn and put on Khadi; let the caste-Hindus cease to spend their anger on *antyajas*; provide them facilities of water etc. and give up regarding them as untouchables; do this much and then demand from me the answer to your question, 'Where is the Durbar with us still?' Then whether the Durbar comes back to you or not, I at least am certain to give up the fight for Swaraj, come to you, and join you in your *tapasya*.'

"I wonder what makes you sit at this nonchalant ease! You came to me once and indulged in professions of your love for the Durbar. Have they evaporated? Even then I don't question you why you did not send your revenue dues to him. He is not begging for them. On the contrary, he has spoken to you of things that can bring you some coins in your pocket. You complain to me that Kathis graze their cattle on your farms?



But why do you let them? Why don't you protect your farms? Is it the Durbar who has made you weak and helpless? Did he not tell you, 'You yourselves must protect your farms? But you say the Durbar himself had looked after their protection. Then why did you not organise yourselves for their protection? The British Government also permits you to heat back the thieves and dacoits that come into your farms. What has made you such cripples? Make this complaint to the Manager (of Dhasaa) also and if he refuses to heed you, let me know.

“Well, let bygones be bygones. But are you *now* prepared to repair the errors of the past? You had only seen the Durbar gaily attired and turbaned. But today he wears a shirt of thick Khadi does without a cap altogether, and has one thick short dhoti. What are you going to do? Did you discard your turban? Will you cease to be manly if you put it off? I ask you have you done anything that would show me you deserve to call the Durbar back to you? All the same, take but a year's vow from today. Adopt *antyajas* as brothers, let them give up flesh and wine; let them refuse henceforth to weave foreign yarn or wear foreign cloth; and let all of you spin and dress yourselves only in hand-spun clothes. If you don't want to burn up your foreign clothes, tie them up in a bundle. And if, after spending one year in that way, you find me breaking my vow, you may cut off my head and go back to your foreign clothes. The spinning wheel has got to penetrate into everyone of your houses. If you can't get enough Khadi, wear only a loin cloth, even a rag. Embrace the *antyajas*. Let them be allowed to use that water which is only God's gift to you. If you don't do that, believe me, that the world is doomed. Don't think of compelling *antyajas* to drink water from troughs for beasts. When you yourselves do not drink that water.

"Do these simple and straight things which tend to your own benefit and then only write to me, if he Darbar does not return. Though a non-co-operator, I will then send an application to the Government to bring the Durbar back to you. And if even then you don't get him, I will do *tapasya* in your company. May God give you the strength to keep your vow and mine. So that's that. I wept myself out before you and spoke of my hope also. It is now for you to do what you like.”

1. Darbar Gopaldas Desai lost this principality for his fearless espousal of the national cause.



Bagasraa

Leaving Dhassa Gandhiji went to Bagasraa, the little town of the Vajsurvala¹ Durbar. Once upon a time the Khadi produced at Bagasraa was famous all over Kathiawar. Gandhiji was drawn to the town for that old reputation, but the people themselves admitted in their address that they were doing nothing to keep it up. Gandhiji replied:

"I always have a soft corner for Bagasraa. In 1908 I knew next to nothing about a spinning wheel or a handloom, though I did refer to the former in my book "Hind-swaraj." After my return to India it was Bagasraa that was the first to help me in starting hand-weaving at the Ashram. When I was looking out for somebody who would present me the first handloom, I wrote to Sri Ranchhoddas Patwari and he said I would get one from the Durbar Vajsurvala. It was the Durbar who gave me the first handloom and then I got another as well as a weaver from the Nawab Saheb of Palanpur. When, after getting the first hand-loom, the question of how to start working it puzzled me, it was the weavers of this Bagasraa again, who showed their readiness to help me. Bagasraa is the centre of the hand-weaving industry and if the weavers and businessmen of Bagasraa are burning with a passion for the industry, they can provide a sufficient supply of Khadi to the whole of Kathiawar."

Gandhiji then explained the scheme of the Kathiawar Political Conference to collect cotton worth Rs. 20,000/-.

More Heinous Than Cow-Slaughter

At the same meeting, somebody complained to Gandhiji against the widely rampant practice of *Kanya-vikraya* (sale of a daughter in marriage).

"Words fail me in sufficiently condemning this practice of *kanyavikraya*. A *kanya* is as helpless as a cow. Instead of giving her in a suitable marriage as a sacred act, the man who marries her off to any one who gives him money in return, commits a crime more heinous than that of slaughtering a cow. When I think over the question how communities like *chandals* and *antyajas* were formed, I come to feel that the society of those days must have severely boycotted those who had sold their daughters and thus made them untouchables. I think, if anybody deserves to become



an untouchable, it is the man who sells his daughter—though I believe, never should a man and all his succeeding generations remain untouchables for all times."

At that small meeting Gandhiji broached the subject of Khadi in a talk with Sri Amruvala, son of Sri Vajsurvala. He refused to promise to wear Khadi and said, "I may perhaps think of taking the Khadi now, if wherever you go and at every meeting you address, you propagate the Name of Rama, which redeems the sinner and saves one from every kind of sorrow." Gandhiji explained to him in that private talk that it was not possible for him to propagate the Rama-mantra at his meetings comprising of followers of many religions and that if he did so at every place and time, he would encourage cant and hypocrisy; but in order that he (Amruvala) may get an impetus to take the Khadi pledge, Gandhiji carried out his suggestion at the public meeting at Bagasraa itself.

"I came to know Amrubhai for the first time today. He told me, 'We have become sinners, sell our daughters and regard *antyajas* as untouchables; there is only one way to come out of this mire of sin and that is Ram-nam. I request you, therefore, to give the *mantra* of Ram-nam to all and sundry wherever you go.' I suppose, it is because he is Ramayanamad that he made that suggestion. I too am Ramayana-mad, but I am Khadi-mad as well, and two madnnesses cannot co-exist. Hence, I call myself Khadi-mad only. He wants the spread of Ram-nam everywhere. Were it a matter pertaining to Hindus only, I may succeed in spreading Ram-nam to some extent at least, but when among those who hear me there are Christians and Parsis and Mussalmans, how can I make the meeting take Ram-nam? As for cleansing ourselves of sins, one way to do so is *tapasya*. The chant of the Gayatri *mantra* also is able to wash off sins, but I do not see any scope for that practice in these days. In order to save the seeker from all these highly troublesome practices, Tulsidas showed us the never failing remedy² of Ram-nam. Amrubhai also told me, 'Make the people take Ram-nam.' But one must have sufficient fitness, purity, and spiritual power to give Ram-nam to others.

With a flutter in my heart, I did put the *mantra* before *antyajas* and *kali-parajas*.³ But how can I talk of it before you, the '*ujaliparaj*?' Those *antyajas* and *kaliparajas*, poor people, believe themselves to be fallen men and so they may believe in my word whatever it be. I may tell them, 'If you are seized with an urge to drink, take Ram-nam. But how may I say so to you? But since Amrubhai has asked me to put that Name before you, I venture to do so.



"It was Ram-nam that made stones to float on the sea and form a bridge. It was Ram-nam that enabled an army of mere monkeys to make the mighty monarch Ravana lick the dust. It was Ram-nam again that preserved the chastity of Sitaji, though she remained a captive of the demon Ravana for many years, and it was that same Ram-nam that kept pining Bharatji alive for 14 long years, since no other word would come out of his lips than that Name. That is why Tulsidas has stated that Ram-nam should be taken in order to throw out the dirt of the Kaliyuga.

"In this way both the elite and the common people can be purified by Ram-nam; but, for that purification, it should be taken from the depth of the heart. We should attune the tongue to the heart first and then take Ram-nam. Let me give my personal experience. It was Ram-nam that saved me from adultery. I have indeed made very tall claims, but if I had not that protecting shield, Ram-nam, I would have fallen and been unable to call three women my sisters. Thus on occasions when temptations faced me, I used to take Ram-nam and was saved. It was Ram-nam moreover that carried me through ordeals that came my way. It was Ram-nam again that gave me peace in my 21 days' fast and sustained my life. In this way, if somebody asked me, I would go on singing the glories of Ram-nam all the night through. But you may not stay here that long and I too have got to go elsewhere. But if you consider yourselves full of sin and sorrow—and all of us are—you should chant Ram-nam and purify yourselves every morning and evening and before going to bed."

1. Kathiawar is a small peninsula. but under the British regime, it was parcelled out into numerous principalities and small states under the over-lordship of Britain. They were all amalgamated after Swaraj by Sardar Vallabhbhai.

2. Gandhiji uses the popular expression 'Rambana ilaj' meaning the remedy that can never fail to produce the right effect, just as Rama's arrow never failed to shoot the mark aimed at.

3. – 'Black' people, i.e. aborigines etc. In order to give them a more respectable name, Gandhiji propagated the word 'Rani paraj' (foresters) to designate them, just as for *antyajas* (having the lowest birth) he circulated the word 'Harijan' meaning 'God's men'. 'Ujali paraj' means 'White or cultured people.'



Mangrol

The few hours' visit of Mangrol on 8.4.1925 was replete with remarkable incidents. This was the place where, for the first time in Saurashtra, a woman's meeting was held. Gandhiji explained the essential meaning of *Ramrajya* and added that such a *Ramrajya* was possible only through a Sita's life. There also he begged for cotton as the kind of alms he wanted. 112 rupees were collected on the spot and some sisters gave even their ornaments.

After having the *darshan* of the sisters, Gandhiji went to see the Shekh Saheb (the ruler). It was a delightful talk that Gandhiji had. Shekh Saheb is simplicity itself. The room was quite small with only a table and some Urdu-Arabic books on it, and furnished with only a velvet carpet or two plus a few straw mats. Gandhiji congratulated him on his simplicity and remarked: "This reminds me of Travancore; but in a way I find greater simplicity here than even there." Shekh Saheb replied, "But who can approach you in simplicity? How nice if one could carry on with only the necessities you have!" Gandhiji ended these compliments in one short sentence, "But I am not a king!" Shekh Saheb condemned rather strongly the modern fashion of the adoption of English ways of life and of loud professions with poor performance. To show how much he loved spinning he said, "They all spin—the Begum Saheba and others—but I could not learn it. I have grown so old! But I have already got 500 yards of Khadi woven out of homespun yarn." In the end he added, "Communal institutions must not be composed entirely of one community. There should be both Hindus and Muslims in them, so that they may imbibe the culture of each other and lay the foundation of Hindu-Muslim unity solidly."

Among the Kharwas

Gandhiji then went to meet the Kharwas (sailors and fishermen). They say that the Shekh Saheb imposes a fine upon his Muslim subjects for buying or drinking liquor and only the (Hindu) Kharwas drink as a matter of right. The Kharwa children and their teachers were also present. Gandhiji had to make the teacher take the vow of wearing Khadi and to beg for money in order to provide the children with it. One sister took off her two bangles in response to Gandhiji's appeal. During his exhortation to the Kharwas to give up drink, Gandhiji was in a reminiscent mood: "I have been loving Kharwas ever since my childhood, when a Kharwa woman was our house-keeper." Many of them took the vow of abstinence.



A Historical Incident

The next item was a public meeting at Mangrol. It was held in the evening with about fifteen hundred or two thousand attending. The first item—of giving Gandhiji a welcome—was stretched to such a length, that people wondered if it would ever end.

When Gandhiji also was about to lose his patience, the dais on which he was sitting gave way with a crash. Nobody was injured and Gandhiji laughed out the accident with the remark, "O, it was but a harmless earthquake!"—as if that word from his mouth was itself the harbinger of the earthquake that was soon to follow. Some *antyaja* girls, made to sit far away, stood up at somebody's bidding to sing the welcome-song. Though the poor creatures were kept at a distance, it was not possible to sink them into oblivion altogether, when it was a question of welcoming a person like Gandhiji! As somebody was going towards them to ask them to start singing, Gandhiji interrupted:

"There is a limit to human patience and mine too is now exhausted. And now, when it comes to making the *antyaja* girls sing from that distance, I cannot hold my tongue. You may have noticed that every five minutes my eyes would turn inevitably to those *antyajas*, standing over there, in that far corner, beyond the segregating rope. I could not bear the sight of *antyajas* made to sit there. If *antyaja* girls sing from that distant quarter, the address given to me by the local Congress Committee becomes a proved sham and even if it was I to whom it was given, it could only be termed as intended for a hollow show. I have often stated that I am no other than an *antyaja*, a Dhed, a Bhangi. In giving these epithets to myself, I consider myself a man full of bliss, because I can only then make my soul happy and pleased. When I was asked about my profession, I stated I was a farmer and weaver; but in my reply to the Madras Corporation's address, I went a step further and declared myself a Bhangi. Is there then any sense in wishing to have me close by your side and keeping away at the same time those whom I regard as my very own? I would become an impossible person, when I keep those people at a mile's length from me and when, on the other hand, you throw at me sacred verses from the Bhagwadgita to point out my qualities. But if there is any substance in the praises you have sung of me, those girls should be asked to sit just where we are sitting, in our very midst. This will give you a shock and you will grumble, 'Why has this kill-joy come here to disturb our liveliness? So let me first know if you also feel shocked at their coming over here, as I did at seeing them kept



at a distance. We have simply been going on passing resolutions till now. I read maxims for the removal of untouchability written in large letters on welcome-arches. Either all that is mere humbug or this ostracism I see indicates your weakness in carrying out your resolve. It is on the present occasion my business to drive out that weakness. I say, either withdraw the address you gave me or let me go to sit amidst those Dheds. If you sincerely wish that *antyaj*a brothers should sit among us, you may say so plainly. *Ahimsa* is our *dharma*, mine and yours. All religions enjoin the principle of *ahimsa*; only, there is a difference of degrees in its application in life. Infliction of pain on you is, therefore, the last thing I would wish. There would be nothing left of *ahimsa*. If you allow the Dheds to come here simply out of deference to me. Call them here, not out of any respect for me, but out of your recognition of the truth of my remarks on the way to save our religion and out of your feeling that you serve your own interests thereby. If you raise up your hands even against allowing them to be with you, I will not let my heart feel aggrieved and offended. Only, I shall heave a sigh and say to myself, "Dear God! When, O when, and how will Hindus understand the true essence of Hinduism!" Everyone should, therefore, fearlessly raise his hand according to his own predilections and without regard to any personality. More than a thousand hands were raised up, almost all of them in favour of calling the *antyaj*as to sit near them, about 25 or 30 against. It was remarkable that there was not a single woman among the dissenters. Gandhiji then continued: "I am in the predicament of a man who has to choose between two conflicting claims of *dharma*. As those who want to keep *antyaj*as aloof form only a very small minority, it is my humble and respectful appeal to them to leave their seats and form a separate block. If they cannot understand my advice, as coming out of friendliness and good manners, and feel hurt at having to go, I had better go and sit among the *antyaj*as myself."

No sooner did Gandhiji utter these words than that some Brahmin who had only a few minutes earlier lustily sung Gandhiji's praises spoke out: "I am a Brahmin and speaking on behalf of all those who think with me, I say that your suggestion does hurt us. I for one request you to go and sit among the *antyaj*as. We shall keep to our seats and hear you."

That put Gandhiji again into a fix. He said: "We need not insist on the ordinary etiquette of public meetings and ask those few people to leave their seats. In this delicate situation it is best I should be allowed to go and sit among the *antyaj*as."



Doctor Ravishankar then remonstrated in an injured tone, "We voted for you solidly and now it is disgraceful if we let you go there."

Gandhiji was again in a quandary. He said: "You (the majority) have no reason to feel offended. You certainly did not issue a previous notice that *antyajas* would be seated along with others at this meeting. You had, in fact, allowed the formation of separate groups and had I not protested, you would have let the *antyajas* remain aloof right there. It seems to me that insistence on the right of the majority in a public meeting is in this case going to hurt the minority deeply. As for me, I am not at all grieved. Your permission to let me go there is an act of good manners on your part besides." With these words Gandhiji got up and was going to take his seat among the *antyajas*, but just then another gentleman stood up and gravely addressing the Brahmin opponent said, "Now, look here. As soon as Gandhiji goes we are joining him and leaving you here. In any case you will form a separate block. Why not then move away yourselves?"

That Brahmin saw the point and, with two or three others, left his seat to keep himself aloof from the rest. Those others who had raised their hands against the *antyajas*, registered a mild protest, saying, "We will take a bath at home", and kept to their seats! So at last the *antyaja* girls came near Gandhiji and at the late hour of 10.30 or 11 p.m. sang their song:

Is brave as a lion, as Moses meek,
Tho' looks a Bania timid and week¹
That Gandhi came to save the earth
And in Gujarat took his birth.

And then at the end Gandhiji delivered his speech. He admired the performance of the dialogue, thanked the people for their address. enumerated the principal features of a national school and then came to untouchability:

"Untouchability grew into a major question here quite accidentally. The disturbance is, I think, good augury. My congratulations to those friends who courteously left their seats to keep themselves aloof as well as to those others who kept to their seats saying, 'We will take a bath, when we go home.' Had you let me go to sit among the untouchables, it would have been a very good solution, but the way the matter ended was not bad also. The meeting had that right and if I had exerted pressure on you (the majority), that too would have been a lapse from non-violence. I



cannot, I must not, impose a very rigid curb even on those who agree with me. That was why I saw justice in the insistence of those who sided with me and, feeling that the situation had taken the right turn, I remained where I was seated.

"Now I want to say a word or two to those who opposed me. What a pity that though this question is being discussed for the last so many years, you don't wake up to its urgency! If Dheds had come here quietly, without any fuss, and sat among you, nobody would have objected. But it was because the question came to the fore, that it raised all this opposition. (One man just then protested. He said that volunteers had made *antyajas* sit among the people.) If, with everybody knowing that they were *antyajas*, some volunteer had made them sit with others it was all right. But if he had kept the people in ignorance and given the *antyajas* seats among others, it was an act of bad faith. In that case the volunteer cheated me as well as those who regarded untouchability an act of virtue. There should be no compulsion in religion. If there is, it becomes irreligion. If any volunteer has really done so, he should express his regret and beg the people's pardon.

"The interrupter does not understand what I mean to say. You do not shun *antyajas* in railway trains, public offices, mills, and other public institutions, where they get mixed up with us. In the mills we do employ *antyajas* and it is impossible to keep them aloof. If we shut our eyes to all these hard facts and consider those people idiots who believe that untouchability is a sin which has got to be destroyed root and branch, then that is not common sense, not intelligence, not humane behaviour. I ask you to have some practical wisdom. The Vaishnavas claim love as their speciality. What love have the Vaishnavas shown here towards *antyajas*? On my way to Bagasraa, I met some *antyajas*. They complained, "We are not allowed to draw water from wells. We have to fetch it from troughs for beasts." Can you call this pity by any stretch of imagination? Is there any pity in compelling *antyajas* to drink water from troughs which only beasts use and we always eschew? It is sheer cruelty, irreligion, sin, satanism. Neither the *Vaishnava-dharma* nor their gospel, the Bhagawata, enjoins such callousness. If it is proved that some such attitude is tolerated or sanctioned in those holy books, I have nothing to do with that *Vaishnava-dharma*, with that Hinduism. (Gandhiji belonged to a Vaishnava sect by birth). I heard the same sorry tale at Hadala also. And this refusal to give God's gift of water to whom? To the *antyaja* who is a human being like ourselves, has all the five senses as we have, is as virtuous or sinful as we are. 'But he takes flesh!' they argue. He, poor man, takes it openly; but



what do we do to those who take flesh secretly—though it be but an open secret? While we non-challantly commit the sin of cow-slaughter by our *kanya-vikraya* (sale of daughter in marriage), we have the cheek to say it is our *dharma* to observe untouchability! What a travesty! Those who observe that 'Dharma' have no pity in their hearts. They are filled with ruthlessness and sham in every drop of their blood.

The *Manusmriti* enjoins the law of cleanliness only to the extent that a *rajasvalaa* (a woman in her monthly sickness) during the period of her sickness and a *chandala* during his professional work may not be touched. And even that rule of the shastra asks you at the most to take a bath after touching a *rajasvalaa*, a *chandala* or a *sutaki* (a relative of a new-born babe or a person in mourning.) Why then this terrible life-long oppression on *antyajas*? Why all these separate localities for Dheds? Why this severe all-round boycott of Dheds and Bhangis? And yet side by side with our commission of all these atrocities, we claim to be descendents of Narsinh Mehta², pretend to chant the *navakaar mantra*³! As long as your hearts have not melted in pity for *antyajas* all this your high talk is mere bunkum. If the whole of India cried out with one voice that I was a pseudo-Hindu, I would say, 'It is I who am a true Hindu and those who believe in untouchability are Hindus only in name. I will not die without proclaiming with my last breath that that thing is a sin. I don't mind if there is no deliverance (from birth and death) for me, because I have an attachment, a fascination, for his thing. But I never forget, 'Who am I after all to end this evil?' I certainly, wish that Hinduism should be cleansed of the sins of cruelty, untouchability, prostitution, and other evils. That desire persists and I never stint in expressing it publicly. When I shall have the power to gain my object by a mere thought of it, I shall go away to the Himalayas. But at present my life is engrossed in action and, despite all this intense activity, there is no uneasiness in mind. I am sure I am going to sleep in peace.

"Remember this—whoever you be, a Vaishnava, a Shaiva or any other. Your religion is hanging in the balance. You have no idea that in every part and every corner of the world, Parsis, Christians. Muslims want to know which religion expresses truth, which lays greater emphasis on pity and love, which insists upon worship of One God. If at such times you imagine you will be able to protect Hinduism by keeping it safely enclosed in a dirty box, you are living in a fool's paradise. All your sect-marks and all your temples are no use, so long as your hearts are not steeped in love—in love for every man and every creature on earth. That was just why none among the sisters



raised her hand against calling *antyajas* to sit with us. That indicates that *satitva* (the virtue of physical and mental chastity) is not yet extinct in us. All over India I have seen that it is our women alone who walk the straight path. But how is it that you have eyes and see not? How is it that it never enters your brain that sixty millions of *antyajas* is a monstrosity? Even *Malaviyaji* and the Shankaracharya of Karvirpeth say that the existence of sixty millions of untouchables is a travesty of our religion." Here again that obstructionist stopped Gandhiji from proceeding by putting him some question. Referring to him Gandhiji said: "That friend thinks I am speaking out of ignorance and I think he is. Who can judge between us? Only our death can finally decide which of us represented truth. I admit, I am an imperfect man. I do not live up to the truth as I conceive it. Were it not so, would there remain any need for words? Were I saturated with *ahimsa* in every fibre of my being would the friend get angry and resentful?" That gentleman protested : "I am not angry. I am speaking calmly." "But brother, I only wanted to say that the real cause of your anger was nothing but my own imperfection in non-violence. But if what you say is correct, and you have not grown angry, it only proves there is still some degree of non-violence remaining in me and I believe I do have a little of it. What I have been speaking are drops of sublime love. It is 24 carat gold." Again that man made disturbance. Gandhiji warned the audience: "Take care. Nobody should cross the bounds of politeness in speech here. And it is doubly the duty of those who voted with me to put up with that brother. I referred to this question so far only in order to cool down those who voted for me and to plead a little with those opposed. But can everyone be won over in a single night? All I say is that until we make our hearts broad as the sea, there is no Swaraj for us."

While thus there was a tussle with Sanatanis on that evening there was another with *antyajas* the next morning, (9.4.1925). *Antyajjas* too, there is no reason to believe, are everywhere paragons of truth and obedience. When he visited the scavenger's quarter, Gandhiji was at first so impressed that he exclaimed, "O, these houses seem to be built to afford me shelter, if Vaishnavas boycott me!" But while they appeared to be well-off, the Bhangis were found to be full of filth, addicts of drink and eaters of putrid flesh. Gandhiji told them, "I would myself shrink from putting clean children in the company of these so very dirty ones. How can I succeed in my pleading with caste Hindus to mix with you, so long as you do not give up eating putrid flesh?" At Gandhiji's instance they took a vow to abjure putrid flesh and wine. They say they have often taken such vows and broken them. Let us hope they are more earnest this time. But we were yet to meet other untouchables who would refuse to take a vow



thoughtlessly. We met them when next we went to the locality of Dheds (generally weavers) who refuse to touch Bhangis (scavengers). They had collected in fairly good numbers. An aged stout Garoda (a 'Brahmin' of untouchables i.e. one who performs the religious rites of untouchables) with a crafty look in his eyes constituted himself their spokesman. Gandhiji began to ask them:

"I myself come from the Bhangis. Why won't you touch them?"

"No, we won't," said the old man;" to defile our sacred person by touching them! We can't think of it."

"So you are saints and they sinners?"

"We are born of Brahmin ancestors. Their (Bhangis') actions are evil. It is their actions that have made them so."

"But I touch Bhangis. I am like a Bhangi myself and you don't mind touching me!"

"Because you are a man apart—a Mahatma. No evil can affect you. We will not pollute ourselves."

"That means Brahmins and Banias are right in refusing to touch you?"

"Yes; nobody asks them to touch us. If they don't, let them stew in their own juice. It's not our concern."

"Oh, that's that? Well, what's your profession?"

"Profession? Why, I am an astrologer. I can forecast even your future," said the fellow with a broad shameless grin.

"Really? Then do. But send for your almanac first."

The old man could make himself the headman of the crowd because he knew little and they less. Everyone knew him. At a sign from him a child brought him his almanac. Gandhiji then asked him to read his future. The fellow was a little put out and said: "What's the sense in reading your future? You are making the future of the whole country!"

"No, no. Do read it all the same."

"No. Maharaj (term of respect). Not yours. I could read the future of those standing over there."



Gandhiji: "All right. Let me have a glance at your almanac. Bring it here. Let me see how you read it."

The man brought it. He refused to be non-plussed; he had the effrontery to start murmuring, "This seven of Ram (*Aries*), this four of Gemini; this so many of Virgin (*Virgo*)."

"But you are only firing off these words orally. Read this written line."

"Maharaj! That I can't. That (almanac) is (only) our means of livelihood."

"I see it all now." Gandhiji flared up against him, and addressing the *antyajas* said:

"I came across one such crook at Dahod. I see this second sample. I say, you never need to listen to such a fraud. To him I say, he must give up this villainy to fill his belly. Instead of living upon swindling you, he should earn his livelihood by manual labour. His talk was like a dagger-thrust in my heart. He teaches you untruth and cheating. He cannot read a single word and simply hoodwinks you. Have nothing to do with him and let him starve to death, if he does not want to maintain himself honestly. If at that fellow's advice you refuse to touch Bhangis, you are heading for destruction. I tell you, you must give him up lock, stock, and barrel. You need not serve a knave. I won't let this downright villainy go on before my eyes. If you do not touch Bhangis, I will ask everybody to keep away from you altogether and befriend the Bhangis instead."

This had a telling effect, as was seen from the attitude of another man, a *bhagat* (devotee of God) who now became the leader. He talked with Gandhiji in a considerate and thoughtful manner. He said: "It is not right to refuse to touch the Bhangi. There is no defilement in touching him." And then everybody promised to touch Bhangis. The question of giving up putrid flesh was difficult. "We have been born to that work. How can we do without eating that flesh? Our very profession makes that demand on us. We have to skin carcasses. We are in the midst of hides and such things the whole day. How can we do without eating that flesh? What's the use of an empty promise? It is not right to give you a promise and break it the next day." They stuck to their resolve not to bind themselves by an oath. All they promised was to do something after careful consideration.



The visit of Mangrol was thus full of remarkable incidents. The citizens of Mangrol had collected cotton worth two or two and a half thousand rupees. Muslim brothers invited Gandhiji and friends to a repast of fruits, though it was their fasting month of Ramzan. Gandhiji was highly gratified to find amity and love subsisting between Hindus and Muslims.

From Kathiawar Gandhiji went to Bombay and from there to a tour of the villages of Jalalpur Taluka (country) of the Surat District. Gandhiji 's very strenuous tour in Kathiawar brought him fever and he was even advised by some workers to drop this Jalalpur tour. But Gandhiji insisted and carried out the programme fully.

He gave the object of his whole tour in a nutshell : "Both my colleagues and I think there is a chance of my tour giving a filip to national work. That is what has induced me to come here. Otherwise, I can afford to sit quiet at Sabarmati and work away there."

At the public meeting of Karadi held on 15.4.1925 he said:

"I am surprised and delighted at the quiet that prevails in the meeting. At present I have lost a little the power of my voice and I cannot raise it for you. I am, therefore, very glad to find you all sitting quietly. I liked the children singing their hymns with the accompaniment of *kasias* (an Indian cymbal). Only the Indweller in the heart of the singer can appreciate the joy of singing with *kasias* and I too appreciate very well their delightful music. I see many men here with white caps—a thing I like. But I don't know whether they wear them usually or for this meeting only. I trust, like their caps, their other clothes also are made from Khaddar. If they are not, I advise them to use only Khaddar. You must realize that it is high time for you now, and you must not dally too long with the resolve to wear Khadi. Foreign or mill cloth should have no fascination for you. Neither should you feel ashamed to wear even coarse Khadi nor should you feel it too heavy, since it is our own poor spinners and weavers who have made it. If we spin thick yarn and have to wear thick Khadi, the fault is ours. Excellent cotton is available and there are people who spin fine yarn. Why then need we wear thick clothes at all? But I don't see the women here wearing Khadi. Our sisters must cease to think that foreign or mill-made clothes are indispensable.

It is not right to come here clad in foreign clothes. If you go on wearing them, I had better keep myself to my Ashram at Sabarmati. But fond hope has allured me to come here. My colleagues also had the same hope and they said to themselves, "Call that



man. Some good may come." I want Swaraj and so do you. Nobody knows what kind of Swaraj we are going to have, but, take my word for it, if it is a Swaraj without Khaddar, it is certain to be worthless. As long as Khadi is not in vogue, you cannot attain that purity and spirit of independence which are so essential in life. I know there are Khadi wearers who are dirty and deceitful. But on our part we should wear it with the full understanding of its implications. All our *karma* (action; right action here) and *dharma* are a mockery so long as we do not wear Khadi.

Keep the *antyajas* away and the world will keep us away. There is no place whatsoever for untouchability in our *dharma*. Temporary untouchability may be mentioned among the rules of cleanliness etc., but to condemn a man as untouchable forever is nothing but a travesty, and *adhharma* (a=not), a kind of Satanism. The man is wrong, who says that the very birth of a man in a particular community makes him an untouchable.

And now the third thing, liquor. Kolis and Dublas are drunkards. Just think! What a deadly enemy alcohol must be that it never loosens its grip on you! We have got to renounce it. An excellent remedy for it is to take Ramnam in the early morning. With eyes suffused with tears, you may pray to God, "O, Lord! Save me from foreign cloth, flesh-eating and profligacy." It was God who saved Prahlad. If you want to worship God by any other Name, you may. Now I have finished what I wanted to tell you about these things.

"The question of Hindu-Muslim unity has taken a turn for the worse. I, for one, have come at the end of my tether. Shaukat Ali and Shuaib tackled the matter the whole of yesterday. I have not been able to bring them with me here, because they have made a firm resolve to remove the suspicion of the Bombayites against the local Khilafat Committee. As for me, I have washed my hands of the matter. My advice is no use at this juncture. It can be followed only by brave men, not cowards. I have found I cannot convert the people to my *dharma* of refusing to take an eye for any eye and I have given up the attempt. Mussalmans have gone mad and so have Hindus. They snap at each other. If I draw up a balance sheet, it seems to me that Mussalmans are more at fault than Hindus. But can I, on that account, give up my friendship with them? The father may see his son's fault in a quarrel with others, would he, therefore, forsake him? The father would never curse or cut him. To such a son I would, on the contrary, say, "You are a debauchee and a drunkard. Have some sense now. Reform yourself." Would I ever tell him, 'Get away! Drown yourself into the nearest sea?' In the same



way I cannot part company with Mussalmans. Even if the Mussalman tormented the Hindu for no fault of his, I am going to kiss and be friend with the Mussalman. I shall go on telling the Muslim, "What you are doing is *adharma* (irreligion). It is not Islam." But while I shall go on telling him so, I shall at the same time bear with his kicks. There is nobody today who would accept this advice from me. I am now sitting still after telling them (Hindu and Muslims) both, 'A day is bound to come when you will have to become united.' I am certain that even if I die tomorrow, they are sure to listen to that man who says the very same thing as I do now. Yes, but one thing. One has to shed all fear, if he wants to follow my advice. This movement itself is started to make us fearless.

I have now said all I wanted to. Nobody asks you to touch an *antyaaja* everytime you meet him. For Hindu-Muslim unity it is enough if you clean your heart. It is easy to bring *antyajas* into our fold. It is also not difficult to understand that it is your *dharma* to wear Khadi."

For Gandhiji to go to Navasari and avoid meeting the Parsis is an impossibility. He met the Parsis this time also and spoke to them very feelingly.

"The doctor may have told you that owing to my bad health, you should not expect from me a long speech. But I hope my voice reaches all the brothers and sisters here. I have repeatedly shown how close my relationship with Parsi brothers and sisters has always been. I have stated quite often that in South Africa Parsi Rustomji's family and mine were closely knit together like the warp and the weft. It was Rustomji who risked both his life and property to give me shelter when my life was in danger and thousands of the Whites, thirsting for my blood, were pursuing me in a deadly hunt. He is now in the world of angels, as he is no longer alive on earth. When I went to England, it was a Parsi gentleman moreover to whom I took a note of recommendation for myself; and the man who guided me in England, nay, on whose lap I unreservedly laid my head, I say this not as a figure of speech but in very truth, was again a Parsi gentleman, Dadadhai Naoroji by name. And the man who brought me in the limelight, who gave me minute directions as to what I should speak and how I should behave was also a Parsi, Sir Pherozshah Mehta.

"This about my connections with the Parsis in the past. Let me now talk of the present. Let me tell you how sweet my relationship with the Parsis is today. Two granddaughters of Dadabhai Naoroji have dedicated their lives in my work. All the 24 hours of the day Nargis and Perin have no other thought but that of India. They have gone



mad after Khadi. You may also know how closely connected I am with Jamshedji Petit. Mithubehn Petit, of that family, is propagating Khadi with greater enthusiasm than any other sister of a leading family. These sisters are devoting themselves day and night to that one work of Khadi propaganda. All the three of them entwined themselves round me yesterday. When they saw me down with fever, they pleaded, 'Take us with you.' But I brushed aside their plea and said, 'No. That is not a sufficient reason for taking you.' And there is Bharucha who is moving about in Madras with the burden of Khadi for sale on his shoulders. Without my asking for it he sends his diary regularly. It is owing to his love for me that he roams about in the Madras Presidency to sell Khadi. Impelled by that same love the doctor came today and said, "No, you can't go away without a speech before the Parsis." I suggested the day after tomorrow, but he demurred. 'No. Right today. If you get fever tomorrow, you can't meet them.'

Can I censure that community, when I have such sweet relationship with it? The Parsis have never failed to come up to my expectations till now. I am certain that the 80 thousand Parsis of India will give their full share in the work of the nation. When the fight was on in South Africa, the man who sent me from abroad the largest contribution was a Parsi, Ratan Tata. At once in his very first bounty he sent Rupees twentyfive thousand. I had not met him earlier nor known him. Gokhaleji was the connecting link. Gokhale told him, 'That man is not a crook', and that was enough for him to send the sum. He wrote to me also that he would send a further amount, and he did.

"Let me point out that though Bombay has become their central habitation, the religious centre of the Parsi is definitely Navasari.

"At this sacred place, let me tell you that Khadi alone is the right means by which Parsis can serve India. This is a very difficult thing for Parsi sisters, because they are used to silk-wear only. You hailed me as the poorest of the poor and declared that I was born for serving the poor. Not I, but all writers have given the Parsis the first rank in the world and the second to the Jews for munificence in charity. I read somewhere that the value of a religion must be appraised not from the number of its adherents, but from the actions they perform. I regard charity as one measure to assess the worth of a religion. No other community has been as kind and charitable as the Parsis and, wherever I go, I find concrete instances of their generosity of heart.

"But I want to tell you something else. You may certainly earn money but, unlike the Bania, you will not hoard it or earn interest by lending it. You will go on freely



spending it in charity. If you lose this *dayadharma* (*dharma* of charity) in you, you lose all. But you can give something even greater than charity in money and that is charity of the heart. It would be really wonderful if Dinshaw Petit gave away 99 lakhs (=hundred thousands) from the crore (ten millions) he possesses. But the man who gives his heart really gives away even a greater sum than the ten millions he may be owning. At the present moment, I pray only for just a little bit of that 'heart'—not the whole heart itself—from my Parsi sisters and tell them, 'Take a step forward (from your charity in money) and give me a bit of your heart as these three sisters have done.' I mean, 'Change your silk *sari* for Khadi.' You will not look the less beautiful, if you do so. Your beauty really lies in your tongue—your polite speech—your heart. (Parsis are noted for their sweet and courteous manners). You will shine, if you have a heart of gold. If the heart is impure, a man like me at least will never bend his head in reverence to any woman, however richly attired and adorned with ornaments. I bow down my head to women today, because they have always been more particular about purity of character than men. That is why to you, my sisters, when I appeal, 'Give me your heart,' I am asking for what is easy for you to give.

"Mithubehn can do the work of supplying you with fine (Khadi) saris. She can get fine yarn woven and that cloth embroidered by poor Parsi women. She can thus make Khadi *saries* attractive and sell them to Parsis. She does not make any distinction in her mind between a Hindu and a Parsi. They are equal in her eyes. I ask you to give her orders for fine Khadi and she will get it for you from outside Gujarat. What coarse Khadi you may require, you may get from Gujarat itself. You have got plenty of time to spend as you like. Spare one hour for Khadi, even half an hour. You are educated women. Spin fine yarn and get it woven. I know it is a difficult thing. It is harder to discard one's tastes and fancies, than give money in charity. But that is exactly why I begged for a bit of your heart. From all parts of India and from my brothers also, I beg for this same thing. As for money a Dinshaw Petit can give it. But can everyone give money in charity? There are many Parsi families that can hardly manage to earn their pittance. But even from them I can take this (heart). Our young men are by no means millionaires. But they too can contribute more than a million. It is not charity on their part if these youths wear mill cloth and thus satisfy their fanciful tastes; but they automatically give some thing in charity if they wear Khadi. They thus put a few pice into the pockets of their poor sisters. Even if you buy Khadi at 6 *annas* (6/16 of a rupee) a yard, 4 out of these 6 go to the poor. And what does the word 'poor' mean in our



country? They are so poor that they have nothing to eat. You have fish, cheese and flesh to eat. Some can afford even wine. But the gift of one's mind, one's love, is far superior to the gift of money. There are people here so poor that they cannot get even a crust of bread. You are sure to buy Khadi if you wish that these people should get at least *roti* of coarse millet, some salt, and a few drops of ghee (clarified butter) for rubbing it sparsely over the *roti* or some oil to spread a little more liberally. I have been wandering all over India at present. I have seen it myself in Kathiawar—people coming from a distance of even 2 miles to take away slivers to spin yarn. From the Khadi Karyalaya at Amreli they take slivers home and bring back yarn. They get from it 5 pice (5/64 of a rupee) a day. To those women who have no huts to live in, who are pavement-dwellers, these five pice are worth five rupees. In the dry God-forsaken region of Kathiawar, 4 pice are as valuable as 4 rupees. If you wear Khadi that amount goes into such a poor man's hamlet. Dheds have to leave their land and go to Bombay to clean latrines! If you can do it willingly, I would even ask you to enroll yourselves (as voluntary spinners). But if you can't, you should at least buy from me the Khadi of Kathiawar. That is the angle from which Khadi must be viewed. Every young man should know that he is giving something in charity if he wears Khadi. A very straight and easy to-practice *dharma* has thus been shown to India. All this long talk was only an embellishment of a short simple tale.

"And now the next thing I should speak of is liquor. It is very difficult to ask you to give it up, since some of you earn your livelihood from it. It was with difficulty that I could make even Rustomji understand that one cannot take wine in the name of religion. He was a lion among men. I have not seen the like of him. But even he succumbed. He gave up liquor quite a number of times and then took to it again. I heard of this relapse from his son and wrote to him. But how much, how often, can I write? And this is the story of one whom I regard as dearer than my own brother. If I could not succeed in making him give up wine, how can I entertain much hope of weaning you? Only, I wish that the Parsi community may continue to prosper. Men like Petit and Readymoney are not born in every generation. How difficult are the times that Tata is passing through? God save him from his present straits! But you should beware. Once a rot sets in, your community cannot bear such an excellent crop. Old venerated Parsis used to lead a simple life. But luxurious living is the order of the day. Even the poor's standard of living has gone up. One such sister told me pointblank, 'An almirah is a must for me.' And the price? 75 Rupees! She said she could not live without it. Our wants have thus rocketed. But all these wants are hard to satisfy in a miserably



poor country like India. We must avoid as far as possible the use of those things which the poor cannot afford.

"Liquor is not at all a tonic for health. I have seen men steeped in wine and gone mad. One of them had lost even the sense to distinguish between wife, sister, and mother. All drunkards come to the same plight. I once went to see a drama of *daamaan*. I was then very fond of going to the theatre. I am talking of my taste 40 years ago. In the first scene there is a song on liquor. It showed how a small wine-glass led the man to ruin. I wish you would listen to this Voice from above, which I am relaying. I wish every Parsi sister and brother gave up drink, gave up the traffic in it also. I know, it is very difficult to give up one's business. Many Hindus do not give up their trade in foreign cloth. But for you it is not so difficult. You have an enterprising spirit, you have business acumen, you are well-read and walk in the fear of the Lord. Parsis, besides, are a small community and it is easy to introduce reforms in it. That is why I give you this idea for your consideration. When I see Parsi sisters and brothers sitting in liquor-booths, my heart weeps in anguish. It is an unbecoming sight for a community like yours. So, reform your ways as much as you can. And I wish that Navasari becomes the pioneer of all these reforms. What more can I wish for you? I only pray to God that He may always vouchsafe prosperity to the Parsis and may the happy and loving relationship between them and us be ever on the increase!"

Addressing the public meeting at Gandevi he said:

"I thank you for your address and yarn-garland. For the last 4 or 5 years I have been giving only one message, putting only one programme before the people. They ask me why I don't give them something else and I have only one answer for the questioner: I don't know and have no desire to know anything else. There has got to be heart-unity between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jews—all regard India as their native land and are willing and eager to regard it as such. That is why unity of hearts between all the communities is an indispensable requisite. I consider Swaraj an impossibility without it. As long as we consider *antyajas* as untouchables, elevation of India as well as of the Hindu *dharma* is unthinkable. If we have an iota of pity for the miserables, if we feel any concern for their uplift, if we wish to raise the economic condition of India, if we want Swaraj not for a few but for her millions, then all this is impossible without the spinning wheel. And that is why I have been hammering into the mind of all that they should give at least half an hour, if not more, for these teeming masses. Turn the spinning wheel with God's name on your



lips. We have lost ourselves in our fascination for foreign or mill cloth. In spite of these clothes we are really naked, since the least of us remain naked thereby. As regards prohibition, I have only this thing to say: Many good things have been done by the Baroda Government. But I wish the State saw to it that nobody under it could get a drop of wine and that nobody was given a licence for manufacture or sale of liquor. Drink is a terribly bad habit. It is our business to extricate those who are caught in its meshes. That is why I pray to you—sisters and brothers of Gandevi—to make prohibition a success."

Speech at the public meeting at Amalsaad:

"I have no new message to give. After my release from jail, I have been repeatedly dwelling upon Khadi, removal of untouchability, and prohibition. Some people are fed up with this cry and think that my harping upon them has passed the limit of their endurance.

"But so long as a large part of India does not start wearing Khadi, there is no other way but to din these things into the ears of the public. Changes in my mode of life to adopt ever greater simplicity have been going on for the last many years. After my arrival in India, there has been some progress in that direction. When I came here, production of Khadi was not sufficient for the needs of the whole country. At that time I did not know also that in case all the mills of India suddenly crashed to the ground, there was this process of hand spinning so ready at hand, that, if, we cared, we could cover the whole of India with hand-spun cloth. But now I feel we are in a position to substitute hand-spun for mill cloth. This is no exaggeration; I have got this *takli* (whirligig) with me. It is possible that a sufficient number of spinning wheels to produce all the Khadi we require cannot be made all at once. But I for one would say that if there is that serious shortage of cloth (owing to the sudden stoppage of all Indian mills) all the carpenters of India would start manufacturing spinning wheels and finish their work in a month. But *takli* is even more handy. It does not require someone else to make it. A bamboo slit and a piece of broken tile will do for making it. We must, therefore, carry out this triple programme of Khadi, untouchability, and prohibition.

"But what is essential to enable us to implement this programme is the will to do it. When it is a time of acute shortage, we should certainly do all that. We require fewer clothes in summer than in the other two seasons. We have the means at hand, we have this facility to spin for ourselves, but we lack the wish to spin. That is due to the sloth that has possessed us and to our notion that we don't look well in Khadi and



it is too heavy for wearing. But it is virtues that adorn a man and not his clothes. And it is will that is necessary for doing any thing. If we change our attitude, we can easily bear the weight of Khadi and then even thick Khadi will not grate on our skin. The ugliest child looks beautiful in the mother's eyes. If God had not created that fascination, that craze, every mother would have been jealous of the children of other mothers and killed her own. But, instead of murdering her own baby, the true mother pours on it all her heart's fondness. We should have the same kind of love for Khadi. No ordinary love, but only a mother's love can help Khadi. And there should be that love for the country also. We should understand that Khadi is *Annapurna* (Goddess that gives food). This is not only the universal *dharma* of all, but also the highest *dharma*. If we cannot see this point, we shall not be able to understand and keep the higher and subtler forms of *dharma*. You sisters, should, therefore, start spinning forthwith. To the brothers I say that the whitest cap made of any cloth other than Khadi is for me worthless. If you have understood the essence of the *dharma* of Khadi, you should wear Khadi from head to foot. You should also spin even and well-twisted yarn and spare at least half an hour for it.

"That is one thing. Now the next; and that is the question of untouchability. That question also is in India as important as the first and as time passes assumes ever greater importance. It will stain our fair name, if we consider a man an untouchable because of his birth in any community, whatever it be. Hinduism will be destroyed root and branch, if its scriptures sanction untouchability. The world puts every religion on test now and estimates its worth from that of its principles. If we don't drive out untouchability, Hindu *dharma*, as measured by the value of its principles, is certain to be thrown out. Don't believe that you defile yourself, if you touch an *antyaja*. I don't insist that you must touch an *antyaja*, no matter how dirty he is. But all *antyajas* are not dirty. There are clean *antyajas* also; and they take Ramnam. I consider it a Satanic practice to refuse to touch such an *antyaja*. This refusal is nowhere to be found either in Vaishnavism or any other sect or creed.

"As regards Hindu-Muslim unity, I hope we are going to sit quiet after fighting among ourselves with wooden clubs or even more lethal weapons. We will live together in future in any case—whether after an amicable understanding or after getting exhausted by fights.

"And now about prohibition. This district is ridden with the drink habit. Ever since I was in South Africa, I knew that Kolis and Dublas of this part were inveterate



drunkards. But even the high caste people drink—some openly in shameless insolence, and some stealthily. On my way here I came across a liquor-booth and I heaved a sigh: 'Good God! Am I destined to always see such sights of grog-shops!' The Government may pass in future a prohibition law. It certainly can. But why wait till then? Why not do right now, what it is in our hands to do? If we ourselves stop going to liquor shops and the vendors earn nothing, they will not continue to keep their shops open to oblige the public with their service of liquor. If we reform ourselves in every respect, India is bound to benefit."

1. Gandhiji was born in the Bania caste, a community regarded shrewd and enterprising in business but proverbially lacking in physical courage.
2. A mediaeval saint belonging to the highest sub-caste among Brahmins who was persecuted by his castemen for going to the quarters of Dheds and singing hymns in their company. But Lord Krishna performs a miracle and the order of outcasting him has to be withdrawn. He is the father of modern Gujarati poetry. His hymns to be sung in the morning are popular to this day.
3. A Jain *mantra*. One of the principal beliefs in the Jaina sect is *ahimsa*.



Speech at the Supa Gurukula¹

"I had decided to come over here during my last tour, but could not. This time I have, but the pitch of my voice must have told you that I cannot speak for long or loudly. I have been ill for the last four or five days and unfit for travelling. But as I had given hopes of my visit to many, I decided to exact as much work from the body as I could. But now my health has grown so bad that I shall have to fly away from here. But for this check, I would have spent more time with you, known you more closely and left you only then.

"I was glad to see the children. I have such affinity for your Ashram that it is but natural that I should want to be with you and a welcome address is unnecessary. There may be only one or two Gurukulas which I may not have visited. I have been quite often to Kangri Gurukula, the father of all these Gurukulas. My connections with the Swamiji² have been very old—since 1908, during the South African struggle. I had not seen the Swamiji but he sent me an account of the work his *brahmacharis* (students vowed to celibacy till they completed their studies and went home) had done. The contact that began then has continued without a break ever since. Though you may have read an adverse criticism of the Aryasamaj from my pen, please don't misunderstand me; my heart tells me that my criticisms are filled with love. My relationship with the Gurukulas is on a spiritual basis and, therefore, one that it is impossible to break. Let me tell you the story of the Kangri Gurukula's students, as it was their work that forged an indissoluble link between us.

"When Satyagrahis were going to jail in South Africa; money used to pour from India. Satyagraha was a novelty in those days. Nobody had imagined earlier that Indians who were mostly ignorant and illiterate would be ever strong enough to pit themselves against the Whites and go to jail. But they did. And on this side India's heart was stirred to its depths and funds began to be collected everywhere. The *brahmacharis* wondered what they could do for the cause. A *brahmachari* is expected to have no penny in his pocket. If he has any he is not a *brahmachari* at all. So they all approached the Swamiji (Shraddhanandji) for guidance. He said 'Work and earn.' An embankment was being built nearby. Swamiji wrote a note, recommending the *brahmacharis* for employment as labourers on a daily wage. The headman was pleased. He promised these boys a little more than the usual daily wage. The students were delighted, because they wanted to send all their earnings to South Africa. The headman had even thought of giving a few pice more for less work, but the



brahmachari's output was even greater than the average adults. The headman feared that the boys might not be able to continue that rate of output for long, but they were not tired till the last day.

"Have you heard the story of Kangri Gurukula? (If you have not, your Principal should be dismissed.) The Ganga flows in torrents there. The place was at first a jungle infested with tigers and leopards. But the Swami was a man-mountain. If 3 or 4 children like you stood, the second on the shoulders of the first, and so on, the topmost boy's head could hardly reach the Swami's ears. He accepted little boys like you for his Ashram and made them do all the labourious work of cleaning the jungle. There are leopards roundabout even now. But the *brahmacharis* are all brave, not afraid even of leopards. That was how the Gurukula was founded. There may be an element of self-interest in decorating the Gurukula for welcoming somebody, but the decoration helps you in rendering greater service to the people also. There should be the sacrifice, i.e. dedication of the mind, along with that of the body. The mind has to be sedulously cultivated. There is nothing wrong in earning money, but our object should always be that of spending it in national service, not of piling it up. Similarly we should dedicate our lives for national service only. Our flair or excellence in any sphere should be used for the service of our country and our *dharma*, in a spirit of complete dedication. In this way our sacrifice should be of three kinds (through body, speech, and mind). One should be a *brahmachari* at least up to the age of 25. That is no Gurukula which does not impart an education that strengthens the mind of the students, so that they would remain completely free from any sexual urge till that age. Children and sannyasis are on the same footing. Children imbibe self-restraint from their mother's milk. For those who are not able to observe *brahmacharya* all their life through, *grihasthashrama* (the householder's life) is enjoined. We should have self-restraint even while we lead that life. My wish and my blessings go with you, in order that you may learn to live a life of self-restraint."

At Sisodra we had a most remarkable experience. When on the one hand we met people at Mangrol (in Saurashtra) who were clinging blindly to their religious traditions, at Sisodra on the other hand we had the *darshan* of a strictly orthodox Brahmin, Sri Keshavram, who observed all the scriptural rules of behaviour and yet invited Gandhiji to see *antyajas* given a warm welcome in his house.

Not only that gentleman, but his family also wear self-spun Khadi and freely mix with *antyajas*. The women in his family are not literate, but their hearts are steeped in



love. The gentleman's mother, when asked, "And suppose you are outcasted?" replied, "Let them. We will stay out." And then, "Do you let them sit in your front room only or allow them to go right upto the back-door of the house?" "Oh, we let them cross the whole house and go to the back-door." There was firmness as well as humility in her answer.

The sight of this family which has purified itself to this extent cannot fail to cheer up the despondent and infuse even new life into him in these so-called black days of despair. While men of little faith are losing even their little faith in non-co-operation and self-purification, those who believe, walk with ever more vigorous strides. When all is dark before him, the pilgrim of deep faith receives the light of resurgent hope all of a sudden and from quite an unexpected quarter. We felt ourselves blessed at the sight of the fearlessness and keen sense of duty of this Brahmin family. That family has done in these days the highest service to Brahminism.

Discourse at the Navasari Antyajashram:

"You have a double duty to perform, that of studying and of serving the *antyaaja* communities. You are all boys of tender age and boys are not expected to shoulder responsibilities. But under your special circumstances, though you are young, you are adults. There is, for instance, Laxmi (Gandhiji 's adopted 'untouchable' daughter). I tell her, 'you see, my dear you have a heavy responsibility to discharge. From the example you provide, they will judge how *antyaaja* children who grow up in company with other Hindus will turn out.' To the world now looking down upon *antyajas*, it is you, boys, who have to show that there is no difference between *antyajas* and others, that good men and bad are found equally among caste Hindus and *antyajas*. This is a solid fact, but the Hindu society will not at once accept it. This Ashram is one way to make it open its eyes to the fact. The question of removal of untouchability is solved through the Ashram to some extent. What should you, children, do for it? You should abstain from eating forbidden food. You should drive out from your mind even a liking for it. One who is habituated to eat unholy food, does not like to eat good food, even if it is put before him. It is your *dharma* to be very particular about being always clean. Keep your teeth very clean, white as milk. Your eyes and your nose too should be clean. You must form the habit of taking Ramnam as soon as you get up in the morning. Everything around you moreover should be kept always clean. You must have inner cleanliness also and so you must speak the truth."



Some other programmes in Navasari sprang up incidentally. The Parsis of Navasari, who had made "the successful end of Gandhiji's fast (in 1924) an event of special prayer and thanksgiving would not rest content until they brought Gandhiji and set his (holy) feet in their new temple which was being built. And addresses from municipalities have become as common as in the stirring times of 1920-21. I do not want to depreciate their value by calling them 'common'; common, i.e., universal would be the *summum bonum*. Gandhiji replied to the local municipal address in a language filled with love, civility, and right perception.

"I thank you for your very loving words in your address. You are quite right when you speak of your Maharaja Saheb's efforts for the uplift of *antyajas*. One cannot sufficiently thank the Maharaja Saheb for his splendid work in that direction. But I know that you, the people, also have much to do still. I call myself a Bhangi. I consider it one of my highest *dharmas* to serve these people and the position of *antyajas* in Hindu society will remain a big blot on Hinduism, so long as we have not succeeded in improving their status. I think, you of this city are doing a bit in the matter. I paid a visit to the Antyaja-Ashram here. I have found the condition of *antyajas* better at all the places of the Baroda state which I have visited than elsewhere. But nothing that you do for *antyajas* will seem 'enough' in my eyes. If a municipality is in any way lax in its duty towards *antyajas*, I would regard its service as incomplete, no matter what its achievements in other matters be. I have often stated that were it not ordained that I should plunge in politics, I would have led a quiet life of municipal service in any corner of India—say in Ahmedabad. A municipal member ought to see that gutters, latrines, roads, etc. are kept clean and people provided with good milk. When all that is done, we have the key to India's freedom and happiness.

" I have been watching how things are going on in Navasari. I came with fever on, have it still, and it was high fever. Two sisters had warned me, "Navasari is a home of malaria and your fever will grow worse." Experience has proved its truth. During my last visit I stayed here only for a night. I slept at that time under the open sky and may be that was why I had no impression of the mosquito-trouble here. I did not, moreover, move about in the streets of Navasari then. Cleanliness is the standard by which a municipality should be judged. At least at present I am afraid I cannot give the Navasari Municipality a certificate of as great merit as I would wish to. I can give a fitting reply to your loving address only by stating my view frankly. Who else may say so plainly, if I don't? Good behaviour, wisdom, and humility all demand that I should not hesitate



to say what I feel. When I was going about the streets here, I was reminded of Travancore and Trivendrum. I have never seen streets kept in a better condition than there. The streets in Trivendrum were excellent and the lanes clean. The condition of cess-pools here requires much improvement. Some localities may be well-kept and may not be stinking, but the test of a municipality lies in the condition of its poorest quarters. But at present even the middle class localities here are dirty. This comment, however, does not apply to Navasari alone. The same is the case with other towns.

"We have much to learn from the West's municipal action. I have seen the houses and villages of the West and I am charmed with the work of the municipalities there. The get-up of the towns and their management is so excellent, that the municipalities can firmly and courageously root out any epidemic, however virulent its outburst. Other than this civic sense, we have very little to copy from them. Johannesburg was once affected with plague. Very few of the victims could be saved. The municipality of the city spent money like water. It had no hesitation in setting fire to its beautiful market built at the cost of 14,000 £s. Then there was a 'location' there. Just as we have made Dhedwadas (quarters for Dheds) here, the people there have segregated us into what are called 'locations.' It was from there that the epidemic had started. That location also was burnt up and with my consent. Owing to these stringent measures, plague did not spread in Johannesburg and has not made its appearance since. The same is the case with the Glasgow Municipality. Every quarter of that city had been taught to keep itself clean; other-wise it would be difficult to live in Glasgow.

"Navasari is one of the first cities of India. It is, besides, the head-quarter of the Parsis. Any flaw in Navasari, therefore, pricks me like a thorn. That is why I draw your attention to the streets, gutters, latrines and cesspools of Navasari. It is not impossible, not extremely difficult either, to remove these defects. I know there are certain difficulties not easy to overcome. But you can never get any thing valuable and keep it in a good condition without paying the price for it. You have money and acumen and the skill to carry out reforms. A most beautiful building, Atashbehram, (Temple of the Parsis)—perhaps without a parallel in India—is being built in Navasari. Let me congratulate you on that achievement. But what does it mean to me? It means there is no lack of money here. And you can get money even from outside. I request you to use it to make Navasari an ideal town, so that sight-seers may be attracted to it, just as in England people go to Glasgow and Birmingham. Chamberlain once stated that he owed his reputation to his work for Birmingham. I have been to the city. Its build-up



shows Chamberlain's eye for art, his enterprising spirit, and efficiency. In the poorest quarters of Birmingham, you will not find any filth and there are libraries even for the poor.

"And now I have said all that I have been feeling with regard to the town. I would be ungrateful, if I did not. I request you to accept my observations in the spirit in which they have been made. I would like you to introduce the spinning wheel in all your schools—primary and secondary. The wheel is the connecting link between you and the poor. I wish the children spun for half an hour and remembered God and their poor brethren as they spun. Please do this much at least."

His speech at the public meeting excelled even the above. The speech infused into him the vim that removed almost completely the preceding two days' strain. He dwelt upon his own simple test to assess an Indian's sense of duty. To show why he set up that test he gave a vivid picture of the stark poverty of India, where a large number of men were simply a burden on the land and suggested the spinning wheel as his valuable and lasting gift for removing that wretchedness. He called himself a physician for the cure of India's ills and the spinning wheel as the panacea for removing them. He begged of everyone, man, woman, or child, old or young, rich or poor, to spend half an hour after the wheel. A fund was collected at the meeting. Even Suba Saheb (= the Collector, though a Government official) gave 25 rupees. About six or seven hundred were collected immediately.

All this shows that the Surat District is full of faith. But the people have not yet realized that the time has now arrived for changing the expression of that faith. Heaps of money are laid before Gandhiji even in small villages. One village gave Rs. 650/-, another 460/-, and a third 300/-. There is no doubt, all this shows the people's love for Gandhiji, but he would like that faith to flow in a new direction. For instance, a woman once came to Gandhiji in order to free herself from the obligation of a *badha* she had taken (A pledge to a deity to present it some money and coconut etc., by way of worship, provided a particular wish was fulfilled. Gandhiji always resisted attempts to deify him). "That's *badha*, I suppose?" Remarked Dayalji bhai. "Yes," said the ignorant woman in all innocence; "I had resolved to give this amount if and when my son could have Gandhiji's *darshan*; and today, by God's grace, he had." "But Gandhiji does not like that form of *badha*. He would only like you to make a resolve to spin and wear Khadi." But this new form of *badha* was quite different from the woman's concept of it. From a hoary tradition she had always thought that, on fulfillment of a



certain desire, one could express one's gratitude to a deity only by giving rupees, breaking a coconut before it, and taking home some pieces of the fruit as *Prasad* (a concrete form of the deity's grace), and not by taking such a queer vow as that of wearing Khadi! But I have seen women taking a pledge to abjure some tasteful variety of food. I wish we could persuade our sisters of India to take pledges of not wearing foreign cloth and spinning for, say, half an hour in order to enable us to release the country from thralldom and poverty.

Only two days were allotted to the Broach District for Gandhiji's tour. He carried out to the letter the hectic programme fixed by Dr. Chandulal (a veteran Congress leader, who gave away all his property to the National Fund in 1921 and of course went to jail etc.). The Doctor was eager to see that Gandhiji should visit nearly all the counties of the district and his wishes were respected fully. On the first day (d. 14.4.1925) Gandhiji toured through Sajod, Ankleshwar, Zadeshwar, Shuklateerth, Tavra and Nikora.

Zadeshwar deserves special mention. That is Sri Haribhai Amin's native town. When Gandhiji visited it, he gave Rs. 501/- and others of the place collected Rs. 225/- for Gandhiji's use for Khadi work. But if Messrs Haribhai and Kashibhai rest content with that much work, nobody will feel satisfied. They are in a position, if they take it into their head, to give up all other things on hand and concentrate on Khadi work in their town. They command great respect and influence and if they decide to devote all their energy in Khadi they can, it seems, make the whole town wear nothing but Khadi.

It was an old woman of another village who told us why this expectation from Haribhai is not too high. Let me come to her.

She belonged to Tavra, a tiny village on the bank of the Narmada. Large crowds collected at all other places and Gandhiji could not have a man-to-man talk with the people. But seeing only a handful of men and women collected under a tree at Tavra, Gandhiji began an informal conversation:

"Well, sisters, what crime have I committed against you, that you refuse to wear Khadi?"

A sister smiled and said: "No, no. It is we, not you, who have committed the crime."



Then an old woman sighed and said: "What's the sense in wearing Khadi, now that I am so close to the grave!"

"But why this dejection? Death is the inevitable destiny of everybody. What a fine thing if we have a smile on our lips and Khadi on our person, when we die? If you didn't wear Khadi, your mind might regret that you failed to do even such a simple good thing as wearing Khadi."

A smile flickered on her lips and she said, "Well then, I will wear it."

The men were sitting quite near Gandhiji: After talking to them on Khadi, Gandhiji asked them: "Does any of you drink?"

A man looking as old as Gandhiji's father and having thick whiskers said, "No, but some of us do take opium."

"Can you not give it up?"

"Only those who are addicts take *kasumbo* (a drink prepared from opium). Not others."

Gandhiji laughed loudly. "That, of course, is true. Why should others take it?"

"No. I don't mean that. We have fallen, but why should we let our young men fall? So, only those who are inveterate addicts drink it. We don't allow young men to join us."

"All right. If you are careful even to that extent it is good. I know it is difficult to give up opium."

"No, we won't let others form the habit. You can't get opium now besides. We too shall leave the world in 15-20 years and even the word 'opium' will be forgotten."

Gandhiji now turned again to that old woman. "Well then, you will wear Khadi henceforth, I suppose? And you give that promise on behalf of you all?"

"Y ... es, we may; but, it would be better if we can get thin and not thick Khadi as at present and if you get the borders etc. printed. And as for the girls well ..., they can't wear it. They will have to marry and go to their husbands, who may have their own views.'

Gandhiji (laughing): "Yes, Yes. But you see, you can't have thin Khadi so long as you don't spin fine yarn. But if you do, I can get it woven and your saries printed. As



for the girls, about whose marriage you feel concerned, let me tell you a story. Do you know this Haribhai Amin?"

"Well, yes. But he is a *mahatma* (high soul)!"

"That he is and even greater than a *mahatma*. Now this Haribhai's niece married a few days ago. She spins daily. When she married, she presented her husband two fine dhotis made from yarn spun by herself. And don't you see that Haribhai himself is wearing thick Khadi? All the members of his family wear thick Khadi. You know he has plenty of money. Why does he wear thick Khadi even then? For the sake of the country, for inducing people like you to begin to spin. Now then, tell me: Will you spin and wear Khadi?"

"Yes! Yes!" they all spoke out in a chorus. If Sri Haribhai resolves to do it, he can make all such villages resound with the hum of spinning wheels. Will he?

1. A residential national school of the Arya Samaj—a reforming Hindu sect—that aims at reviving the ancient culture of India (Gurukula=family of the preceptor). They are not Government-aided institutions and hence, comparatively free from Governmental regimentation.

2. Swami Shraddhanand, an Arya Samajist Sannyasi, bared his chest when soldiers threatened to shoot the procession he was leading in protest against the Rowlatt Acts. His boldness saved the people from being fired at. During his stay with a Muslim doctor-friend, he was killed by a Muslim enraged at his movement of accepting those into Hinduism who wanted to be reconverted from Islam.



18.4.1925

Samni, Amod, Jambusar, Kerwada, Vagra and Broach were all covered in the next day's tour.

There were many sisters who had brought yarn-garlands for Gandhiji at Samni. "Have you spun this yarn?" inquired Gandhiji. "No, it has come from Petlad. We bought it for the garlands for 4 annas each."

Gandhiji referred to this talk in his speech:

"The sight of the yarn garlands pleased me at first at the thought that so much yarn was being spun in the village. But when I learnt that that yarn was bought, the smile on my face faded away. All you did thereby was to give me only a 4 annas worth of honour. You had better bought yarn from those 4 annas to get it woven into cloth than present it to me. And the yarn you have bought comes from Petlad!—not from spinners of your village or even your district! That you could afford to spend 4 annas to buy yarn shows that you are by no means poor? But you don't know that your money has come from the pockets of a large number who have thus grown poor themselves. That is so because the rich have drained much wealth from small and poor villages."

The Thakore of Amod gave Rs. 501 for buying cotton. At the public meetings in Jambusar and Amod, Khadi was conspicuous by its complete absence. And equally so at the Ankleswar meeting.

Jambusar Municipality resolved to give an address to Gandhiji. The meeting was to be held in a *dharmashala* (rest-house for wayfarers, where free lodging but no boarding is provided). From its very unclean appearance nobody would have imagined that that site was selected for the presentation of the address. There was a heap of dirt in front of the entrance door and on the walls were thousands of cob-webs! Were Gandhiji in his normal health, he would perhaps have commented upon the filth in his own persuasive way. But whatever his intentions might have been, the text of the address changed the whole trend of his reply. There was no lack of the usual encomiums, but no reference at all to his untouchability crusade. Gandhiji had, therefore, to pass severe strictures against the omission.

"I am really unhappy over the fact that you have committed the error of forgetting the *antyaja* brothers. That is not a municipality worth the name, which



discards this very small but important section of the citizens. We may agree with our friends to any extent, but where our principle is at stake, we must not concede an inch of our ground. You overlooked this important point in your address, because, without supporting my principle, you wanted to have the snug satisfaction of having given me an address. You cannot break into pieces in that way the life of that person whom you want to honour with an address. Not once, but many times, I have declared that I regard removal of untouchability as my first *dharma*. I would not consider myself a true Hindu, unless I pleaded for it day and night. I hold strongly that if Hinduism clings to untouchability, the 22 crores of Hindus are certain to be destroyed. And that means that the whole of India would be doomed. If, therefore, those who gave me this address were either opposed to the removal of untouchability or indifferent to it, they should not have given me an address at all. An address should reflect only the sincere feelings of the heart. Were I a V.I.P. as an official or a Sirdar, this address might perhaps fit into the situation. But I am neither; I am but a Bhangi, a Chamar (a tanner; also an untouchable), a farmer, a servant. A servant like me may also be honoured with an address, but only when you agree with him in the most important plank of his services. It is true, you cannot have freedom without Hindu-Muslim unity. But even if they fight with each other, it does not matter so much. Hinduism is not going to be extinct as a result. After tiring out our nerves by fighting among ourselves, we are certain to come together and be united. Nor is Hinduism going to be uprooted, if Khadi and the spinning-wheel are wiped out. I know we will then get the punishment we deserve for that crime and remain beggars as at present. But if the cancer of untouchability is not destroyed, Hinduism itself will die and we shall have to bend our heads in shame before the world, as it will put us unanswerable questions and ridicule the teachings of our religion.

"This address is no address to me, but only a warning lighthouse. How will you be able to accept a Bhangi like me, unless you give up untouchability? Rather than give me such an address, you should have told me frankly, "You may come here, if you like, but we don't accept your idea of doing away with untouchability." You have admitted your lack of zeal in Khadi, but Khadi is bound to suffer, so long as you have not shed untouchability. And how are you going to make prohibition a success, if you continue to stay on your Olympian heights? Unless you go down to the plains at the foot, you cannot understand the sorrows of the masses."



Numbers of people came to discuss the Khadi question at Broach, but hardly any to embrace the cult of Khadi. The address of the Local Board contained, to quote Gandhiji's words, 'a basketful of adjectives' and was framed in a language that would amaze even an erudite scholar. How can such a highflown language be a fit vehicle for referring to such down-to-earth subjects as Khadi and untouchability?

Replying to this address Gandhiji said:

"Your overflowing love has impelled you to fill your address with irrelevant adjectives; whether I am fit for them or not is a different question. I find it, therefore, difficult to give a fitting reply. Cleaning the streets and educating the children are parts of your duties. The latter include care for *antyaja* children. All these apparently insignificant public activities are, no doubt, really very important, but the adjectives you have used have no bearing on them. Had you told me, 'Join us in our work, take some interest in it, push forward your social reform activities which we approve of, and it would have been so good if you had not plunged in politics, willingly or otherwise!', I would have appreciated your comments. But assuming that all this is implied in your address, I shall refer to it in my reply in a few words.

"I have joined politics because of the exigencies of the times, though friends say I don't fit into the place since I talk of Khadi and prohibition and such other things which have little to do with politics. But that apart, does my politics stop me from being conscious of the fact that our roads should be excellent? I know full well that many people must be blaming and abusing the Local Board for the wretched condition of the roads. It falls to my lot to swallow more dust than you may have to. Today at last I was fed up with this annoyance I have been putting up with so long. During the motor-ride itself I had decided to say something in the matter to you. But if I say something, you will answer back that the Government has swept away your treasury clean to the bottom. If you then suggest that I should fight for you and refill your treasury, you are not giving me a proper answer. It is you whose business it is to tell the Government forcefully. How happy we all would be—you and I and all others—if the roads are good! I do not know how far you are responsible for the condition of the gutters. The people, moreover, are largely farmers. Education given to their children should have an agricultural bias so that it could help these would-be farmers in their occupation. The three 'Rs' are insufficient. Somebody even complained to me that all this education given to the children was wasted. It is not the province of the Minister of Education to think over these defects. He cannot create from his own brain plans for



a sound educational programme. Please, therefore, do as much as you can in the matter of improving the quality of education. There is no end to the process of improvement in education. This is the only possible reply I can give to the basketful of adjectives you have given me in your address."

In reply to the speech of Dr. Chandulal at the public meeting in Broach, Gandhiji had to pass some remarks on one or two points. He began with:

"My tour-programme ends with this meeting. There can be three causes for the lack of enthusiasm that is evident here: the people, the workers, and the present situation in the country. Whatever may be the true causes of the depression all over the country, if the people say the fault wholly lies with me since I submitted before the public a too difficult plan of action, I shall accept the blame. But I had no other alternative. If a patient calls a doctor who prescribes some specific medicines and treatment, which the patient does not take, and if, in consequence, the patient is not cured, whose is the fault? And what can be done in the matter, specially when the patient insists on having the same doctor never the less? I am at present in the position of that doctor. You do not want the methods which I show you to rid yourselves of your ills; all the same you invite me and wish to hear me, but not to follow up my advice in action. That is the awkward situation in which I am now placed.

"Dr. Chandulal said, 'The people of Broach are loving by nature.' 'Loving' indeed but what can I do with empty love that is not translated into solid action? I don't mind it much if the people of Broach have no love for me, but if they go on throwing yarn at my face thinking in anger and resentment, 'The fellow has gone mad but we want to satisfy his crazy demands; let us throw at him some yarn', I would be content even with that attitude. I have been crying myself hoarse in my appeal for Khadi, because the pennies it will fetch will go to the living skeletons of India, not to the shareholders of Manchester, Bombay, and Ahmedabad. These latter do not need me, it is the men with skin and bones that require my help. I don't mind shareholders retaining their shares with them, but I want them to spin and give me the yarn. And not only do I want their yarn, but I want them to understand that they have thereby bound themselves with the miserables of India with the silken tie of love. We have also to persuade Manchester not to send us anything, because India is going to rack and ruin by their export of cloth.

"I am a physician more than a politician. This is a country where some crores of men do not get food to eat. If there is a flood and the crop is swept away, or if there



is a scarcity of rain, starvation immediately begins to spread. Pilgrims that go to Jagannath-Puri are kind and loving. They help institutions that give free food to the poor. They themselves give their money to buy good qualities of cereals, but the middlemen supply bad qualities to the poor and pocket the difference. Hence, I wish to say, 'Don't give anything to poor men by way of alms. Get work done by them and give them money or corn in return.' But they are so idle that if we ask them to go to a farm to make baskets, they would refuse to do the work. I discovered the spinning wheel for such people. One of the advantages, or call it what you will, that has accrued from the railways here, is that nobody is now willing to barter cereals for yarn. There was a time when current coins were in no demand at all in some parts of India. You may dump any quantity of cereals in Orissa, but the poor have no money with which to buy them. If a man of these parts gets but one anna, he would dance with joy. The spinning wheel serves the purpose of the goose that lays a golden egg in such regions. It is the foundation, the nucleus of our economic uplift. We have lost our good name today; we should serve such poor people with single-minded devotion to regain it. That is why I am wandering from place to place. I don't feel any shame or constraint or even want of self-confidence in speaking of the spinning wheel to each and everyone. My faith on the contrary goes deeper every day. It was only for the purpose explained just now that I suggested the spinning franchise. If those who do not spin are not members of the Congress, the ship of the Congress is not going to sink. It does not matter, if there are only five thousand or ten thousand members. I shall be able to solve the economic problem of India with their help. But I can do nothing with the support of ten millions, who have no knowledge of the economic plight of the country. They are no use to me.

"That is why I tell you. '*Please spin. Spin and be members of the Congress or buy cotton and spin it.*' If our stomach is too weak to digest even the cereals we ourselves produce, we are doomed. In the same way if we do not spin the cotton we grow, we would meet with the same sad end. But we actually do that! Instead of spinning it we send our cotton to places where it does not grow and send for our clothes from there. If we rouse our sleeping intelligence, we shall see at once that we cannot do without Khadi. Nobody could have anticipated that Gujarat could produce such fine yarn as of 80 counts. There are now quite a large number of Gujaratis who wear only self-spun clothes. They think themselves as sanctified as those that had done their part in life, by having nothing else on them except self-spun clothes.



"Untouchability is a deadly sin in Hinduism. The advent of Swaraj is an impossibility so long as Hindus and Muslims fight with each other, as they are doing at present. All the same, I am not worried over the fights, because I know that they are certain to embrace each other after fighting to their hearts content. Since they refuse to learn wisdom the easy way, they will be knocked about till they learn it the hard way."

From a perspective view of Gandhiji's tours in Kathiawar, Surat, and Broach Districts, it could not but strike me that if we all did but a small portion of the work we take from Gandhiji, (I don't speak of its quality—that is out of the question for us—but only of its quantity, of the number of hours he puts in), we would be able to work wonders.

Every village or town we visited overflowed with enthusiasm. Perhaps regarding the spread of Khadi, Jalalpur and Bardoli Talukas beat all the others. But it was the villages that made records in the warmth of Gandhiji's reception. It may safely be said that by and large there was greater awakening in villages than in towns, big or small. A tiny village called Sajod specially deserves notice. There is a pretty rich farmer there, Natha Patel by name. He wears only self-spun clothes. He collected in a trice Rs. 350/- to give to Gandhiji for his alms for cotton. And from another village, Shuklateerth, even the local district leader, Dr. Chandulal, did not entertain any high hope. But the people had collected 500 rupees there in anticipation of Gandhiji's visit and within a few minutes collected 600 rupees more during his presence in their midst. The combined contributions of the villages of the Broach District and the city itself came to the total of 7,000 rupees. This amount, collected spontaneously, is definitely a creditable achievement. I should not wonder if the work of buying cotton from it, distributing it, and getting it spun and woven absorbs all the energies of the workers of the Broach District for the whole year. We shall gain the trust of the people only by such efficient team work.

In this amount of 7,000 rupees, there are two remarkable contributions of 500 rupees each, viz., from the Thakore Sahebs of Amod and Kerwada. Both the Thakore Sahebs had invited Gandhiji to their palaces and when the object of the fund was explained to them, they gladly subscribed 500 Rs. each.



28-4-1925

A large and representative meeting was held at Madhavbag in Bombay for the establishment of the All India Cow-protection Association. Shri Ramanujacharya¹ graced the occasion by his presence and blessed the move. Representatives of other Dharmacharyas were also present. Maulana Shaukat Ali too insisted on being present. Earlier, the constitution of the Sabha (Association) had been submitted to an *ad hoc* committee and it had passed it with a few minor charges. In this open meeting it was again submitted and passed almost unanimously, only 3 opposing. Before submitting the constitution for acceptance, Gandhiji said:

"I have started many activities in my life, but, as far as I remember, there has not been a single one before beginning which I have felt so much trepidation and fear as I am feeling now. I am a man used to taking serious risks without any hesitation. I have done many a thing in life that may be termed extremely dangerous. Right from my childhood I have been interested in Goraksha (cow-protection) and, in my quiet hours, I have often meditated over this question during the last 30 years. I have written stray articles on it also. And yet I have never thought that I possess the spiritual fitness to plunge into the work of *goraksha*. It does not mean that since I have now taken the work in hand, I have ceased to have my doubts. Nor does it mean that I do not know the way to tackle the question. I do know the method, but a work like this cannot be done by intellectual perception, however sharp. This activity calls for both Herculean labour and severe *tapasya* (purificatory austerities). If I could have my way, I would like to be armed with more self-restraint and *tapasya* than I have, in order to deal with this question in the right spirit. But the fact is that it has always fallen to my lot to launch all my activities, simply because everyone of them has fallen into my hands, unsought. That has been my uniform experience ever since I came here from England (in 1951).

"I had never expected that I would be the President of the Cow-protection Conference at Belgaum. I accepted the position simply in response to the love and desire of the workers of the place. I did not, moreover, even dream at that time that I would have to exert myself to establish a permanent institution for *goraksha*. But the workers of Belgaum had already made preparations to give a concrete shape to their desire for serving the cow. I had, naturally, (as President) to take interest in the scheme. I, therefore, appointed an *ad hoc* committee to frame a proper constitution. I had to arrange for its session in Delhi. The matter was discussed there thoroughly.



Even after the discussion, I was loath to accept this tremendous responsibility. But Chaunde Maharaj was not the man to let me escape. He persisted in his appeals to me to take up the work. I, therefore, agreed and thought that, without minding my limitations whatever they were, I should rest content with rendering as much service to the cow as I possibly could. That was why I framed the constitution and submitted it before all the leaders that had gathered then in Delhi. Now that constitution was read and approved by all the leaders present—Lala Lajpatrai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Swami Shraddhanandji, Dr. Munje and others. Though they were all noted leaders, I did not proceed with the work. I thought that though the constitution had been accepted by leaders, it should be submitted before much larger public gathering and its support secured first. I wanted that public meeting to be held in Delhi, but as it is possible for me to go to Delhi at present and as I have to adapt my programme to suit the exigences of my other activities, this public meeting in Bombay replaces the intended one at Delhi. That is how incidentally we have come to meet here today. Not only have all the front-rank leaders read this constitution and approved of it, but the Constitution Committee also, made up of a few members, has, after a good deal of deliberation and sifting of all its details, accepted it with very few minor modifications.

This is the work of a Titan and I want your sympathy and support for it. I have often declared that the attainment of Swaraj is comparatively easier. I say so because this (cow-protection) is a religious activity and the slightest flaw in a holy activity means to me a grave sin. As regards my work for Swaraj, I committed mistakes, but I repented publicly and made amends. I was thus saved. But it is difficult to make reparations for errors in this type of work. They are not errors but sins. Service of the Mother-Cow is thus by its very nature extremely difficult. If the untouchable suffers from a grievance, he can at least express it before others. If, in the strife between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, the latter has complaints to lodge, they also can ventilate them. Hindus and Muslims also can speak out and even break their heads over their injustices. But Mother-Cow is a dumb creature, she cannot voice her troubles, she has no means of communication with us. She would take upon herself as much burden as we might load upon her. If we send her to Australia, she would meekly go there. She would without protest bear the sight of even iron-nailed prods selfishly thrust by us into the body of her progeny, the bullock. If we overload her and make her walk under the burning sun, she would do even that. That is why, service of the cow is a very onerous responsibility. But I have undertaken it solely from a sense of duty.



I have, however, my own limitations for the work. First of all the practical limitations. I cannot, for this work, go from house to house to collect money. I know the art of begging. Every time that I have appealed to India for funds, the country has given a splendid response and showered money on me. But at present I have neither the time nor the energy to wander from house to house and collect money. So the burden of collecting money and using it efficiently and honestly rests on your shoulders. If we introduce untruth and sham furtively in this religious activity, it will recoil upon us terribly, even though the cow is not going to prod us with her horns in answer to our injustice to her. In this dark age people have ceased to think of the results of their bad acts, ceased to worry over the troubles and tribulations that are in store for them in the next birth for the wicked deeds of the present. Please therefore remember this law and keep as far away from false show and insincerity as possible. It is you who have to see that our work remains stainless. All these are the limitations of my work in this matter.

"In my speech at Belgaum I gave the full implication of *goraksha*. Protection of the cow does not end with the protection of the animal called 'cow', but it means protection of every living creature on earth. Naturally, man is included in 'every living creature.' That means killing an Englishman or a Muslim in defence of a cow is irreligion. Though I am fully conscious of the platform on which I am speaking and though I claim to follow the tenets of a Sanatani (orthodox) Hindu, I say so, because, I for one, am certain that that *dharma* teaches me not to kill an Englishman or a Mussalman in order to save the cow. In its true sense *goraksha* means protection of all creatures on earth. It is beyond the power of the puny human to protect every creature on earth. That is why the aim stated in the constitution of this association is that of protecting only the animal known as 'cow'. If we are able to do even that much, we have done enough and more. When we successfully tackle this question, we shall have in its very process grappled with many others. यथा पिण्डे तथा ब्रह्माण्डे (—As in a unit, so in the universe) is a maxim literally true in very respect, including our day-to-day living. An English² *rishi* (sage) has declared and I believe there have been *rishis* among Englishmen also—'Man! Know thyself; that is all you need to know.' If, therefore, we do our work with wisdom, consideration for others' feelings, and our whole heart in it, success is certain to be ours. Protection of the cow does not mean rescuing it from the hands of the butcher. It means we ourselves should stop from killing the cow (i.e. torturing her), as we have been doing at present. The whole concept of *goraksha*



comprises of nothing more than a Hindu's duty towards his ownself and towards the cow. Did we but know the economics of *goraksha*, we would not slaughter our cows, the way we were doing. India stands lowest in the world in the ratio between the population and the number of cows a country has. And the milk-yield per head is also the lowest here. You will find besides cows more emaciated in India than anywhere else. There is not an iota of exaggeration in all these affirmations. What I am saying is plain unvarnished truth, and I have no desire to excite feelings. There is no doubt in my mind that the cow is nowhere treated more harshly than by Hindus in India. That is why the responsibility of saving the cow ought to rest wholly on the shoulders of Hindus. When I joined the Khilafat movement to serve the Muslims, to kiss their feet so to say, it was, among other things, my object to secure the protection of the cow. In our cities to milk a cow is to extract the last drop of milk from her. That is why in three years our cow ceases to yield milk and is sent to the butcher. A few enthusiasts of cow-protection like Chaunde Maharaj may come out to save the cow from this cruelty, but their effort comes to a drop in the ocean. We can't rest content with it "I want you to consider two things, so that you can understand the true implication of this constitution. First, we should gain control over the professions of milk-supply and tanning. You may think this is a crude idea un-becoming of religious attitude towards the cow. But *dharma* is not an airy nothing. It is no *dharma* which we cannot reduce to action. The life of king Janaka teaches this same truth, that that is no *dharma* which cannot be practised in our day-to-day life and that it may even be *adharma*. That is why I bring this religious question³ into the field of practical work. Next, we should direct our attention to improvement in the present process of milking a cow, i.e., start dairies for the purpose. It is not necessary to have a law passed in the matter. It is enough if we resolve to supply pure ghee (clarified butter) and pure milk to the public. And then, what shall we do with the cow that dies? We ourselves must get its hide tanned and wear shoes made only from such dead animal's hides. You may feel, 'This man is talking like this, because he has returned from England with new-fangled theories and lost his *dharma*.' But it is not so. My suggestion covers not only the protection of the cow but that of our tanners also. What are they doing at present? They skin dead animals in such a disgusting manner, that we would feel the creeps at the sight. Tanners themselves told me so. And as they spend their whole life in dealing with carcasses in that shocking manner, they say it is but natural that they would eat the flesh of the animal they skin. That was how they defended their practice of eating dead animal's flesh. I advised them to give it up. Some replied they could not, since



that was their ancestral practice. Some others said, 'We can abjure that flesh, only if you provide us some other occupation.' Some others said that they would try, but it was a really difficult question. From all this I have come to think that we must ourselves look after the profession of tanning hides. For myself, I may say that I am such a devout worshipper of the cow, that when I came to know in South Africa of the cruel way in which she was milked, I gave up taking cow's and buffalo's milk. But while holding the cow in such reverence, I still believe that no *adharma* is involved in making use of the leather of dead cows and other animals for our shoes etc. And if this is irreligious, it is nothing before the fact that there are among us persons who use slaughtered cow's leather and fat and beef. There are even Vaishnavas (they love the cow specially, because Lord Krishna was a cow-herd in his boyhood) among us who take beef tea. When I question them why they take Lee Beg's Beef Tea,' they answer me, 'Even Vishwamitra (an ancient sage) took beef.' True, considering it as his *dharma* during the time of dire distress Vishwamitra did hold beef in his hands but he did not eat it. Then again they say their doctor's advice compels them to take beef tea. But it is really because we send our cows to Australia that we have begun to eat these unholy foods. If we want to save ourselves from it, we must learn how to preserve and tan hides scientifically. We export even beef from India! We dry it under the sun and then send dried beef to Burma, because Burmans have an objection against slaughtering a cow, but none against eating beef! That is why I have included the tannery question in the resolution. So long as we have not taught them the scientific way of tanning hides, our tanners are sure to go on taking dead animal's flesh.

There are other things in the constitution which cannot raise any controversy and I do not wish to touch them here. The immediate work before us is to establish good dairies for milk supply. In this matter as soon as I receive the help of the Vaishnava-maharjas, and Ramanujacharya and others in one pocket, I assure you the help of Mussalmans will fall into the other (Cheers). There is no reason for these cheers, because the Hindu Acharyas' support has not yet been secured.

"In this way, it is my aim to supply you pure milk, to get our farms tilled by sturdy bullocks, and to make you wear shoes of leather tanned from dead animals. Let me state here that in the establishment of dairies, I want to take the help of even Government officials, because they have got technicians with the know-how to get a large quantity of milk from a cow without injuring her in any way.



"I want as the Treasurer a man who can collect money from all sources and may even spend from his own pocket when necessary. Purshottamdas (a Vaishnava millionaire) has been approached, but the question can be settled only when he accepts the terms. The Secretary required for this work must also be an ideal worker. He should be a *Brahmachari* and know both English and regional languages. For a holy cause, a holy *brahmachari* is a prime necessity. I know that in these days it is not possible to get a *brahmachari* of the purest type. We have certainly got *brahmacharis* with us, but they are subject to anger and unable to keep all the five senses under complete restraint. What we want is a *brahmachari* who has subjugated the cravings of all the five senses. If we can't have such a one, it will do for us to have a Hindu of high character. There are even Mussalmans who are ready to help me, but I am not giving out their names because this is specially a Hindu's business and I want to take mostly their help.

"Let me, in conclusion, say that this institution is inspired by and filled with love and I hope that not only should no controversy arise in this work, but there should not be even a semblance of it. And I finish my speech with the prayer that God may grant us the strength to do this holy service."

When votes were taken, the constitution was declared passed by a majority of thousands with only 4 opposing.

Maulana Shaukat Ali then said:

"There is no Hindu who does not love Mother-Cow. And we want to live as his neighbour, his brother. I must, therefore, try not to wound his feelings and find out ways and means, so that the hearts of twenty-four crores of Hindus do not feel aggrieved at our conduct. The real remedy for all the ills of Hindus, for all the ills of Muslims, for all the ills of the whole of Hindustan in fact, is Swaraj and Swaraj alone. And the way to attain it is unity. But today the Muslim weeps over the Khilafat question and the Hindu over the cow. But neither does the Muslim do anything substantial for Khilafat, nor the Hindu for the cow. May God instil into us wisdom, patience, charity of heart and courage! Dark clouds have lowered over the country today, but this situation cannot continue for more than a year. A day is certain to come when we shall see that India has Swaraj, Islam is free and the cow too is free."

Dr. Munje (President of the Hindu Mahasabha, an ultra-Hindu institution) said:



"Muslims do not use a hundredth part of the quantity of beef that is consumed by the English army. We cannot, moreover, save the cow by fighting with Mussalman. Only when we first save the cow from ourselves, we shall be able to save it both from the Englishman and the Muslim."

On the next day, April 29th, there was, at Gamdevi in Bombay, a session of the Executive Committee consisting of 12 members chosen at the public meeting. Sri Revashankarbai was appointed as the temporary Treasurer and Sri Nagindas Amulakhrai as the temporary Secretary. Everyone of the members of the Committee promised to enrol within 3 months the required quota of members fixed by the constitution.

Let me admit that my friend Sri Shankarlal and I had cautioned the organisers of Gandhiji's tour in Bengal, because we were alarmed at the fact that he had caught fever from the strenuous tour programmes in Kathiawar and Gujarat. But the warning has done no harm. Satishbabu took every possible care to see that Gandhiji kept up his health. If anything, he erred on the side of excess, in that he provided a first class ticket for even a coolie like myself. But even that extra particular care proved itself not unjustifiable, when the crowds, eager for Gandhiji's *darshan*, kept us awake the whole night. It was only there that we learnt a new but negative definition of 'Mahatma': "That is no 'Mahatma' at all, who does not peep out of his carriage for giving *darshan* at the darkest hour of the night."

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1. Like Sri Sankaracharya's line of Adwaitin Gurus there has been an unintermittent line of Ramanujacharyas, whose centre is at Sri Rangam in South India. The first Ramanujacharya lived in the 12th century A.D. He founded the Vishistadwaita School of Philosophy (Non-duality of the Eternal, but having attributes by means of which He created the universe). Even at that early mediaeval period, his sympathy for Shudras—the servant classes and still lower ones—was very noteworthy. He went against the express command of his Guru—a heinous sacrilege—to give to one and all whomever he could meet the saving *mantra* or 'Obeisance to Lord Narayana' at the risk of having to go to Hell himself. But the Guru was pleased at this disobedience and all went well with him.
 2. An Englishman formerly meant a Whiteman colloquially in an Indian language.
 3. Cow-protection is regarded as a religious duty by Hindus.



Calcutta

1.5.1925

On arrival here Smt. Aparnadevi presented Gandhiji with her self-spun yarn ranging from 51 counts to 101. In the hallowed memory of her late mother, she sends 2000 yards to Gandhiji every month. Gandhiji advised her: "Try to spin all your yarn of the same thickness now. That will give you cloth of even texture."

Calcutta

1.5.1925

Principal P. C. Roy¹ occupied the chair at the public meeting held at the Mirzapur Park. "I suppose I should introduce you to the meeting?" said the Principal with a smile. "I think, it is necessary," returned Gandhiji in the same tone.

Addressing the meeting Gandhiji said:

"When I entered the house of Deshbandhu (the popular title given to Sri C. R. Das, meaning 'the Country's friend') today, I had a pang. A few months back, when I came here, the house was his and he was there, but not today. I had heard that the stately mansion had been given over to the Trustees. When, therefore, I went there today in response to their invitation, I was aware of the change of hands. But it is one thing to hear of an event and another to be present at the scene. When I went into the house, I felt a pang. There was no reason for it, since nobody had wrested the building from him and his action only showed his spirit of renunciation. But, moved by common human feelings, I could not help saying to myself, 'O, he gave away such a splendid palace!' I learnt also that Deshbandhu had not yet regained his health. God grant him a long life! And I wish that he recovers soon, and grows ever better, so that he can be always at the service of his motherland.

"I am sure you do not expect me to comment upon the events which you read of in the dailies. In the first place I don't get much time to read them and don't know what the papers say. I have not much to do with them besides. It is not necessary to read papers for the work I have made my own. Villagers don't read them, and, if sometimes they do, they don't spend much time over them. Their needs are different. I am living in their midst now-a-days and spend my time in making the spinning-wheel popular. I know economics and appreciate the value of time. I know that everyone



must engage himself in some work or other every moment of his life. I decided that political work might be entrusted to the Swarajists and so made a Pact with them to let it be regarded officially as Congress-work itself. There is, therefore, no need for me to meddle in their work, as I have complete faith in Nehru² and Das. I know that neither you nor I can protect the welfare of the country as much as they do. When I made that Pact, I made it known to the people also, that would not interfere in their work. To do so is a sign of want of faith. I do not, therefore, think anything at all about that (political) work.

"I have made two divisions of Congress work. The first section does our outer work, the second, the inner. Swarajists are entrusted with the first part and all of us are expected to carry out the second. For this, I have been touring all over India to ask the people to carry out a three-point programme. The first is Hindu-Muslim unity. My wings have been clipped and I find myself entirely helpless in this matter. Once upon a time I considered myself a physician who knew the cure. I thought then that I had with me a talisman, a sovereign remedy, for the malady. But I find I can do nothing. I see that neither Hindus nor Muslims are prepared to try my prescription. All I can say today is that Swaraj is a will-o'-the-wisp without the heart-unity of Hindus and Muslims. If Hindus proudly imagine that they can attain Swaraj even though they may cut themselves off from Muslims, they are living in a fool's paradise. And if Muslims dream of the re-establishment of the Moghal Empire without the support of Hindus, I shall say the same thing for them.

"Swaraj is impossible till we have not destroyed the devil of untouchability. Let Hindus call themselves Sanatanists or Arya Samajists, but as long as they eat this opium of untouchability, Hinduism has only one fate to face—its extermination. So long as we keep our heart impure, the world is going to treat us as untouchables. Hindus and Muslims and Parsis are all looked down upon as untouchables in foreign lands. But here I want to make it clear that by the end of untouchability I do not mean the end of *Varnashrama* also. (The four classes of Hindu society, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra and the four stages of life: a student, a householder, a retired gentleman and a sannyasi).

As long as we have not started plying the spinning wheel, the wretched poverty of India cannot be done away with, however high our own position may be. Ply the Sudarshan Wheel³ for half an hour. Not that India is a deficit country in cereals. It is in industries that it is undeveloped. As I came from Bombay to Calcutta, my heart wept



at the sight of crowds, having black caps on their heads and still crying out, 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi). It shows only blind devotion and that I don't want. It only pains me. One thing is certain: nobody can tell me it is a sin to wear Khadi. That is why I say to everybody, 'If you wish well of the farmers, use only Khadi.' If you want to get these men released whom the Government has imprisoned without any trial, without even a proper inquiry⁴, you should all spin. May be we could get them released by pleading with Birkenhead and Lytton⁵—though personally I have little faith.

"I have nothing new to give you. But I am not worried at all, so long as there is in India one man or one woman prepared to listen to my message."

Then speaking in English he said:

@ "I have spoken sufficiently in Hindi and I hope a large part has followed my broken Hindi. It is always a matter of deep grief to me that when I go to the South (India) or Bengal, I have been obliged to speak in English. I wish that the people of the South and Bengal could rid themselves of laziness and make up their minds to add to their knowledge of their mother-tongue a passable knowledge of Hindi, which alone can be the language of inter-provincial communication. Let English be the language of international diplomacy, but it cannot usurp the functions of Hindi. 20 crores can understand my broken Hindi Let it not be said that 10 crores want to impose their speech on 20. What a deep pain it was to me to enter 148, Russa Road! That house, I knew, no longer belonged to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. I knew that he gave it to trustees to divest himself of the last vestige of wealth. But man of the world, when I entered that house of the illustrious owner, I felt a wrench and could not help shedding a tear; and I was doubly grieved to hear that he had not been able to regain his broken-down constitution and more grieved to have (only) his message. May God grant him health and long life to serve the country he loves so dearly.

"You will not expect to hear from me regarding negotiations going between Birkenhead and Das. I have no knowledge of it. But I know that there is something like a political situation.⁶ But it does not interest me. I am an economist of time. I have given full power of attorneys to the Swaraj Party, which is in charge of the political programme of the Congress. And seeing that I have the fullest faith in the capacity and wisdom of Das and Nehru so far as council programme is concerned, it would be impudence on my part to offer my opinion. But what is more, it is impossible for me to attempt any such thing without having talked to Das or any other of the Swarajists.



I am pledged before God, not to interfere even mentally in their paths. I cannot help, because I cannot. It does not mean I cannot. There is only a difference of ways and means. I swear by the constructive programme. I cannot carry on negotiations with the matchless diplomats of England. We have no power from within. We have not the Power we had in abundance in 1921. I must, therefore, solely and exclusively concentrate on the constructive programme and I promise that, if you will but kindly help me in making the constructive programme a living and swinging success, you will find that our fetters automatically drop, you will find that those who are today grinding away in the jails will be discharged without our asking for them.

"And what is this programme?"

"The first is Hindu-Muslim Unity. Is it undesirable? unattainable? But I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady. They are not disposed to accept my own prescription. If we propose to break one another's heads, let us do so in a manly manner. Let us not shed crocodile tears. Let us ask for no quarter.

"So long as untouchability disfigures Hinduism, so long Swaraj is an utter impossibility. If it descends as a gift from 10, Downing Street, it will be a curse to India. The removal of untouchability is the acceptance of the service of these untouchables. Listen to me, Hindus of Calcutta! Hinduism is in the balance and it will go to perdition if you don't get rid of this curse.

"What do I ask you, you barristers of Calcutta? Half an hour of your time for famishing India, so that I can tell the daughters of Bengal that millionaires are spinning. They smile at us the smile of no-confidence and say we do not know the meaning of the spinning wheel. Unless you do it yourself, you will not be able to revive this lost industry of India. I defy every Indian, no matter how distinguished, to show me an effective substitute for the spinning wheel. But until that effective substitute is shown you do not deprive the country of the half hour. We want the villagers to be smiling with plenty. I want the people of Khulna feel that the next time they see a famine, they won't need the services of Dr. Roy. They will have an instrument which is an insurance against famine. I regard myself as a Charkha-expert, Khadi-expert, and I believe I have something to say to everyone; and while there is life yet left in me, and while Bengal is ready to listen to me, you must build the foundations of a permanent structure. Remember this: If you do not get this, even if you get Reforms without this, it will be nothing but a house of cards."



Mrs. Williams came to see Gandhiji in the afternoon. There was not much that was new in the talk with her. Regarding American globe-trotters he said:

@ "It is bad that their object is pleasure-hunting, not the world's good." She then asked, "Is it possible for everyone to do some good?" "Yes, everyone can, in his own way. Man in Europe is not, it is the civilization that is bad; man in India is bad, not the civilization." Gandhiji dwelt at some length also upon the question of machinery vs. hand-labour. He narrated the romance of the origin of the Singer Sewing Machine.

Left Calcutta on the night of the 1st. The trouble of the besieging crowds that began at the Sealdah Station continued all through the journey. Gandhiji was compelled to sleep on the upper berth.

Reached Faridpur on the morning of 2.9.1925.

Visited the Exhibition, which was excellent. The organisers had taken the help of the Government and gained thereby. Many of the Government men were clad in Khadi. Students from 'SriRampur Weaving Works' were also present. They had come to weave on fly-shuttle handlooms the yarn they had spun and were also spinning jute on jute spinning wheels and weaving it. All the processes of silk upto spinning were shown, but we did not see a handloom for weaving it. The section of the exhibition, where there were conchshell buttons, bangles and other ornaments, clothes made from tusser silk, and mutka (a variety of waste silk) and beautiful mattresses made from straw, was specially attractive.

There was nothing really noteworthy in Gandhiji's speech.

@ Saw Das. He is much pulled down and surprisingly weak. Referring to his speech,⁷ Gandhiji said, "I have read it from beginning to end. I would subscribe to every word of it. It is beautiful, I was almost going to say it is magnificent."

I suggested that he should give only a summary rather than read the whole of it. He dismissed the idea: "Not at all! There have been various whispers about that speech and my attitude. Have got to read every word of it. Were I to finish it in half an hour, people might put their own meanings."

Speaking on the proposal for a trip to England Sri Das said, "London, I would never go to. That would set tongues wagging. I am afraid even my visit to Vichy (a health-centre in France) may raise rumours."



Gandhiji then remarked, "Get an express order from the Congress President against a visit to England, and then you may go."

When Kashmir was proposed, he said, "Last year I was served with an order. They may stop me now also and I can never give any undertaking."

It was then proposed that he might go to Burma. He rejected the idea. "They may not let me land there, as Subhash and others are in Mandalay (Jail)."

Then he explained how the controversy with Birkenhead arose. There was really nothing behind it. "Some Europeans met me in Patna. The Editors of The *Englishman* and The *Statesman* also saw me. They said, "We wish to clear out of this (controversy). Can you not withdraw your Sirajganj Resolution ?" I refused, but agreed to issue a clarification. Immediately after I gave it, there was a wire: "WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON BIRKENHEAD'S SPEECH?" I said, "I have not seen it." It was sent to me and I replied. That was all there was to it."

With regard to the friction between Motilal (Nehru) and Jinnah (founder of Pakistan later on), he said, "Motilal is on the war-path. He would not accept my advice to avoid this controversy."

He then gave his experience of spinning : "I spun on your own spinning wheel at Patna—for two or three days—but I am a dunce."

Gandhiji: "I have not succeeded with the *takli* either. You need not despair, as long as I go on with my struggle with the *takli*."

Mrs. Das referred to her baby's health: "Is it not a bonny baby now?"

Gandhiji : "Yes, you were right and I have been proved wrong."

Speaking on his own speech, Das Said: "Pandit Motilalji remarked, 'There must be something at the back of it.' I said, 'As much at the back as in front of it.'"

Addressing the Faridpur Hindu Sabha Gandhiji said:

"With the President's leave, I shall deal with three points.

"Hindus, Mussalmans and all those others who are in India should live together in amity and love. But I know that distrust between Muslims has grown. Each is afraid of the other and that comes in the way of unity. I have shown the remedy known to me, but I have not succeeded. What to do then? I see that at some place or other we



fight with each other to our heart's content. I have, therefore, suggested, 'If we really want to fight it out, we should fight like brave men.' Even after our fight, we shall have to see reason and be united at heart. Genocide either of Hindus or Muslims is unthinkable. Mass exodus too is equally impossible. Nor is total conversion into Hinduism by *shuddhi* or into Islam by *tabligh* ever possible. That is why I am keeping quiet and watching events in the hope that unity will come after a hearty fight. I only wish that no Hindu or Muslim runs away after breaking another's head and that none resorts to the protection of law courts.

"I have said enough on removal of untouchability. It is a terrible sin. The punishment of that deadly sin has come upon us and we shall go on suffering until we shake ourselves free from untouchability. I do not plead for interdining and intermarriage with untouchables. I am not against any one who does so, but you cannot say that Swaraj is impossible without them.

"The spinning wheel is the life-breath of India's poor man. I have, at times, called it the *Sudarshan Chakra*, at times the *Kamadhenu* (the wish-fulfilling cow). All my experiences go to show that the spinning wheel is really our *Kamadhenu*. Our poverty began ever since we discarded the wheel.

"I saw the Exhibition here. I found that the Spinning wheel shown there was defective. You should have experts with you to remove the defects. The resuscitation of the wheel has to be brought about not in a diabolic, but in a humanly or angelic manner. We do not want to adopt for its revival the method of Manchester-people who destroyed the spinning wheel, ruined India with it, and raised the spectre of poverty that stalks the land. When I saw the famous Dacca Muslin three or four years ago, I was delighted. But when I learnt that it was foreign yarn they were using, my heart sank and shed silent tears. It would be uneconomic, if you produce only rice in Bengal. What will you do with your surplus rice, if Indians of other parts give up rice-eating? We should deal in our specific indigenous products only, for instance, ghee (clarified butter). The spinning wheel should be as common in every home as you have your ghee.

"Let me recount the story of that little girl, Aparnadevi. She came to me to have my *darshan*. But I felt myself blessed at hers. I thought we had no reason to doubt the rise of India, so long as there are girls like her who can spin such fine yarn. But torpor and lassitude have overpowered us; and we have no real love for the country. We have



not identified ourselves with the poor of our land. I, for one, think that India's uplift is impossible without the spinning wheel."

At the Faridpur Provincial Conference:

"I am your follower still. The world will listen to you, not only India. May your guidance inspire us till Swaraj is attained."⁸

At The Youth Conference:

"Mr. President and young friends:

"I had little hope to address the meeting. I just learned the history of this association. As you all know, I enjoy—one might almost say confidential—relation with the Youth of India. For, ever since the beginning of my public life, I have realized this one fact that the future of our country lies with its youth and he amongst public workers who can command the students or young men of India will be able to do something for the country. I propose to have a hearty talk. I don't want to deliver an address, which I detest, although it has been my unfortunate lot now for years.

"It is a good thing—a study of young men. Young men, of all people in the world, should eschew all desire for distinction, if they want to serve. Service, first and last, should be their motto. I give you my assurance that no pleasure in the world is equal to service well and truly done. When a young man begins to render service, not for itself, but for some end, then that stinks in his nostrils and he soon gets tired of it.

"What is the reward of true service? I have had training of thousands of youth and it began with my own training. I began to mould myself. Its conditions are purity, inward and outward. You understand what purity stands for; chastity in life. The Hindu term for it is *brahmacharya*. That is really the beginning of life and you will be astonished to learn from me that it is not only the prerogative of Hinduism, but it is the corner-stone of all religions. In Islamic phraseology, you will find the expressive word *paakdaaman*. You will find the same in Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and I doubt not in Judaism of which I have not the same knowledge as of others.

"This is the one crying need of the youth of today. I have toured all through our land and it is a matter of anxiety and even of pain that the private life of the youth of our country was not as pure as it should be. Excuses there may be. But unless you start with chastity, you are undone. Many of you may say, purity of private life may not be a necessary condition of service. But as you go in life, you will find that those who have



not led that life will find themselves handicapped in a variety of ways. I have told of confidential relations with you. You must know its implications. I know your private life as few know and you can understand what I suggest. Many a youth were termed scholars in English, Sanskrit, and mother tongue, but impurity in life has unnerved them and made them practically useless for life. Some of them have shed tears of blood before me and, as I tell you, a picture rises before my eyes and I tremble to think. He gave promise of a brilliant career. He was a brilliant worker and truthful. He was a school-master. He has disappeared. I do not know where he is and he is lost to the country. When I find myself in your midst and against time—I am occupying your minutes in order to have a heart-to-heart talk. I know the life of youth in Bengal and I know that temptations waylay them.

"But the remedy lies with themselves. You will permit me to give you the advice I gave to ignorant people far down in Gujarat. I mean the *kaliparaj* (black) people. They are not blacker than you or I, but they are called black because they belong to the lowest rung of the ladder—others are called *ujaliparaj* (white) because they are ground down and are slaves to these so called *ujaliparaj*. I have ventured to call them your humble countrymen. They are given to drink. I told them of the spinning wheel. A forest of hands went up as I asked them if they would give up drink. As you are aware I do not ask audiences who don't understand me to raise hands, because I don't do anything to create impressions on Downing Street, but only when I want them to do things. They insisted on raising their hands. I know people taking vows and then going back to the curse. How was I then to rely on promises made by them? I will place the same thing to you. I hope you will not laugh at the suggestion, but take it in good faith.

"Early in the morning invoke the assistance of God and pray to Him to help you keep your promises. It is difficult to become pure after once you have become impure. There is a way out for one who has a little bit of faith. I myself have taken His name as Rama. Tulsi Ramayana is a great thing. Gita is, but when I knew nothing of Gita, I knew Tulsiidas. You may not call Him Rama. Call Him by any name, but if you think I am telling you of something, which is a thing of eternal importance, in order to feel some strength, I ask you to fill yourselves with faith in God and invoke Him, take His name in the morning, and never allow your eyes to close before you have taken the Name. It will be like a fortress to you, keeping you from all harm. You may not approach God in arrogance. One must allow God to fill him through and through. His terrible condition



is that He does not want divided allegiance. He will have all of you. Everything will then come right to you.

"Non-co-operation is considered a very good word. It was a process of self-purification. I felt I should give that message to a boy or girl of 8 years. Three things are required: Removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, and Khaddar. They are indispensable. Whether you want to dance on the political platform or not, these three things are necessary. Hindu-Muslim unity does not require anything on your part, once you make up your minds. Once, as Hindus, we disabuse ourselves of untouchability, nothing is necessary, but if we want to identify ourselves with the poorest, the spinning wheel is a tangible thing. May it work for you and in you. May it add therethrough to the material wealth of the country. It will not but bind you to the lowest. It will help you to keep yourself pure. There are thousands who are not pure though they spin. But you disregard them. I have got letters from young men who describe what they gained from spinning. You have to battle with slivers and with delicate machinery and as you lose yourself in it you calm down. The spinning wheel is especially fashioned for that purpose.

"May God protect you and enable to understand a little of what I have said. There is no hope unless you lay the foundation of life in purity, of which I have talked to you."

'From 4 to 10 O'clock the pot continued to boil without interruptions' (M.D.). At 9 p. m. some untouchable brothers came up. One of them Sri Bhisma Devadas is a lawyer and was formerly a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. There were two schoolmasters with him. They talked with exceptional gentleness, modesty, and civility. They gave the information that there were, as in other parts of India, many communities among untouchables in Bengal also, for instance, sahas, kaivartas, namashudras, etc. But we learnt also that 'untouchability' in Bengal differs from that in Gujarat.

Bapu first asked them about the disabilities of *namashudras*. He said that there did not exist 'untouchability' as such. Namashudras at least can go into most of the caste Hindu houses. "But we are not allowed to go into the room where they keep their drinking water. High-class Hindus would not accept water from our hands, would not let us go into their temples, and would not allow our children to sit on the same bench with theirs. These are some of our disabilities. There are about 200 graduates and a few lawyers among our population of two millions."



Q. "How are we to remedy these disabilities?"

Gandhiji: "That's a nice question that you have asked. I was coming to that. Now there are ways and ways. There are some who would use violence against the offending party and wrest reform from them. I met such in Poona. They had voted me an address. It was not in Marathi or Hindi, but in English. There was an English-educated lad who thought the address should be given in English. In the address they said that if the higher classes did not mend their behaviour, they would fight and kill them. I went for them. I said that they would lose all my sympathy. That was the surest way to defeat the ends they wanted to achieve and to defeat all the efforts of the reformers to help them. There is another class—I met them in the South—who threaten to leave Hinduism and take to Christianity or Islam. I was very hard with them. I said it was only now that their religion was on trial and if they gave it up because they were ill-treated, their religion was not worth a moment's purchase. I was excommunicated when I went to England, but I did not give up Hinduism. The third way is that of self-purification, i. e., being free of all the charges that are levied against you. I wonder if you eat meat."

"No; hardly any. Vaishnavas amongst us don't eat meat. We do eat fish though."

"Do you eat carrion?"

"No-none."

"Well then, you have to do very much less. But try to rid yourself of all that they have to say against you and you will overcome their prejudices. It will be a long process, but a sure one. I know you can bring them to their knees by drastic measures at times. In cities, for instance, if sweepers strike work and say they won't resume work unless they are regarded as equals and certain disabilities are remedied, I am sure they will succeed, but their minds won't be changed. Their hatred against you will increase all the more. The only way is that of purification, and you leave the rest to reformers like myself. I am devoting all my energies to the task, as it is an entirely religious thing for me. As I know that unless we purify ourselves, Hinduism will be ruined."

Q.: "You want us to trust the reformers. We trust you, but how may we others? They talk of removal of untouchability, but they in their heart of hearts don't believe that Swaraj cannot be had without the removal of untouchability. Dr.



Roy is there who is fighting hard. He has genuine feelings for us, but even men like Mr. C. R. Das hardly do much for us."

G: "But I assure you, he can have nothing against you and he wants the reform as much as I. Do you know the reason why he cannot interest himself in it, as much as I?"

Q: "Yes, sir, because he has many irons in the fire and he has no time."

G: "Yes, that's it. He feels that no work can be done, unless by our political action we keep the English in dread of us. That is the only difference between him and I. But he is absolutely in earnest about the removal of untouchability."

Q: "We agree sir ; but then you want us to rely on the reformers ? You know, sir it has so happened that whenever we have shown fight they have come down, and if we don't, they will persist in their hatred and contempt for us. Swami Vishwanand says, we should refuse water from them, if they refuse it from us."

G: "He is hysterical, you know. Don't do anything of the kind. Maintain a dignified attitude. I don't think you can feel any love for them. But I do think you can rid yourself of all hatred against them. A dignified attitude and not vindictiveness is all that I want."

Q: "How can we join the national programme?"

G: "Why not? And what is the national programme today? Removal of untouchability, Khaddar, and Hindu-Muslim unity. I think all the three items are calculated to help to a solution of the untouchability question. Hindu-Muslim unity means more or less the solution of the question. And Khaddar is the solution of the pauperism of India. Yes; if people come to you with schemes of Swaraj in which there is no provision for you, and if missionaries come to you with schemes in which special rights are asked for you, you will be on your guard. You will brush both aside.

Q: "But how are the disabilities to end? Barbers won't give us their services, Dhobies won't. What are we to do?"

G: "That will end. You have to trust to the good sense of human nature too. When you have purified yourselves they are bound to awaken to their sense of duty. I have passed through the same disabilities as you in South Africa, and I want you



to do as I did. You know what I did? You see, in South Africa the European barber refused to serve me. I got a pair of clippers and one fine morning began to crop my hair before a looking glass. A European friend peeped in just then and found me in the course of the operation. 'What are you doing?' he said. 'If the European barber won't serve me,' I said, 'I will serve myself.' Then he offered to serve, with the result that my hair was cropped in a most amazing fashion, patches of hair here, patches there, hair unevenly cut in some places and evenly in some. With regard to sending my children to school, there was the same difficulty. They said an exception could be made in favour of my children. I said, "No, unless all Indian children were free to go to English schools, I won't send mine, and I kept them without school education, even risking the charge that I did nothing for my children's education. Oh! There were any number of disabilities. I can feel as one of you, because I have passed through exactly the same difficulties. I boarded a tramcar once and took my seat. A fellow came and asked me to get up. I got up and took my seat near the driver. The fellow said that the place where I was sitting was more breezy. He, therefore, came there and asked me to sit near his feet. I said that that was the last thing that could be tolerated. I said no, and bang, bang, bang, he began delivering slaps on my face. I still stuck on refusing to move and holding securely the brass railings so that I may not be pushed down. The other passengers were so shocked at this man's behaviour, that they came and remonstrated with him. "You won't allow him to sit inside where he has a right to sit, and now you won't allow him to sit even near the driver! What do you mean?" they said, and out of sheer shame he left me. And you know that I still got over their prejudices in course of time and they began to respect us. I could not offer retaliation, as I saw that we were reaping the fruit of our conduct with the untouchables in India. That is what I mean when I say we have ourselves made of us *pariahs* in the Empire and that Hinduism will be blotted out of the face of the earth, if we don't warn ourselves betimes and rid us of the curse."

- Q. "But, sir, Hinduism has persisted all through the ages, inspite of it. How will it be destroyed by untouchability now?"
- G. "Was there not cannibalism in some parts and Sati in India? Had they not to disappear? They had to disappear. If they had not, civilization would have gone



to pieces. And because consciousness has been aroused everywhere, Hinduism is on its trial and, if it is not to be found wanting, it must rid itself of the curse."

Q. "Shall we, sir, then join the Congress?"

G. "You must; and help us as much as you can in the national programme; and, above all, realize the inherent effectiveness and value of character. It is your character that will tell in the end."

When they got up to leave, Gandhiji said, "It has been a perfect pleasure to me – this talk with you."

Among the numerous visitors belonging to the untouchable Classes—whether in Gujarat, Travancore, or anywhere else—Gandhiji has never met men so considerate and sensible as these *namashudras*. After their departure Gandhiji remarked "It was a perfect treat, this talk with them." What a tragic story they said! And with what gentleness and civility!

An Untouchable Conference was held the next day. There were only a handful of untouchables among the audience, but Gandhiji's speech was directed mainly to them:

@ "All human beings are equal in the eyes of God—and so in the eyes of man, if we are fashioned in His image. But today the canker of superiority has crept into Hinduism. I was prepared to reconcile myself with some such distinctions here, as they are not so badly off as in the South. Slavery in the South is so complete ! But the idea of superiority and inferiority has crept into untouchables of Bengal also.

"A small group of these friends came to see me yesterday. It was one of the rarest privileges of my life to have that discussion. I found myself face-to-face with men who understood everything that I said. I shall treasure that conversation all my life. I found that the canker had got in here also. I said to them, reform must come from upper classes. Hindus own it to themselves to rid themselves of the curse of untouchability. It is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, as of nationalism. All born and bred up in India are nationalists. This curse is like the black bubonic plague. It infects those who come in touch with them. It has affected Parsis, Christians, Mussalmans. And so everywhere outside India—all Indians are untouchables-and that was why Gokhale said it was only our Nemesis that has overtaken Indians in the world, and a



fitting reward of the treatment we were giving to our countrymen here. That remark holds true.

"How are we to get rid of the curse? I pointed out to the young men who saw me that removal of untouchability was one of the subjects which Hindus only have to deal with. The friends told me, 'Yes, you are quite right. Reform must come from those who are not untouchables. But was it possible to expect that from reformers? Are not the caste-Hindus using us as pawns, are they not likely to sell us—as soon as they came to their own—in obedience to this blind cursed prejudice?' There was truth in their remark. Let us assure them that there is nothing behind this (move). Political result is there as a by-product. But a Hindu who uses this for a political motive has no title to be called a Hindu. It is a question supremely religious for Hindus and I have said often that Hinduism will be wiped out of the face of the earth, if it does not wipe this curse. It is a question of penance and penitence, of discharging our debt to untouchables. So long as we have not discharged that debt, we shall not be square with them, square with the God of the Hindus. We shall not be Hindus, and if I dare offend you, not be human beings.

"It is shocking that an untouchable who becomes a Mussalman or a Christian rises in the social scale. All honour to that untouchable who sticks to his religion in spite of all these difficulties, in that his religion forsakes him but he does not forsake his religion. My untouchable friends! Do not be afraid to follow the path chalked out for yourself. For ages you have refused to abandon your religion because your fellow-religionists have kept you slaves. This is, therefore, our paramount duty.

"A young man from Sylhet met me. What can he an individual, do? I said, 'You serve the untouchables.' He said, 'I shall be an outcaste.' I said, 'It is all right. Be good for nothing.' Be good for nothing, not by becoming an atheist, or forsaking your religion, but by serving the untouchables. If you are a moral leper, then your touching untouchables does not secure my purpose. But if you have a character to lose, then it is worth much to me.

"There are hundreds of Hindus who, I thought, were honest with untouchables. Just a few days ago, they had untouchables in their midst. But one of them was put to a severe test. He had to receive a Brahmin who had a Pariah boy he is bringing up. This boy is indistinguishable from the finest and purest of your boys in body and mind. He (the Brahmin) did not wish to palm off this boy on friends. This friend had undertaken to take him. In fact, he promised to accept the Brahmin and the Pariah boy with him.



He wanted the Brahmin for work among the untouchables in his place. But when they went there, the friend was afraid and he had not the courage to accept the Brahmin with the Pariah boy. I suggest to you that the friend was weighed and found wanting, and ceased to be a Hindu as he had not been true to his promise. I, therefore, say to young men, they have to brave every peril.

"I am not out for breaking *Varnashrama-dharma*. Untouchability is an excrescence, but *varnashrama-dharma* is a purifier of Hinduism. As an institution, I have not found it in my heart to get rid of it. I do not ask every Hindu to eat and drink with every Hindu. Inter-drinking and inter-marrying stand on a different footing. It is not necessary for me to marry a girl to serve humanity. It is not necessary for me to dine with everybody. Andrews does not. Shaukat or Mohammad does not—for the simple reason that Shaukat eats meat and I cannot eat meat with him; though I shall eat food cooked by him. But I love him no less than I do a brother born out of the same womb. If I was an eater of pork, he would not dine with me. These are restraints, naturally put on us, but they do not debar me from serving him. If an untouchable was bitten by a snake,

I would readily suck the wound on that boy. I would disown even God, if He restrains me from serving any human being. Seeing this as a question of service and not as a question of importing reforms from the West, as only a question of true Hinduism, I would, therefore, discard all restraints that society has put on untouchables. I consider not taking water at the hands of Namashudras a crime, as we take water from the hands of Shudras. I understand that barbers and washermen do not serve them. I say this is crime against humanity. Sentiment governs the course of our life, but if we are hurt at every point we shall be unnerved and disabled for service. Men who offend and are offended are both bad. The Bishop sang well who said, "Every prospect pleases but man alone is wild." He was right. They do not know what they are doing. It is for us, educated men, to arm ourselves to rid Hinduism of this curse and for that let us put up with excommunication, put up with taking water from them. Upto now we have played with the question. Let everyone ask himself, "What have I done for him? Have I taken a cup of water from him? Have I known his troubles and trials? I would allow my daughter to remain a maiden for ever, than suffer untouchables to undergo all these unjust disabilities."

It is customary to hold other Conferences side by side with the Congress Provincial Conference. One of these was the Students' Conference. This Conference



was held in a Theatre with a roofing of corrugated iron sheets. Gandhiji was spinning when students came to take him to the Conference. He suggested, more in jest than earnest, "May not the students come here? Should I have to go there myself? If they come here, I shall, in reply to their address, not only give them a speech but something else also." But who would carry this message to the students? Gandhiji chose Acharya Kripalani, who stays with us at present, to be messenger. He played his part to perfection: "Well, friends, don't you think it is better to see Gandhiji spinning than disturb him and bring him over here? He is a soldier. Why not march as soldiers in rows of two or three to his place? It is better to sit there in the open air than in this suffocating tent." The students and their President, Mr. Suhrawardy, immediately agreed and came to Gandhiji, crying '*Vande Mataram*' all the way. Gandhiji was sleeping but was awakened. He was very happy to find that students had come to him cheerfully walking under the hot sun of 2 p.m. Immediately a mattress or the like was spread out on the verandah and Gandhiji took his wheel and started spinning. Students sat on the court-yard ground in front. Sri Suhrawardy read the address and Gandhiji made the following speech as he kept spinning:

@ "I thank you sincerely for the address and more for the trouble you have taken to come here. The message was sent half-jokingly. I wanted to give you a demonstration in spinning as an object lesson and I ask you to spin, through this slender yarn, the destiny of India. You see only a thread of yarn coming out, but it is my certain conviction that with every thread I spin the destiny of India and the conviction is growing upon me that without the spinning wheel there is no salvation for this country of ours. Instead of thinking, speaking, may you set apart half an hour and devote it to spinning."

Faridpur is the chief town of the district. The population is largely Muslim, about 75% of whole, but the Mussalmans who attended the Bengal Provincial Conference could be counted on one's fingertips. Gandhiji visited the *Anjuman* the next day and when he brought some Mussalmans from there, there was appreciable sprinkling of them.

The Conference can well be termed a Swarajist Conference. But some revolutionaries also had got into the Swarajist camp. In view of their violent extremism, Deshbandhu Das laid a special emphasis on non-violence, which many of them resented. There was, therefore, something like a revolt. Some firebrands distributed leaflets stating that neither Gandhi's spinning-wheel nor Das' Council was going to



deliver the goods. In his speech the next day (d.3.5.1925) therefore, Gandhiji stressed two points: the meaning of the spinning wheel and the necessity of Das' lead for the good of Bengal.

Addressing the Conference he said:

@ "I am supposed to be speaking in reply to the kind words by the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the president. First of all, my congratulations to the Subjects Committee for having finished its deliberations in perfect harmony. It is an open secret—and we have been having no secrets, we have been inviting even detectives in order that they may see that we have nothing secret—that there were some disputes and some dissensions. But all's well that ends well. I know of no Subjects Committee without them. They will abide with us. European Committees have their secrets. They would be as bad as ours. Let us treasure the thought that we can unite and unite to purpose.

"I read—and I had the pleasure and privilege of having an advanced copy of the English address, with the brief little bonny sweet note—I read it then from start to finish and was wondering whether he had pilfered any sentiment from me. But the language was of a scholar and not of a rustic like me calling himself a spinner etc. and a *namashudra*. I would subscribe to every word of it. Someone will say that it is the surest sign that it is as dull as ditch water. No, it is not. A thing that is not dull in reading must be interesting.

"But let us look to the thought underlying it. What is it? If we are to be true to that policy we enunciated in Calcutta,⁹ then there is nothing in that address to cavil at. It is an emphatic re-enunciation of the policy laid down by the Calcutta Congress for the first time. Not that the Congress believed in violence, but in 1920 you chose deliberately to tell the world that in order to attain our goal, we shall employ means, peaceful and legitimate, i.e., non-violent means. During these four or five years that have intervened, those who had the shaping of the policy in their hands had but to follow the lead given in 1920. You had no right to expect anything less from him (Das) or anything more.

"Some like pepper and salt, which we have eschewed. We can attain nothing with pepper and salt, nor with fire and brimstone. We cannot attain national regeneration—even salvation—from motives of expediency and no higher motives. We have problems which no other country has to deal with. We have to deal with so



many sections, diverse elements! How are we to achieve unity between them except by means which are open and truthful? A Bengali thinks that India must be merged in Bengal. Gujarat thinks it must rule the whole of India. The brave Maratha feels he must shape India's destiny. Mussalman also thinks so with his still later traditions. We are sitting on a mine which might explode any moment. I have, therefore, launched on a policy of non-violence and truthfulness. You may, after Swaraj, have any policy. For me it is the first and last breath of my nostrils. I wish I could infect our young men with that zeal and devotion for *ahimsa*. I know every young man is ready to die for the country as to live for it. I agree he has a burning love and devotion. But I have also the ability to die for the country as to live for it. It is a living death for me at present. I believe I have the capacity to die on the gallows with a smile on my lips—if I am innocent and if my heart is white as snow.

"Did he¹⁰ not say the same thing at Gaya? I would not pilfer the news. But the news came in the natural course that Deshbandhu had enunciated the policy of non-violent non-co-operation. He has detractors, you know. What was he to do? Is he to sit on the fence? If he was not prepared to say in a most living manner, 'I cannot possibly wish a long life for you, I do not pray that Gandhi may live long,' he said, 'I do pray for non-violence lest Swaraj may be delayed.' I understand our limitations. If we could get Swaraj by a doze of intoxicating medicines, I would hurl defiance, but I can't. I admit the incapacity of my country. I can take a few heads. It requires a strong heart. But what do I gain by taking Reading's or Lytton's head? Deliverance is not the capacity of killing. Even Mrs. Besant said, 'It requires courage to live in censure and calumny, in such storm and stress.'

"How then are we to attain freedom? Not by killing but plodding. That is why I have planned 3 items. Hindu-Muslim unity is our creed, but we cannot engage our attention 24 hours in it. Removal of untouchability is also a creed, but that too cannot engage everybody. But everyone of you can put your hands to the beautiful wheel. With every yard you spin, you spin the destiny of India. Some of you will say, 'There is an idiot, speaks every minute of the spinning wheel.' But the finest testimony will be that he revived the *charkha* (spinning wheel), that Gandhi spoke for the famished masses. I have no misgivings about the future of my career, as I swear by the *charkha*. I am sure, even if you all, with Das, will say Gandhi is mad, I will say 'Give me the spinning wheel and I will give you Swaraj.' Let us not be a nation of talkers. You don't know how idle our masses are. I saw it in Champaran. I have seen agriculturists



hovering round me from day to day. They were not famishing, starving. But they had forgotten the use of their hands. They had no industry in their homes. It is an encumbrance. Our limbs were cut off by the (British) East India Company. That was its blackest crime. Until they think in terms of the masses of India, there is no salvation for India. I want the Englishman to read the hearts of the masses, the economics of the masses—not the economics of Europe. Then will fall at his feet.

"If I charge him with black crimes, what shall I charge you with, when you write pamphlets and say Gandhi has imposed a cursed burden on you? Does he ask you to do something which you are incapable of doing? They accuse Bengalis of want of practicality and in some respects they are right. You want everything without work. Those who shirk work in the interest of the nation shall have no share in shaping the destiny of India. Make spinning obligatory for every man or woman and also Khaddar on all occasions. That is my message. That is what I want. You want discharge of prisoners cooped up in Mandalay. Without Work? Impossible! If you want them to be discharged with honour, promise me that everyone will spin. If you do that, I shall be as happy as a lover going to his sweetheart. It is not a mighty thing I have asked of you. It is because you have no faith that you decline to spin.

"Some of you consider that he (Sri Das) is carrying on negotiations. What is at the back of it? As much at the back of it as in front of it, and you will find it in his speeches and life. If you search him, you find that that sane man pines for the salvation of his country. That is what binds me to him and that is why he wants you to bow to him. Sepoys and soldiers have not to reason why. Scan your would-be leader from top to toe, but after having made your choice, nay, throw your garland on him, like Sita, go to the fire and prove your purity and worth."

It is not possible that such speeches may satisfy everybody. These two days gave us ample proof of the adage that a people's leader has always to walk on the edge of a sword.

Gandhiji came across an 'ultra-modern' sister at Faridpur. He was invited for a visit to the local Government farm. Government officials had gathered and this sister was also among them. Gandhiji was spinning all the while on his whirligig. She began with laughing at the whirligig and then at Gandhij's simplicity. But he continued spinning all the while that he was talking with her. He was persuading even the Sessions Judge and the District Collector to spin on a whirligig the whilst they conducted their cases. The Sessions Judge remarked: "I admit, it would be a more



pleasant occupation—turning this whirligig—than having to listen at times to the rigmaroles of lawyers” —That mellowed the sister a little. Taking it for a plaything she asked for a whirligig from Gandhiji, as he was about to depart. He promised to send her one and returned to his stay. When we came to the station, Gandhiji asked me to take off the yarn from his own excellent whirligig and send it to her. I remonstrated: "Bapu, you are wasting your fine whirligig on her. It will lie on her table to make you a butt of ridicule in her circle." Gandhiji smiled. "Let her. What do we lose?"

Before we went to Bengal, we thought we were going to a Furnace. But it turned out to be a false fear. Faridpur at least was as pleasant as Tithal (a health-resort on seashore in Gujarat). By the town's side flows the vast expanse of the Padma, which has often shown her leonine fangs to Bengal. And the foliage too is nearly as dense as in Travancore, though less charming perhaps because of greater humidity. The animals again are as weak as in Travancore. Perhaps in no other parts of India the animals look as emaciated as in Bihar, East Bengal, and Travancore. There was an exhibition where the prize-cow was shown to be yielding 12 lbs!

It would be rather unfair to say from the sight of Faridpur alone that Travancore surpasses Bengal in art. But when corrugated iron-sheets roofing small hamlets met the eye, the sight was as repellent as the appearance of those self-same sheets alongside of the beautiful Jain temples on the Shatrunjaya Hill near Palitana. There are fine-looking roofs of straw on the huts of the poorest, but all those who could afford have substituted those iron-sheets for them.

As a sign of welcoming a guest, they erect a gate of banana trunks and leaves and put a *mangala-kumbha* (an auspicious earthen jar) nearby. We saw exactly this kind of *mangala-kumbha* everywhere in Travancore too. But there they put a heap of unhusked rice grains also and keep a light-stand with six or seven wicks burning coconut oil all the 24 hours. There was another striking similarity between Travancore and Bengal and nowhere else. When they welcome a guest or bid him goodbye, women at both these places make one and the same sound: "Hulululu-", by rolling their tongues. This remarkable similarity between places so far apart deserves the search of scholars. Even in West Bengal women do not make this 'Hulu-lulu...' sound. They blow a conch instead.

The *purdah* system is in vogue in Bengal, but not everywhere. Very orthodox families do have the *purdah*, but Gandhiji has torn the *purdah* so to say, wherever he has gone. Scores and scores of women, if not hundreds of them, came to meet



Gandhiji at Faridpur. At Chandannagar, numerous women came out of their houses and blew their conches to welcome him. And it is impossible to forget our hostess. Her husband, Sri Sureshchandra Vishwas, has earned several degrees and was a leading criminal lawyer. He gave up his thriving practice in 1921 and has never renewed it. Today he is a Swarajist and a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. It is impossible to forget his ardent love for Gandhiji and his wife's devoted service to him. Immediately when Gandhiji reached their house, she laid at Gandhiji's feet a dhoti made from self-spun yarn. She clothes similarly the whole family with Khaddar made from yarn spun by herself. It did not appear that Sri Vishwas was spinning regularly, but his wife spends all her spare time in spinning and all the children also spin. She kept herself busy from morn to night, made every possible preparation to meet all the needs of Gandhiji, and insisted on fanning him herself, when he retired for a siesta after lunch; and when Gandhiji started spinning, she made him fresh slivers from the best quality cotton, *devakapas*. The roaring income of the family has disappeared and poverty has now made her habitation in the house, but it appeared to me that both the husband and the wife were proud of their poverty. I have very rarely had the *darshan* of a sister so cheerful, so devoted, and so steadfast in her faith as that hostess. All other sisters also brought with them their self-spun yarn. They had themselves made their winding reels and exhibited their artistic touch by giving it the shape of a trident. There may be in Bengal a few Congress-members who spin their quota of yarn themselves, but the number of women who have taken to spinning is quite large and all of them spin very fine yarn. It was in Calcutta that we had the *darshan* of Aparnadevi. She had been longing for Gandhiji's *darshan* for a long time and had flooded me with letters for it, but when she actually came up and stood before Gandhiji, she was struck dumb. She had brought 4400 yards of yarn, fine as silk since it was of 150 counts. She gave it in a bag on which was embroidered the word 'Bapuji' at the top and at the bottom 'Aparna', in light-yellow silken thread. She knew enough English to be able to speak, but she felt such awe and reverence, that she could not utter a word.

From Faridpur we came to Calcutta.

Sri Deshbandhu Das came with fever from Faridpur. He is so worn out! It is difficult to recognise him. Though his palatial building no longer belongs to him, a friend has insisted on giving him free for use a house worth the rent of 500 rupees a month; and that friend has absolutely nothing to do with his political activity.



We stayed in Calcutta for two days. There were, of course, some programmes even in that short period, for instance, a visit to Chandannagar ('Chandranagar' is a name given by Englishmen) Sri Motilal Roy, (once) a follower of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, conducts a 'Prawartak Sangh' there. It was for visiting that institution that Gandhiji was called to the town. There is no sense in saying much about the visit, as an hour's hurried visit does not entitle one to form an opinion either of the Ashram or its inmates. His arrangement, moreover, for a quiet talk fell through completely, as an inrush of thousands turned the meeting into a public one. 25 to 30 women were spinning in the women section. They had excellent slivers though their wheels were not in good order. Gandhiji in his speech expounded the meaning of the motto of the Ashram “ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय” (Om, Bows to Lord Vasudeva) and explained the essential meaning of renunciation. Renunciation, he said, did not mean renunciation of all activities as such, nor that of all contact with the world. It meant reconciling the good of the world with one's own good and engaging oneself in the world's service under the conviction that Lord Vasudeva permeates through it.

The American Consul paid a visit during our stay in Calcutta (probably on 5.5.1925). Introducing himself he said, "Mr. Leh was in Cape Town and I in Nairobi. Then I stayed twenty years in Cape Town."

@ The Consul put a pointed question: "Whether you have succeeded in your efforts to unite Hindus and Muslims."

G: "No. But I do feel I will."

C: "Your fast focussed much attention on the question."

G: "Yes; it has produced a somersault, but not much."

C: "Your charkha. It does teach people some discipline, rather than economics."

G: "I regard myself as a practical man."

C: "Is not the spiritual idea the great idea about it?"

G: "For me it is the biggest idea."

C: "To bring them together, to teach them spend their time."



- G: "But it has a spiritual basis as you said. And if I succeed, I succeed in forming the largest co-operative society in the world. Two ideas are at the back of it: to spin and earn for others, and for us, sacrificial spinning."
- C: "Can you estimate the number of people spinning?"
- G: "Nothing less than ten lakhs on a rough estimate."
- C: "Can you anticipate much success amongst the working classes?"
- G: "No. Even amongst rich people there may not be even ten thousand people."
- C: "To my mind it is a big idea; it serves to unite them in common interest."
- G: "Even non-co-operation meant co-operation between Indians."
- C: "Can people not wishing independence think of it?"
- G: "Indeed. The famishing may have no idea of independence, but they may unite to drive away poverty. "Untouchables" may also unite. Untouchability is not going to take much time to die. If there was anything to support it in Hinduism, I should have long renounced it."
- C: "Is it a late growth?"
- G: "There are some verses which give colour to untouchability. There were at a time a class of people who rose up to undermine Hinduism. They were excommunicated in a Dyerian terrible way. Dyer wanted to strike terror. Even so Hindus made even touch with such a crime."
- C: "Are many Brahmins in favour of untouchability?"
- G: "No. I refuse to believe that it is one of the dogmas of the faith."
- C: "What was the purpose of this meeting?"
- G: "We have annual functions, national and provincial. This time it assumed greater importance because of the expected pronouncement of Das because of the bazaar gossip."
- C: "Lord Ronaldshay in his "Bird's-eye-view of India" argues against a purely western form of government for India. Ronaldshay says all Indian forms of government started with the village form of government. Is it not the same as



that of the District Boards? But they have Government flavour. They have no power."

G: "In the old days the method of voting was loose, but it was its strength. Today the voting is manufactured."

C: "Your movement (spinning) is not unlike a movement in China ... I think, Mr. Gandhi, Indians are educated in an academic way. There is not much industrial education."

G: "Yes, I agree with you."

C: "How would you improve it?"

G: "Government can do a lot. We must do a lot. It should come from Government and not essentially from the people, as you say. If Government had not drawn up its educational policy so that it may have an army of clerks, this thing would never have happened."

C: "Is not there a tendency now to try to teach them improved methods of agriculture?"

G: "Yes; only of a type."

C: "Can India provide every one of her wants to herself?"

G: "Yes, every one. India can well afford to have all her instruments—surgical instruments for instance—from the West. Sugar we import 18 crores; hardware 7 crores. I don't grudge that. All I grudge is cloth. Immediately we save that, we get enough to buy other things."



6.5.1925

The second noteworthy event during the two days' stay in Calcutta was Gandhiji's visit to Sir Surendranath Banerjee. (A noted Moderate leader, who was one of the foremost in the Anti-Partition Movement in Bengal.) Gandhiji himself has given a detailed account of it. Gandhiji's visit to the Spinning Exhibition in Mirzapur Park is also worth recording. Among the organisers were Srimati Kamini Roy, the well-known Bengali poetess, Dr. P. C. Roy, Chakravarty, and Sri Jatindranath Chaudhary, a big zamindar of Nakipur. Dr. Roy even spins and the yarn is excellent. There was Shrimati Hemaprabha Mazumdar also in the Exhibition. It is safe to say that this Exhibition surpassed those in Bombay and Madras, since they were all skilful spinners here and all of them came from the educated classes. The fourth programme was Gandhiji's very profound speech before the Mahabodhi Mandal on the occasion of Lord Buddha's celebration, on the full moon day of this month (d. 7.5.1925 probably). The gentleman who proposed that Gandhiji should take the Chair suggested among other things that untouchables should be induced to accept Buddhism. Gandhiji said:

@ "Friends,

"It is now my pleasant duty to end this service—not these proceedings. Dr. Dharmapal has added a pathetic touch to this service and he has laid on my shoulders a burden which I consider I am ill-fitted to carry. I hesitated last year, when Mr. Natarajan drew me out of my convalescent bed and asked me to preside at the anniversary last year, but I could not resist Mr. Natarajan, for I have great and deep affection for him. And I knew that I would be called upon to take part in such functions somewhere in India from year to year and so it happened when I came to Calcutta.

"It is a strange thing that almost all professors of great religions of the world claim me as their own. Jains mistake me for a Jain. Scores of Buddhists have taken me for a Buddhist. Hundreds of Christian friends still consider that I am a Christian and some Christians do not hesitate to impute cowardice to me and say, "We know you are a Christian. But you are afraid. Will you not come out and acknowledge the kingdom of Jesus?" Many Mussalmans consider that I am a Mussalman. Though I don't consider myself so, some consider I am on the road to it.

"All this flatters me and I take it as a mark of affection and esteem. For me I regard myself as one of the humblest of Hindus. But the deeper I study Hinduism, the stronger becomes my belief that Hinduism is as broad as the universe and takes into



its fold all that is good in the world. And so I can appreciate the services of Islam and sing its praises and similarly of the professions of all religions. But something within me tells me, for all that veneration, I am not the less a Hindu.

"I came to Buddhism now nearly 40 years ago. 37 years ago I went to England a lad, and the first book—a religious book—placed in my hands was this incomparable book 'Light of Asia.' I had read nothing of any religion in the world, nothing of Hinduism. I knew of Hinduism what parents had taught me, not directly but by practice and a little more from a Brahmin who taught me Ramaraksha (verses invoking the protection given by Lord Rama). That was my stock, when I found "The Light of Asia." I devoured it. I went from page to page. Though an indifferent student of literature, I could not resist the temptation of reading it through and gave my thanks-giving. I read it again after commencing practice in South Africa. At that time I read something of other religions. But the second study did not diminish my veneration, if possible increased it, for the teachings embedded in it. Beyond that I have no acquaintance with Buddhism; though some more literature I read in Yerwada Jail.

"But I know the reason why I am asked to preside at this function, whether in connection with Mahavir, Buddha, or Christ. It is that I endeavour to follow to the best of my ability such teachings. My limited understanding enables me to appreciate them. Many friends consider that I am expressing in my own life the teaching of Buddha. I accept the testimony and confirm that I am trying my level best to follow this teaching. Unlike Buddhist professors and unlike, therefore, many Hindu students, I draw no distinction between the essential teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism. In my opinion, Buddha lived Hinduism in his own life. He was, undoubtedly, a reformer of terrible type, i. e. a reformer deeply in earnest and counted no cost too great for reform indispensable for his own growth and the uplift of his body, mind and soul. Blind Brahmins rejected his reform because they were selfish. But the masses are not philosophers who while away their time in philosophising. They were philosophers in action, had robust common sense and so they brushed aside the priest in Brahminism, i.e., selfishness, and had no hesitation in recognizing Buddha as the true exponent of their faith. And so being myself one of the masses, and moving in their midst, I find Buddhism as nothing but Hinduism reduced to practice in terms of the masses.

And, therefore, sometimes learned men are not satisfied with the incredibly simple teaching of Buddha. They go to it for satisfaction, mere satisfaction of the intellect, and they are disappointed. Religion is pre-eminently a matter of heart and



the man who approaches it in intellectual pride is bound to be disappointed. It may look queer for me, from the chair to think of God at a Buddhistic service, but I make bold to say that Buddha was not an atheist. God refuses to see a person who goes to Him in all his pride. He wants to see people who rub their noses on the ground and he wants to see the marks. You see Moslems rub their noses and you see the marks about the circumference of a rupee. But God does not want that mark. He sees through and through us and he wants to see a mark deep down in you. Shyambabu may cut off his nose by rubbing, but God won't consider that. But a man who may have a pointed nose, and yet a bruised heart and blood coming out him God will recognise. Splendid philosophy in action—that is Buddha's teaching. It is pre-eminently a religion of the masses.

I don't despair for a moment. I don't think Buddhism has been banished from India. Its every essential character I consider as translated into action in India more than in China or Ceylon or Japan. But with first-hand evidence I can speak of Burma and with humility I say that we in India translate Buddhism far more in action than the Burmese. Buddha is impossible to banish. You cannot remove him from his birthplace. He made an imperishable name. Nothing of Buddha can be banished. What matters it, if we go to a temple and worship his image or whether we take his name? My Hinduism teaches me that I may mispronounce Rama, but a philosopher if he pronounces punctiliously Rama and hides a dagger, he perishes. So I say *Dhamma* (dharma) is the essential thing.

What matters it if he can count a few numbers (in India)? Buddha never counted heads. What matters it if someone sends a few dollars from Honolulu? Buddha has taught us, it is not necessary for millions to call themselves anything or of millions to associate themselves with him, if one man remains true. There is no occasion for despair or disappointment. If we are true, safe, then all is true. But if we have little faith, if we depend on outward things, we are undone.

And if we want to contemplate on that great life, let us not consider what the world thinks of us. Let us consider how much of the message of mercy and compassion we have translated in our life and to that extent we have translated Buddha in our life. So long as the world lasts, he will be regarded as one of the greatest teachers of mankind. 2500 years—what is that in the life of a nation? Thoughts travel quicker than a railway train. But they have also a knack of travelling at a snail's pace. The thought he gave birth to will never perish. It is still germinating and although we may find that



Buddhism is really decadent, I am optimistic enough to feel that the day is dawning when all religions will be purged of all dross, humbug, fraud, untruth, cruelty and degradation. They will be purged when you see the day dawns, when he who runs may read that truth and love will reign supreme. Action is the current coin. Any one else is a base coin.

"May God help us to realize the message that Buddha taught mankind and may we endeavour to translate it in our life whether we call ourselves Hindus or what not.

"I thank you for listening to me with courtesy and attention."

"May this little service be fruitful for all."

Leaving Calcutta on the 7th we started on a tour for the real Bengal. Even Faridpur can on no account be called a village. Only now we began to visit the villages of Bengal. One has first to go north-east from Calcutta to reach Goualando. You have to take a steamer from there and go south. A number of villages lying on the bank of the Padma pass through your sight and then you reach the Dacca District. Our tour started with the villages of the Vikrampur Division of that district. The Dacca District is the most densely populated district in Bengal. The census gives the figure of 1,064, and in some parts even 2,000, per square mile. 96% of the population live in villages and even among them only 10% in those above a population of 2000. It is difficult to permanently mark off even the boundaries of tiny villages, because when there is a terrible flood, whole villages are swept off and the place which was the location of a village this year, may be under water the next.

We first went to one such village. The meeting was held right on the bank of the Padma. A zamindar in Calcutta had lent his steamer to Gandhiji for 2 days. It would anchor off and on and the meetings were held on the bank. But Gandhiji insisted: "I must go into the villages and see them." When we saw one, the sight gave me for a while the creeps. Such a dark and deep wood! From one hut you could not even see another in the same village. And these huts, with walls of bamboo slits and roofs of reeds and straw, were always damp. Round these huts were *pukurs* (ponds) or ditches. Those who live by the river, fetch their water from it, but those that stay at some distance use their *pukurs'* water. They wash the refuse of their dishes as well as their clothes in those same *pukurs* and even answer their nature's calls on their brinks! If there is a heavy downpour in monsoon they resort to some higher place or even keep themselves confined into their damp rooms. Is there any wonder if epidemics like



malaria and cholera break in out such places? And yet this district is regarded as the healthiest in Bengal, and not without reason. The whole of East Bengal is smothered by the numerous windings and branches of the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers and so many names have been given to them that even the local residents are often unaware of these separate names. It may be difficult for a Gujarati to have an idea of what I mean by the 'branch' of a river. You cannot conceive of the expanse of these 'branches' from a view of our big rivers, Mahi or Tapti or even Narmada. The Padma grows four miles broad at many places and when you leave Narayanganj and proceed towards Chandpur where Meghna meets the Padma, then it becomes a gulf of 8 or 10 miles in width. These rivers serve as drains provided by Nature to sweep away all the filth of these parts. In West Bengal, however, where there are not so many rivers, people have to depend upon their pukurs and hence diseases have become endemic there. In East Bengal, however, these natural conduits maintain cleanliness at least to some extent. But the village people are entirely careless there also about removing night-soil etc., when their rivers do not, on their own accord, come to their help to clean their villages. Even water they will not care to boil before drinking. In those parts of Travancore, where they have to use such water-holes, everyone, rich or poor, drinks boiled water. In fact, owing to long usage it has become a natural habit with them not to drink water before boiling it. But here in East Bengal people are indifferent, no matter how harmful their negligence proves to be to themselves.

The question, naturally, arises why people should have penetrated into such marshy jungles and how they have succeeded in settling there. While, on the one hand, our eyes are never satiated at the sight of the scenery on the banks and the vast oceanic expanse of the rivers on the other, when we actually set our foot on the land and go to a village we tremble at the very thought of staying there even for a day. And yet people have gone into such dreadful thickets and made them their permanent habitations. The moment they see the flood signal, they run away as fast as their legs can carry and as soon as the flood subsides, back they come to stay in their old haunts. If it is swept off, immediately they erect a new one. Nature has thus armed man with an unremitting spirit of adventure. Most of them know both swimming and boating. It is a child's play for revolutionaries to take hold of a boat that is handy, row it in the dead of night to any zamindar's house they like to rob him, sink the boat and hide themselves into the dense jungle nearby.



It is this same Vikrampur Division that has produced a large number of Bengal's greatest sons. We may well say that as the Ratangiri District has supplied to Maharashtra through its Chitpavana Brahmins, the flowers of the land, so the *Vikrams* (exploits) of Bengal's eminent men, like Das, Roy, Ghose and others whom this Vikrampur Division has given are resounding everywhere. But one has got to add that their achievements have yet to be canalised for the preservation of the health of the villagers and the conquest of freedom for the poor peasants of Bengal.¹¹ As we were passing by the side of the village Taaltalaa, we were shown from the steamer's deck the pucca house of Deshbandhu Das. Such brick-built buildings are one in a thousand here; for one cannot trust the frequent floods to keep even them safe. Rice and jute are the chief products of the Division. This district alone yields jute worth 4 crores of rupees. The people's staple food is rice, vegetables, and fish from the rivers. The shaaktas (followers of Shakti-Power, i.e. God's omnipotence symbolized as Lord Shiva's spouse, Parvati or Shakti) take flesh also, while the Vaishnavas do not, but everyone takes fish which is plentiful in Bengal.

The first such village we visited was Malikandaa—Dr. Prafulla Ghosh's village. Gandhiji's seat was installed under a beautiful canopy made from reeds and around him a crowd of thousands sat quietly.

Dr. Ghosh has organised a sangha (group) of about 50 or 60 workers and founded 10 centres one of which is his Malikandaa village. This centre focusses its activities on the production of Khadi. There was an exhibition also which contained Khadi produced exclusively in Vikampur Division. The production of Khadi through Dr. Ghosh's *sangha* is still very small. Last year Khadi worth Rs. 13,000 was produced and the sale figure was Rs. 8000. But the excellent quality of Khadi was a treat to the eyes. The fine Khadi we saw could well compare with the famous fine Khadi of Andhra, the medium could perhaps beat the Tirupur Khadi and owing to its exquisite borders, designs and even smoothness, Khadi made here could match the best Khadi produced in India. There were many samples of good Khadi, one of which was a dhoti made from Sri Makhanlal Sen's yarn of not less than 60 counts. His yarn has a history behind. The Rowlatt Committee's Report¹² based on the Black List of the Police made his name famous as an arch-anarchist. But now non-violence and Khadi have captured his imagination so much that he has made his mark even in that field.

Though the village proper was away, in the interior, we went there and entered the house of a Muslim weaver who has been helping Dr. Ghosh by using hand-spun



yarn. It was an excellent house in which lived a family of 5. The old man and his son were earning Rs.40 per month from weaving handspun. Other weavers have not yet given up foreign yarn. Gandhiji then returned to the place of the meeting, where he dealt with the condition of the villages in his speech:

"If there is an excellent sewage system in villages, malaria would be wiped out. The area on which Oxford now stands was all full of pools at one time. You can't imagine the state of England even only 60 years ago. And what a difference between Holland of the past and present! I say all this from Motley's book."

As we were going back to the steamer, Gandhiji asked Dr. Ghosh, "But you haven't shown us *your* house!" Though he took Gandhiji all round the village, he had the deep humility to keep back his own house from Gandhiji's visit. But Gandhiji insisted: "I can't leave this place without seeing it." So we crossed some part of the wood to reach Dr. Ghosh's house.

And what was his 'house' like? 'Walls' of nothing but piles of some wooden hollow cases fixed on the ground in wetted earth and the roof of reeds. The house in which he was born is now in ruins, but the one, in which he used to live with the big family of father, mother, brothers and sisters is extant and it is 20' by 10'! "Was it in this house that you lived together?" Gandhiji asked.

"Yes."

"And all of you slept here?"

"Yes."

"And your study room was also this self-same room?"

"Yes."

Dr. Ghosh left this village for higher studies in Calcutta, became a D.Sc., was employed on Rs. 500 per month in the Government Mint, gave it up in response to the call of non-co-operation, and joined Gandhiji's non-violent army. He has a little sister. That chatter-box was with us in our tour. Gandhiji asked him, "Where have you put her in school?" "In 'The Sister Nivedita Girls' School' in Calcutta." "How do you provide for her expenses?" "They come to 15 rupees per month which a friend supplies. When I gave up my job, I had 150 rupees with me; I gave them to her and started her education."



"That's exactly what should be done," emphasised Gandhiji. "I have no pity for you. Where a whole tremendously big society has to be resurged, many men of character have got to be paupers voluntarily."

When you go still further south on the Padma you come to Lohoganj. On the way lies a village, Bhaagya-phool. The zamindar who had lent us his steamer for our tour belonged to this village. He went against the fixed programme and halted his steamer there. Dr. Ghose was opposed, but in response to the pressing request of the zamindar's son, Gandhiji got down. Hundreds of people were gathered there also. This zamindar is the richest among all of his kind in Bengal. He is a Kundu by caste, a community which is regarded as untouchable in some parts of Bengal and touchable in others. It was only here that we learnt for the first time that the standard by which to treat a man as an untouchable changes from province to province.

Lohoganj is a big jute centre and its bazaar an emporium for loading steamers with jute for export worth hundreds of rupees. A Marwari gentleman had made all the necessary arrangements for our halt there (on 8.5.1925). On behalf of the Vikrampur Division Dr. Ghosh gave an address of welcome to Gandhiji and a purse of 5,500 rupees. Gandhiji gave away the purse for Khadi work in the same Division.

The address stated that the town produced 13000 rupees' worth of Khadi and had sold 8000 rupees worth previously and further 3000 rupees worth on the occasion of Gandhiji's visit. The number of Congress members under the spinning franchise was 111. "The Belgaum resolution has acted as a soporific." Gandhiji in reply said:

"I congratulate you for the address, for the yarn, and for the purse. I am sad that the Ali Brothers are not with me here. All of us must purify ourselves. Hindus and Muslims should be united at heart. When that is done, untouchability disappears along with it. We should never look down upon any body. Hence, I wish everybody to spin for half an hour. The sole purpose of Prafullababu's (Dr. Ghosh) stay among you is your service. You should fulfil your promise of making 10,000 spinners. Having my *darshan* or listening to my speech will not help you. But your action in response to my prayer will benefit me, you, and the whole of Bharat."

Shyambabu a leading 'No-changer', (a believer in the original non-co-operation programme of boycotts of councils etc.) and an active journalist gave us the following shloka about fishes here:



इल्लिषं जितपीयूषं वाचा वाचामगोचरम् |
रोहितं हि हितं प्रोक्तं मद्गुरो मद्गुरोः प्रियम् ॥¹³

Our next halt was at Dighirpur. Sri Jatindra Kushari conducts a national school here. He too was a leading Anarchist. When we went there, thirty boys were spinning. They spun very good yarn, but their spinning wheels were very much below standard. Gandhiji remonstrated with the teacher:

"The sight of this terrible spinning wheel has cut me. If you conduct a school with such wheels and can't infect the village with enthusiasm, who is to blame—the village or you? It was good I came here. Had I not come, I would have fastened the blame upon the village itself. See what spindles these are! The boys have to turn and turn their wheels before they can draw out even a short length of thread. The yarn output is bound to be poor at this speed-rate. And the wheel does not hum musically. It is impossible for the boys to sing songs as they spin, because the whirl of these wheels can never be in harmony. These children seem to have a flair for spinning. Were such children spinning on good wheels, they could easily double their yarn output. Such wretched wheels make me all the more convinced of the bright future of the spinning wheel." The teacher said, "he did not get the time to look after all these details." "If you have not the time to find out defects in a wheel and repair them," returned Gandhiji, "you should undergo a year's *tapasya*, be an expert in repairing wheels and then start your tuition work."

Gandhiji then came to the place of the public meeting. At least 15,000 must have been present and yet there was pin-fall silence. The whole credit goes to the organising power and meticulous care of Satishbabu. Even the cry 'Mahatma-Gandhi-ki-Jai' was forbidden. Only, nobody could stop the women from giving their hearty welcome through their 'hululu' sound.

In his speech here Gandhiji said:

"I congratulate the Municipality on its present of five spinning wheels. But after all it is but a symbolic gesture of the help they should give. Nothing that we do for this holy sacrifice is too much."

From there to Taaltolaa and then to Malkhaanagar (d.9.5.1925).

For this town we have to go north and not further south, since a splinter of the river flows towards the north and Malkhaanagar lies on its bank. It is not easy to forget



the sights we saw here. The whole bank—for nearly two miles—was filled with rows and rows of men. An inlet branches off from this northward strip of the river and goes towards the town. We got into a boat at that place, because the inlet was too narrow for a steamer. Both its banks were clustered thick with crowds of men numbering hardly less than 25000. Immediately after alighting from the boat, Gandhiji went to the women's meeting where thousands were sitting quietly. Samples of excellent yarn as well as dhotis woven out of the superfine yarn spun by those women were exhibited on a table. Gandhiji spoke to them on purity, both internal and external. The *dharmas* of pity, truth and preservation of high character constituted internal purity, while spinning and wearing Khadi the outer, he said. The ideal that Sita's life provides includes the observance of both these dharmas of inner and outer purity. "Your self-purification cannot be complete so long as you all do not become copies of Sita." The moment the word 'Sita' escaped Gandhiji's lips, the women responded with their sky-rending shout, "Hulululu!"

Gandhiji then proceeded to the men's meeting. The number of those present was a difficult guess. 40-50 thousand is only a too modest surmise. It was unbearably hot and stuffy, and yet the people were sitting still and quiet. But the problem was how to deliver a speech before such sea of men. At all the meetings addressed by Gandhiji Sri Shyambabu used to translate Gandhiji's Hindi speech into Bengali. His 'translation' was little less than an original speech in Bengali. His method of 'translation,' with the addition of his own exposition to draw out the sense and spirit of the original, reminded one of Dr. Rajan in South India. But Dr. Rajan lacked Shyambabu's sonorous voice. Only Shyambabu could handle the big gatherings here, but even he failed with this. So Gandhiji would stand in front of a section of the gathering, have a short talk, give his message in 2 or 3 sentences and then proceed to another section to repeat the process. In this way he finished speaking to the whole audience in half an hour.

Leaving the crowds and passing through a dense thicket Gandhiji went to the national school. A workers' meeting was held there. They do not belong to the Khadi Pratishthan of Bengal, but are all Dr. Ghose's assistants. I have already given the names of two or three but some other names deserve mention. I should not fail to speak of at least three: Jatindranath Chaudhary, Pareshprasanna Sinha and Nivaranachandra Sircar. All these were revolutionaries a long time ago and members of the Anarchist Party. Nearly all the workers are either graduates or under-graduates. One or two are



doctors. Most of them accept for themselves nothing more than their food-expense and that comes to 10 rupees per month. Some have to be given Rs 10 more to meet the expenses of their families, but nobody takes more than 20 rupees in return for full-time service. Out of the 13 centres, 5 produce Khadi and the remaining 8 conduct national schools only.

Soon after the talks with the workers began, there was some hubbub around the place. Gandhiji, therefore, took all the workers to the steamer. I give here a gist of the frank private talk that took place. The questions *at issue* were mainly two: (1) Many a worker feels depressed and disappointed at the insufficient response from their villages. Hardly two or three have the faith that the spinning wheel alone can bring us Swaraj. 'Can you explain how spinning alone can win Swaraj?' (2) What is the good of remaining in the Congress? Why not go on spinning, start a Spinning Association and separate ourselves from the Congress?

This was Gandhiji's answer:

@ "In the first place I have never claimed that spinning by itself, can bring us Swaraj—though I myself believe it can. But I have definitely said, and quite often, that without spinning Swaraj is a day-dream. That apart, I am prepared to prove the truth of both these propositions. What does 'spinning' mean? It means making it universal. It means we must know all its processes—ginning, carding and spinning—and must get the spun yarn woven.

"Successful spinning involves the mental working of all, from Rajas down to raiyat. Imagination is the faculty of seeing things without visible objects. We can visualise gods and goddesses on the Himalayas, because our mind is filled with sacredness. Millions spinning means ourselves spinning. It requires a tremendous effort to keep these things going and more to make millions spin. If you have faith that without spinning there is no Swaraj, you should feel that there is no Swaraj unless we hook ourselves to spinning. The captain will have to be buried under water, if all leave him. No chemist has yet worked unless he has a number of workmen taking care of little things. Some will have to take care of the spinning wheel, making it one of the essential items in many, because spinning makes automatic the solution of the untouchability problem. In Karnatak and Madras untouchables say, 'we are not going to touch Khaddar,' say, 'we are not going to do this thing.' They touch Khaddar because of me. The 'invisible' in Malabar could not even listen to me. 'Give, give (the address



in my hands)' I said, but he won't give. The man had ceased to be a human being, because he was made physically incapable.

"These English people have their hands on every string of the violin, except one string which is in my hands, That is of non-violence. Win Swaraj with non-violence and then you may if you like tinge the Pudda (Padma) red and I will dance with joy. I see with my own eyes as I see this cup that there is no Swaraj without non-violence.

"Hence there should be no paid spinner as a Congress member. I want the Congress to be a living organisation pulsating with life—just as on any ship each part corresponds to the order of the Captain. I can make that Congress hum, but not the one with 300 millions inactive spinners. These spinners will act when the moment comes. God will make them act. That is my defiance of the Government.

"The Transvaal coolies did the same thing. When they heard that we all had gone to jail, they woke up. Harbant Singh¹⁴ said to me: 'What's the use in my living when you go to jail and others go to jail?' Mines were turned into prisons. The prisoners had to descend into mines. The secret of this response was faith in God. When people ask me when I am Going to begin civil disobedience, I say I do not mind. Do what we should today and that is how I hurl defiance.

"Let us take the smoothest passages. Nawabs and others are embankments. Leave them. Leave the rest to itself and the rest will take care of itself. A professor told me, "Ask everybody to plant cotton." But I don't want to create dissipation of mental energy (*buddhi-bhransha*). I bide my time and say, 'Plant cotton also'. All cannot grow cotton, but millions should be carders and spinners. The spinning wheel is the centre of the Swaraj Universe. You have so far touched only the outskirts. In the legal course, they don't teach you racing, but there is a racing language and for certain cases they have to learn it. Some have to learn navigation language and corruption slangs also. Similarly here you must fill in all these details. I have talked to grown-up people the language of grown men. You have then to dot your 'is' and cross your 'ts'. I am *read* today, because they know that in one sentence I pack a world of meaning. You have to live in these swamps for many a year before you can touch the imagination of the people.

"Universal spinning implies solution of all problems. In that sense spinning means Swaraj. When you have solved all these problems, what is there that remains? We shall have a workable solution of the three and then we have a power and strength



to dictate terms to Englishmen. They must then either say good-bye or stay in India on our terms. If they come to terms, I shall have machinery, hardware from them. I don't want to be vindictive. I want to turn persecutors into friends. It will be a partnership at all levels.

"This you can intellectually work out, only if you believe that Swaraj can be got only by non-violent means. If you are not convinced of non-violence then you must cease to think of spinning. If you are convinced that non-violent means alone can bring Swaraj, then you will take the non-violent means one by one.

"The atmosphere is not spoiled. The Government wants dissensions, finds mischief-makers. I wish you will say, 'Let all of them come in my way, I will spin'; things will then settle down. If you are clean, all about you are bound to be clean one day. Shall I say good-bye to *brahmacharya*, truth, *ahimsa*, because the opposite is going on about me? My method is right, even if I was the sole representative of it.

"Such tried spinners are certain to come out when the time comes. I can't take any work from 300 millions who don't believe in spinning. But if there are 300 true believers, I shall rouse the country. If you ask me how these people will rush when the trumpet sounds, I cannot answer the question. All I may say is that God will push them forward. I have such deep faith in God, that I am sitting quiet now in the assurance that when the hour strikes, He will shake everyone out of his slumber. That was what happened in Transvaal. Till the last moment nobody was asked to join the struggle. But when the coolies saw that we all were in jail, they also came out of their mines. Harbant Singh was a free man, he had not to pay the poll tax¹⁵, but his spirit was afire, he also went to jail and died. Mines had to be used for jails, the Satyagrahis were cooped up in them and suffered great hardships. Could I have anticipated that wonderful response? But it is a matter of faith in God. When people ask me when I would start civil disobedience, I give only one answer, 'God will bring the time for it.'¹⁶

"Now let me come to the question of the utility of being in the Congress. I admit, not much. But I don't want it to be said that No-changers are apathetic to the Swarajist programme. The utility of eyelashes is not much, when the eyes are open. The same with us. But next year we may have an All-India Norm and it will be formed with the consent of Swarajists. It will be the naturally ripe fruit of this year's labour. We drop out the (spinning) franchise and I drop out from the Congress. When there is the power in me, I shall deliver blows—of course non-violent. There is no harm in being in the



Congress, if there is no good in it. Supposing we all had retired after the spinning franchise was accepted by the Congress, it would have looked indecent."

An extract from the Dacca District Gazetteer:

@ "Density of population 1064 per square mile; in some places it is 1787 and 1526. The population is mostly rural—96% live in villages and only 10% in villages containing more than 2000 inhabitants. But a census village is a most elusive thing. Houses and godowns are made of reeds and plaster in a wooden framework and roofed with corrugated iron sheets and there is utter absence of urban amenities. There is no conservancy, drainage, or water supply, other than that provided by a *khal* (a raised plastered square on the floor with a hole for the outlet of water).

"Regarding the language of the people, Grierson says: 'It exhibits well-marked peculiarities of pronunciation—a cock-like hatred of pre-existing aspirates and, in addition, the regular substitution of an aspirate for a sibilant. They say 'shibboleth' for 'sibboleth' in West Bengal, but 'hibboleth' in East Bengal. East Bengal has no ch, chh, j, but ts, s, and z.

"There are 60,000 Muslim weavers in the district.

"The Namashudras are the autochthones of the Bengal delta. They refused to take any share in the partition of Bengal.

"It is hopeless to expect villagers to adopt any prophylactic measures whatever. They will persist, in spite of all our efforts, in drinking foul water, even if they are in a position to obtain river water, and to expect them to boil or filter water, to clean a drain, to leave an infected spot temporarily, even to drink prophylactic doses of acid sulphuric, if given to them, is utopian. The river often acts as the receptacle of night-soil and the source of water supply.

"Robert Mitford who served in Dacca for many years died in 1836 in Europe and left the bulk of his property to the Government for works of public utility in Dacca.

"Cotton goods exported from Dacca were worth 28 ½ lakhs in 1747. In 1800 Mr. Taylor reported that in 1760 a weaver earned from 1 to 1 ½ Arcot rupees per mensem! British yarn was imported in 1821. Native yarn of the same quality as the best imported yarn (No 200) cost 13 annas per 5/4 of a hank as against 3 annas.



"Jute crop was worth 465 lakhs of rupees in 1906. "For shell-carving, shells were brought from Ceylon, Bombay and Madras coast."

Narayanganj is a junction of many rail roads because, for going anywhere to the south one has to board a steamer there. According to the original programme, we were to alight at Narayanganj from the Calcutta zamindar's steamer, on which we were sailing so far along the bank of the Meghna, and take a mail steamer for Chandpur. But the agent of the zamindar very pressingly requested Gandhiji to proceed to Chandpur in the same steamer and we had not to change. On the way to Chandpur we enter the confluence of the Padma and Meghna rivers with its bed of about 10 miles' breadth. The Meghna meets the Bay of Bengal some 30 or 40 miles south of Chandpur and Noakhali lies there. Calcutta and Noakhali are on nearly the same latitude. At the Rajshahi District the Ganga divides itself into two branches that are the sides of the triangle which has for its base the imaginary line drawn from Calcutta to Noakhali. There are many such deltas in Bengal but this is the biggest.

But let us leave this digression into geography and come back to Chandpur. It is one of the only two cities of the Tipperah (Tripura) District, the other being Comilla, the capital. There is hardly any other place in that district which deserves the name of even a small town, and villages abound. The rural population is, therefore, large though not as dense as in the Dacca District. Never the less it cannot be less than 800 or 900 per sq. mile. Chandpur is the biggest jute centre. Many foreign firms have been established and jute is exported through numerous steamers. Comilla is to the east of Chandpur. As Chandpur is a jute centre Comilla can be called a cotton centre. That does not mean there are many spinning or ginning mills in Comilla; cotton grows in luxuriance in the hilly tracts near-about and thousands of hand-spinning wheels are still busily working there.

People may not have forgotten that railway servants on strike were shot down there 4 years ago. Chandpur has for us another association also; it is the native town of Hardayalbabu and Krishnadas. There is no member of the All India Congress Committee who does not know Babu Hardayal Nag. At 70 or 75 he has the enthusiasm of a lad of 17. Immediately on getting down from the steamer the very first question that Gandhiji asked him was: "I am sure you are as young as ever?" After the Gaya Congress of 1922 (where the Swarajist resolution of lifting the boycotts was thrown out by large majority), he stood by the side of Rajgopalachariar in sticking to the original non-co-operation programme of all the boycotts. He is still smarting under the



pain he felt in 1924 at the Belgaum Congress Resolution (by which Gandhiji's Pact with Swarajists recognizing them as Congress representatives in the Council was confirmed). He cherishes the deepest—I may even say unlimited—distrust for Swarajists. This was evident from the fact that he took 2 hours of Gandhiji's time for the sole purpose of putting him searching questions on the Swarajists and his Pact with them. At this age, he continues spinning - though he cannot match Gandhiji. When there was a Spinning Exhibition in the morning he sat by the side of Gandhiji to compete with him in speed and output. At the end he remarked. "I am sorry. I can't beat you." Gandhiji replied, "That is only the privilege of my children and my children's children, I won't give in to elders like you." Krishnadas is not unknown to Gujarat also. Those who have read his (English) book "Seven Months with Gandhiji" in translation in the *Navajivan* cannot have forgotten the author. Only when we came to his birth place, we learnt that that was not his original name. 15 or 17 years have passed since he left, but we met some of his co-students who knew him as 'Devendranath Sinha Roy.' He had then recently passed the Matriculation Examination (for entry into college) but ran away from his home and studies, as he saw that attempts were being made to force him into wedlock. He has never left his Guru since then, for even a flying visit to his hometown. Everybody now knows him as Brahmachari Krishnadas, the name which his Guru gave him. He had a brilliant career as a student and even graduates with distinguished degrees among the young men who have joined the non-co-operation movement look up to him as a respected colleague. It is but natural that when he left home as a lad, the parents did not like his escape, specially since he was the eldest son. The quarrel on the question of his marriage continued for long but that loving quarrel not only ended after his joining the Gandhian army, but the whole family now loves him as much as they love his action. His father gave up his legal practice during the non-co-operation movement and has never resumed it. With the one exception of his father, his whole family of about 50 souls, i.e., his parents, his elder cousin and his wife, his brothers and sisters with their families, and uncle and aunt, spin regularly every day and wear Khadi from top to toe. The father is not physically fit to ply the wheel for long and cannot spin much, but composes poems on the wheel. The mother and cousin's wife move among women to organise spinning. Giving the reminiscences of Krishnadas the sister-in-law said, "O, it was difficult even to talk with Thakurpo (— husband's younger brother or cousin) then. Nobody dared disturb him! But his contact with Gandhiji has changed him and his love for us all has grown deeper; now we can talk freely and crack jokes with him." She talked about Krishnadas' early life and then



said: "Yes, Krishnadas' marriage never took place, but is not the visit itself of Gandhiji an event as auspicious as his marriage?" I have rarely seen a woman so gentle, serene, and cheerful as Krishnadas' mother. She met Gandhiji for a 'private' talk, but all her private talk came down to one question: "My Krishnadas - he is but a child. I wonder if you are satisfied with his service to you?" Owing to his silence day, Gandhiji wrote: "Completely satisfied. I have not to worry about him; he has about me." As she did not utter a word for a long time after that one sentence, Gandhiji wrote: "You need not hesitate. Say frankly what you want to. Do you want Krishnadas' marriage?" Everyone burst into a loud laugh. But the mother firmly replied "Marriage? We have given him away to you and he is your servant now. His marriage is out of the question."

The women's meeting at Chandpur was a grand success owing to the preparatory work of these sisters. They had made house-to-house visits to request everybody to bring yarn at the meeting for presentation to Gandhiji. Hundreds of women had, therefore, brought their yarn. It has become a rule with the women here—and with men also—to wear Khadi when they come to such public gatherings. But many of them seemed to be wearing previously unused Khadi. A girl studying in Bethune College attracted Gandhiji's attention particularly. She read the women's address which she herself had drafted and her style of reading was definitely superior to that of Bengali men. And then she sang a beautiful song on the spinning wheel. Gandhiji has not yet forgotten the refrain of the song: "Ghor, ghor, ghor, aamaar saadher charkha ghor," and asks people to sing that song wherever he goes. That refrain has been adopted from a Bengali song composed by a Muslim poet, but all the other charming stanzas have been hers. Gandhiji asked her: 'Do you spin?' She said: "Yes, sir; but I can't devote more than half an hour to spinning." Later we came to know that her father, a doctor, was also a regular spinner.

This tour programme has been so efficiently arranged that wherever we halt, there are certain to be two items—a ladies' meeting and a spinning exhibition. Most of the spinning wheels in the exhibition at Chandpur were of the Khadi Pratisthan institution. Bengal produces good yarn because much attention is paid to the quality of slivers. Many of those interested in spinning make their own slivers and take care to clean their cotton first. A large number have in their courtyards *dewakapas* trees that yield a very high quality of cotton. The old proficiency in spinning has been kept up still besides. The need for improvement in spinning wheels, however, was a common feature noticeable everywhere. The spinning exhibition was held early in the



morning in an open maidan. It began to drizzle after a short time, but nobody budged. It was raining during the public meeting also. Welcomeaddresses began from Chandpur. Their number goes on increasing as we proceed in our tour: five in Chittagong, six in Noakhali, and eight in Comilla District. That is a frightful figure and the printing expenses may be termed a sheer waste of money. But in one or two things Gandhiji's instructions have been carried out to the letter. Most of the addresses contain more facts and figures than panegyrics. In the Chandpur address read by Babu Hardayal Nag, for instance, the following among other facts were stated: Spinning Congress members—10, non-spinning members 68, spinning wheels 245, average speed of spinners 100 yards an hour, production of yarn 1 maund (40 lbs.) a month, 7 out of about 1000 handlooms use hand-spun yarn both in warp and woof, production of Khadi 250 yards a month, sale of Khadi Rs. 300/-per month, national schools working 4, and use of liquor increasing. Babu Hardayal Nag expressed disappointment with the situation. Some of Gandhiji's statements in reply are worth recording:

"You have given a review of your progress and expressed your disappointment. But the man or the institution that does his or its work with perfect renunciation, perseverance and energetic effort need not feel dejected, because Lord Krishna has told us that the fruit of our labour is His business, not ours. The reason for this slight progress lies in the fact that we entered this field of work only recently. Till now we indulged merely in speechifying. Only now we have begun to use our hands to do some tangible work. When we compare our achievements through speeches and through practical work, we feel depressed at the present situation. But how is it discouraging if two, four, or ten years ago there was a plethora of speakers and millions to clap them and now we have only a few, but the few who do the solid work of spinning? At least my faith in that work increases as the visible result decreases. We can take little work from 10 millions who do nothing except giving us 4 annas a year (the fee for Congress membership before the spinning franchise); but I hope to take greater work even from only 30 men who believe with their head and heart in spinning and do that work and who are wedded to Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability. We shall throw into the neatest river one thousand false coins, but if we have only 5 real coins, we shall get corn for our food. The new franchise thus serves as a sieve to separate the grain of useful members from the chaff of do-nothings. If we have no faith in the spinning wheel or in its work, it is best we gave it up. But so long as our faith continues, we should not feel depressed just because a large number do not join us. He who has faith in this means of uplift will always be active and go on doing his duty. Even if



Hindus, Muslims and all others give up the spinning wheel, I shall sit alone in my home and spin away for 8 hours. You told me that both poverty and crime have increased here. And yesterday I learnt that poisonous leaves have grown thick in rivers and whole fields are destroyed by them. Just as their growth is due to our negligence, so is our poverty the result of our indolence. The spinning wheel is offered to the whole country just to drive out this listlessness and sloth. If we want to end the poverty of millions, we have only one means and that is the spinning wheel. It is the pivot of all healthy activities. Turn it first and then you may do as many other things as you like.

"You have asked me to give you a message of hope in the midst of despair. What shall I say? Hope and despair are both embedded in ourselves. The man himself is his own enemy as well as his own friend. But the children pointed out one good thing. The song they sang said in substance that we should remember God in times of distress. But even God has the heartlessness to refuse to listen to us, so long as we do not care to do our duty. That means in the last analysis we must spin and take God's name. I will not rest till that work is completed. I have been hearing all along all the good things that have been spoken about me here. Resting content with praising me will do good neither to you nor me. Only if we Hindus and Muslims unite, shall we be able to love each other. Namashudras came to me and complained, 'Hindus hate us', i.e. Hindu *dhobi* and Hindu *barbers* refuse to serve them. In my view it is a sin. And in conclusion, I appeal to you to give up foreign cloth and begin wearing hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi."

Gandhiji then visited the local (national) school (probably on 11.5.1925) and indulged in fun with the students.

"Let the brightest boys come forward."

Five boys came out.

"And how many are the dullest?"

Nearly all stood up.

"Who is the naughtiest?"

One boy stood up.

"Why so naughty?"

"I climb up trees and run and scamper," the boy answered.



"How much do you spin?"

"Don't know spinning."

"Well then, you fail in the test of smartness."

"Who is the most backward?"

One boy stood up.

"Why so?"

"Not much in intelligence and study."

"Are you good at spinning?"

"Can't spin very well—only 50-60 yards an hour."

"A good runner?"

"No."

"Jumping?"

"Yes."

"Know sewing?"

"A little."

Gandhiji then addressed the boys:

"Let me give you the definition of a bright smart boy. He who plays, runs, dances, jumps about is smart indeed but that boy is really so who is good at his studies and first in everything he does. I won't call that boy smart, who speaks English fluently or is very talkative, I will call him smart who spins much, because he knows why he should spin. The boy who has a sharp intelligence understands that his spinning will decrease the poverty of India. That boy is really clever. He will think it his duty to spin well and spin much. He will keep a timepiece before him and watch daily the quantity of his yarn and the time he took for it. He will then inquire the spinning rate of others. The teacher will tell him there are spinners of 700 yards an hour. That will not dishearten that bright boy even if his rate is much lower. He will then pray to God when he goes to bed, "O God! Give me the power to spin 750 yards an hour." The next day he will spin away in right earnest. If he finds even then that he could spin only 350 yards, he will refuse to give way to despair, but hope to be able to reach to 700 yards one day.



When he finds that in spite of his prayer he is not able to spin that much, he will try to find out the cause of his failure. 'Is there any flaw in the wheel?' If there is any, he will repair it. If even after setting it light, he does not make much progress, he will ask himself, "Are my slivers not good enough?" If that is so, he will not feel dejected but improve the quality of his slivers. In this way he will not rest till he is able to spin 750 yards.

"Now let me tell you who should be called a dunce. He is an idiot who is always dissatisfied. Even after spinning 750 yards, he feels he must spin still more! He will only say, "I will go on progressing." Such a 'dunce' as well as such a 'bright boy' are good. One who considers himself a fool in this way is humble. The other who regards himself in the manner I have shown as an active and bright boy has the spirit of adventure in him. We want both types of boys. The latter will remain in the front rank and the former will always press forward. Both will try to serve Bharat. They are both free from selfishness. They will observe *brahmacharya*, translate their sympathy in action and spend their time in the service of fellow-students. They will be devoted to their parents. These two types of boys I regard as dunces and clever boys. I wish you to be like either of them."

After a couple of days' stay, we left Chandpur to go southeast for Chittagong (Chattagram). There are land and water routes for Chittagong. For the latter one has to board a steamer that sails down the Meghna river to the Bay of Bengal and then to the east along the sea coast. As it is at once a long and dangerous route—dangerous because it passes through the formidable mouth of the Meghna river—people prefer the railway route. We have by the rail route first to go eastward to Feni, a big spinning centre within the limits of the Noakhali District. The route then turns straight down south, and runs seventyfive miles to reach Chittagong. Feni is a big market-town for hand-spun yarn. Weavers buy that yarn for woof, and mill-yarn for warp and produce such mixed Khadi in large stocks. Those residents of Feni who were using and propagating 'pure' Khadi (i. e. of hand-spun warp and weft) gave an address to Gandhiji on the station platform. It was written in Sanskrit verse form. They used Sanskrit as Gandhiji did not understand Bengali and they did not like to give it in English. For the same reason addresses at three other places were given in Sanskrit. In the Chittagong District also there is another market-town for hand-spun yarn, and that is Mahajan Hat, where the Khadi Pratishthan has established one of its big centres. Every week it gets 9 maunds of yarn woven into pure hand-spun Khadi. The eastern part of this



district also, like that of the Tripura District, is a hill tract. It also produces cotton in such a mass that the cotton produced in these two districts can supply cloth for the whole of Bengal. Spinning wheels had not stopped working in both these districts even before the start of the non-co-operation movement, before even Gandhiji came to India. The Government Gazetteer of the Chittagong District shows 11,000 men living upon spinning in 1912. Today, of course, the figure has grown much bigger. Workers of the Khadi Pratishtan move about in surrounding villages to supply them cotton and carry yarn from them to the town. Hindus form a large majority among weavers and Mussalmans among spinners. At present weavers of mixed Khadi buy their hand-spun yarn from the yarn emporium of the Khadi Pratishtan. It is Satishbabu's aim to buy up all the available hand-spun yarn for getting it woven into pure Khadi and thus stop the production of mixed Khadi.

A zamindar family in Mahajan Hat has been taking a keen interest in Khadi and helping the Khadi Pratishtan substantially. Their family name is Roy Chaudhari. They are five brothers, living as a joint Hindu family with a separate house for each. Spinning wheels are humming in everyone of them. Their self-sacrifice may not be as great as that of Ratnasabhapati Gavandar of Puduplayam and the women of the former family may not be spinning as much as those of the latter, but Khadi is used by the whole family for all their clothing needs and there is a likelihood of this family making a greater sacrifice after their meeting with Gandhiji.

Chittagong is the eastern end of India. It lies south of Mahajan Hat. The population is comparatively thinner in the district because a large part of it is hilly. Humidity in the air is greater than even in Dacca and Tripura Districts. There are nearly 900 tanks in the town. A few years ago there were 1100! Cyclones sometimes sweep the district in monsoon and cause havoc. In 1897 their toll came to at least 20000 human lives! Chittagong is as big as Nadiad (in Gujarat. Mahadevbhai writes these articles in "Navajivan" in Gujarati) but the meeting held there was much bigger than ever held in Nadiad. That stupendous gathering, however, maintained wonderful silence and there was perfect discipline and management. The addresses gave an account of the Congress work done. The report showed that during the last 2 or 3 years nothing at all was done. The Reception Committee's address admitted the people's failure. "How low we have fallen since your last visit!" It stated that there were 45 Congress members in Chittagong. But all these 45 were workers of Suchiya and Mahajan Hat centres of the Khadi Pratishtan. There was not a single Congress



member belonging to the Chittagong town itself or even the district. Sri Sen Gupta (an eminent lawyer and political leader) stays in Calcutta and none else cares a pin for the spinning wheel.

The District Local Board refused to give an address to Gandhiji. Those who gave the Local Fund Cess, therefore, gave him one.

The (town) municipality also gave him an address. It stated that it had passed a resolution to introduce spinning wheels in its primary and secondary schools.

A Muslim brother translated into Bengali Gandhiji's speech (in Hindi):

"My arrival at this historic place gives me a painful reminder. One of the Ali Brothers was with me when I came here last. (The translator said, 'I have no difference with him of any kind!') He is not here today. Sen Gupta too is absent. During our last visit he was under a Government ban from attending a public meeting. He, therefore, carried us both to this place and then left. All the arrangements were made by him.

"I congratulate you on your introduction of free and compulsory primary education in the town. I do not know if compulsory education tends to the welfare of the people, but I know there are two views on it. I shall watch your experiment. I congratulate you for making Khadi dress compulsory for employees also. There is no salvation for us but through the spinning wheel. Let me remind you of what I said at Calcutta. I told them, 'Even if you want to go to the Councils to serve the people, you should ply the wheel. And if you want to non-co-operate, then also the spinning wheel is a must. Non-co-operation is impossible without it.' Cotton grows in plenty here. From my talks with Sri Satish Babu of the Khadi Pratishtan, I learnt that Muslim women were so poor that they would hail their employment as paid spinners. And they know spinning so well that Bengal itself can supply all the cloth needed for Bengal. But I am grieved to find that Bengali brothers are enamoured of foreign cloth and do not wear Khadi. They say Manchester cloth is cheaper. I admit Khadi is comparatively dearer, but the money spent on Khadi remains in our own country. Can we not undergo that little sacrifice? If, moreover, you spin for 1 hour daily, Khadi may be cheaper also.

"It is indeed good that you made Khadi compulsory for employees; but did you, before you passed that resolution, resolve to wear Khadi yourselves? You should have first passed a resolution making it obligatory on you all to wear Khadi before you passed that resolution for the servants. Will it look decent, if servants wear Khadi and



the municipal councillors and the Chairman don't? I ask the public also, "Is it not your duty to see that your chosen representatives should first wear Khadi themselves, before they get an order issued by the Commissioner for the compulsory use of Khadi by the staff? Khadi is for self-purification. Before doing every thing else, you should do what is right for you. You should be frank and open in word and deed and put into action everything that you resolve upon doing."

Before the meeting ended, Gandhiji was requested to say a few words in English. Gandhiji makes it a point to speak in Hindi specially in Bengal, so that the people there might be accustomed to understand Hindi and tempted to learn it. His speech is then translated into Bengali. But since there was this specific demand, he said the following in English in addition to his Hindi speech:

@ "Mr. Chairman and friends,

"I have been just now asked to say a few words in English. I know Bengal's infatuation about English. You have had every word translated fairly accurately in Bengali, your mother-tongue. I can't imagine that I can drive the truth home with greater force or clearer words through a language which is as foreign to me as to you, but I have to do my work and if I can convert only a few to the cult of Khaddar and to truth and non-violence through English, I should do so; and therefore if I take up your time by speaking in English, it is only to flatter those who want me to speak in English, so that if they have perchance not seen the truth, they might see the truth of the spinning wheel. As one of my co-workers said some years ago, its simplicity frightened the educated classes. He said with great truth that because of its simplicity the educated failed to understand its deep and grand meaning. Simple as the spinning wheel is, I am convinced, after 4 years' deep and prayerful thinking, that there is nothing before India so efficacious for her many ills as Khaddar. The problems of our country are so vast and complex, that nothing but a simple remedy, will solve the riddle. The complex character of our education has paralysed our thoughts, our brain. We refuse to see the truth lying in it. But if you will retire into private rooms, bend the knees before God and ask him to guide you, He will guide your hand and put it unerringly on the spinning wheel. We have written, made speeches, published books, done researches, but the age of speaking, books writing, is gone, never to return again, and the age of action has come. You have to give battle not to a race of speakers, but of born workers, a race that has known not what it is to yield, a race of inflexible determination as well as of some of the finest soldiers of the world. No diplomacy will



be able to do the task before us. You want mass consciousness, you want co-operation of all men. You want councilors to speak with power. At present there is no power in their words, in their resolutions. Not because they cannot speak. Das has shown how he can outwit the Government in defeating its resolutions and policy, but he can do little unless he had power behind him. You and I cannot go to Councils, but I have granted that those who believe in them can go there. But I want them to have power, to be respected, and to be listened to by the Government. How can we do that? Not by meetings, nor by resolutions supporting them, but by giving them some power. You can't give that power without doing something. I defy anybody to match the violence of the Government by our violence. No matter what has happened in other countries, we shall achieve nothing by violent means. I have placed non-violence, because it is expedient and the only political remedy. He who has wisdom will see that violence will serve no earthly purpose. I can understand the impatience of youth at the shackles, but I yield not to them. I consider myself a sane man, a man who has seen something of the world, a born fighter—from youth I have fought my wife, parents, co-religionists, Mussalmans—but I have understood that one weapon is common, non-violence. I could not fight my wife with violence, refuse to fight Mussalmans with violence, dare not fight Hindus with violence, and deduced that I cannot fight England with violence. I have made the claim that I have converted more Englishmen (in India's favour) by non-violence than any man has by violence. It is a proud claim, but of a humble man. Action without rest, without intermission, without pause, is what we need and the only action that I can put in the hands of boys and girls, poets and philosophers, politicians, professors, sweepers, in the hands of old men with shaking fingers and robust men—that is the spinning wheel. Multiply the half hour's product of the spinning wheel by 300 millions and tell me its power. There is nothing that we can show to our credit in 40 years of lone, dreary, political life. Shall we not do one thing, one programme? I ask the nation to fulfil that programme before it dare to do anything else. If Khadi is costly, tear it half; do that with it and it will go down with credit in the book of life. If it is coarse, understand that the slavery of India is coarser than coarse Khadi, pauperism is coarser than the coarse Khadi of Chittagong. Have you not a heart? If you have, spin, spin, until your hands are paralysed, and wear Khadi, until your bodies perspire, and see the vision of rejuvenated India."

After this speech it is hardly necessary to record his other activities. The programme fixed for Chittagong was fairly crowded. Meeting with students, addresses of businessmen, fishermen untouchables, Bhangis etc. etc.



The students' meeting was an excellent event. Six or seven hundred students gathered in the courtyard of Sen Gupta's bungalow. "What shall I speak on?" asked Gandhiji, "National education," replied the students.

Gandhiji began:

@ What is national education? What does it consist in?

English education? Hindi?

"Then I suggest that national education begins with spinning. 'Ayes' raise their hands" "Those who spin?"—None. "Those who promise to spin from tomorrow?"—10.

"I have not a shadow of doubt that our education must begin with spinning as England's begins with the naval affair. And just as protection of England depends on the bravery of her naval generals, so the millions of India scattered over the length and breadth of India, scattered over an area of 1900 miles in length and 1500 miles in breadth, require an industry supplementary to agriculture. If they have not, these agriculturists are doomed to serfdom. In India every farmer added spinning to his occupation and not weaving, because he could not occupy his odd moments in weaving. I attended a ladies' meeting and gave them a demonstration in spinning. This little thing (whirligig) contains my spinning wheel. I gave my artistic thing to Miss Ghose. She liked it most and she has now sent me the message that not only is she going to spin, but also her friends, on a spindle of that character. You can do it whilst you are talking, whilst you are speaking. I am an idiot at this, let me tell you. However, I am just now going to try. Whilst you are solving a Geometrical problem or entertaining your friends, you can do this. You don't know that our shepherds take this thing whilst they are walking about, their eyes on this and spin handsome beautiful wool.

"If you can't understand my view, you may ask Satishbabu. He has given up his chemical factory and the substantial income from it and joined this work of Khadi. He will explain the matter in a more explicit manner with facts and figures because he has an inventive brain. If you think you should, for the sake of your starving countrymen, do this daily sacrifice, start doing it now."¹⁷

As already shown, before addressing them Gandhiji had asked those to raise their hands who knew spinning and none had. In answer to the next question 10 boys



had promised to begin to spin. When after this speech, attended with visual demonstration in spinning, the question was put "Now tell me how many agree with my view," some 50 or 60 boys raised up their hands. But when asked, "Well then, how many of you promise to spin?", only about 20 hands were raised. Can there be any sounder proof than this to show that our boys are becoming more honest?

This was followed by a meeting of businessmen. There also the same subject was touched, but the treatment was very different:

"I am always in close contact with businessmen. It is my conviction that we lost India through our businessmen and will regain it through them. It is not the educated classes that will win us freedom. Nowhere in the world has there been a single instance of a country successfully defended by its educated classes. It is always businessmen and warriors who have protected their country. India's freedom, however, was lost by a war, but only through business. Take it from me, therefore, that India's freedom is in our pocket, as soon as I get in my work complete support from businessmen. That is why I appeal to you, businessmen, to give your full share in this national service of propagating Khadi. I request you to spin for half an hour and wear pure Khadi. One or two of my millionaire friends wear Khadi and spin. Why may you not also? You can help the cause with your wealth and with your sagacity. If you are once bent upon doing it, your achievement would beat mine. It is my prayer to you to give your share in this activity with your body, mind, and wealth."

He thus talks of nothing else but the spinning wheel. And now Gandhiji can spin on the whirlygig also fairly well. He, therefore, spins on it even when he is in railway trains, motor cars, and meetings. He has now to spin 2000 yards more than before, because he is now a member of the Cow-protection Association. As his contribution thus comes to 4000 yards a month, he turns the spinning wheel for full one hour and carries the whirlygig with him wherever he goes. He has begun to read Bengali characters a little and in a one sentence speech on the platform of a small station, he would always say: "Chorkha kanto; Khaddar poro. (—Turn the spinning wheel; wear Khadi).

But the devotees have no pity for Gandhiji, who has somehow to steal an hour for spinning. Many go to the length of giving him a spinning wheel and wishing to keep the yarn for themselves as *prasad* (sanctifying gift from a deity or a saint)! But at Chittagong Gandhiji happened to come across a friend whose demand simply amazed us. He is a Muslim and the Principal of the Government College. He outdid them all



when he said: "I would wear Khadi, only if you give me a piece of cloth woven by you from the yarn spun by yourself." The Mogul Emperor, Aurangzeb, they say, used to make caps, the whilst he kept sitting on his *gadi*. If Gandhiji had only to sit on a *gadi* like him, he too would go on spinning. But as that is impossible, he said: "I cannot even spin so much yarn. How then can I weave it also?" All the same the gentleman insisted on his demand. Gandhiji then said, "I will try." May not those who approached Dadhichi¹⁸ with a request to give them his bones be of a like mind?

At the meeting of untouchables the following song was sung.

Bengal's earth and Bengal's water,
Bengal's air and Bengal's fruits,
Hail! we greet you all.
Bengal's women, Bengal's men
Let us all unite.
Unite, unite, unite¹⁹."

Three addresses were given here and everyone of them in Hindi. Fishermen addressed Gandhiji as Mohandas *karmachar* Gandhi (not 'Karamchand', the father's real name. 'Karmachar' means a worker). It stated in effect. "We have saved Rs. 5000/- and deposited them in a bank. Many of us used to drink, but a large number have given it up, though a few still send for it. We are doing a dirty work, but Hindu society cannot live without us. We obey your command. Khadi, we hear, is in vogue in some places, but we have not been taught to spin and wear Khadi."

Gandhiji replied:

"I thank you for your address. Nobody is an untouchable in my eyes. You are called untouchables, but I think it is a wrong practice. I have often declared that there is no place in Hinduism for untouchability, as it is understood today. You have recounted your sorrows in your address. I have the faith that all your disabilities will disappear as time passes, because the age has come when people refuse to tolerate oppression on anybody. In Hindu society also a similar movement is going on and some kind of good order will come.

"But I wish to say a word or two to untouchables. I have lived among you and have much experience of you people. I believe a man's troubles are not removed,



unless he himself makes an effort to save himself from them. I want to show you, therefore, the remedy which lies with you. You stated that you are fishermen by profession and that other Hindus block your progress. I am sorry if that is so. But the remedy to redress your grievance lies in your hands, and that is : you should take stock of your situation and defend yourselves. You must, therefore, have a strong organisation and one of you should come forward to serve your community in the spirit of self-sacrifice. So long as your own community does not produce self-sacrificing men, others cannot protect your profession. A few men like myself can help you with advice. A man like me may do the work of a physician. He may prescribe a medicine, but it is you who have to take it. You must, therefore, realize quite well that in spite of whatever comfort and consolation I may give you, no tangible good can come from it, so long as you do not gird up your loins to serve your community. It is definitely Hindus who are responsible for the refusal of *dhobis* and barbers to serve you. And, for it, I have been telling them to persuade barbers and *dhobis* to lift their boycott. Scavengers told me they had given up drink almost completely. I congratulate them. But they said they took some wine when they celebrated a marriage. I ask you to give up drink even on those occasions. I have heard that followers of some faiths believe wine to be necessary for some of their religious rites. But don't, therefore, labour under the delusion that religion compels you to drink. In any case, those who drink just because they like it, should give it up. In the second address I was informed that they had given up pork. My congratulations to them. In the same way if there are any among you who eat beef or putrid flesh, they should give up that also. You should wash your teeth regularly, take God's name and pray to Him to make your heart, mind, and body clean. Exert yourselves to provide education for your children. If your wife is prepared to spin, the Khadi Pratishtan is eager to help her. Discard foreign cloth and wear Khadi. You can get any kind of Khadi you like in Chittagong. If you find it costly, you may start spinning yourself and that will cheapen it.

"I beg to say something to other Hindus. Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity—all religions—are weighed in the balance by the world and, as I have often declared , it thinks that if untouchability is an essential part of Hinduism, it must be rated the lowest of all religions. I go one better and say that if Hindus do not quickly wipe out untouchability, I regard Hinduism's eradication from the earth a certainty. By giving a place to untouchability in their religion and believing untouchables as worse than beasts, they have tarnished the lustre of India itself. Its evil influence has affected even Muslims, Parsis, and other communities, because when they go out to live in foreign



parts, the people there regard even them as untouchables. Just as we regard untouchables as separate from us, those people keep us aloof from them. In a foreign country, we are not allowed to sit in a tram-car, nor are we given an employment in their offices. We are untouchables in their eyes. I consider this treatment as the hand of Nemesis for observing untouchability here. Swaraj is impossible, so long as such iniquity exists. It is not religion, but irreligion, which requires its followers to detest a human being and condemn him. How is it possible for believers in non-violence to consider other persons untouchable?

" 'May God grant you the wisdom to follow your religion'—that is my prayer. And for untouchables I always pray to God that He may end the oppression we inflict on them. I have the faith that all their disabilities will end."

Noakhali is on the mouth of the Meghna. The river expands there to the breadth of 18 miles and so tremendous is the rush of the flood at times that nobody can anticipate when and to what extent it will spread. Our zamindar-host's palace worth hundreds of thousands of rupees was all washed off by bits within a month! The river has been named 'Kirti-nasha' (destroyer of good name) owing to its destructive work.

The Noakhali District Gazetteer states that spinners and weavers there are 6000. Khadi work was flourishing in 1921 and hand-spun yarn was woven on a number of hand-looms. Today there is one such left. Gandhiji met that Muslim weaver. He has planted 40 *dev-kapas* trees. He gets their cotton spun by others and then weaves the yarn himself. He gave an assurance to Gandhiji that he would never give up weaving hand-spun yarn.

The women's meeting was excellent. 60 sisters of Laamchar, a village near Noakhali, had fasted and spun for a whole day in honour of the impending visit of Gandhiji and two pieces of Khadi woven from their yarn were presented to Gandhiji by way of 'an humble tribute of devotion and faith' in him.

Their address required a reply, specially as it contained the following words: "Pranams (obeisances) from the *chira paraadheenaa* (ever helpless and dependent) female sex to Gandhiji, the moulder of India's destiny, lord of the hearts of her millions, and the herald of freedom" Gandhiji replied:

"Who ever has called woman *paraadheen*? There is no dependence of woman imposed by our shastras. Sit a was Rama's '*ardhangana*' (=half-body)²⁰ and she had acquired lordship over Rama's heart. Damayanti²¹ was not *paraadheen*. And who will,



after reading the Mahabharata, say that Draupadi was a *paraadheenaa*?—that Draupadi who defended herself by praying to Lord Krishna when her husbands, the Paandavas, refrained from defending her honour? We consider seven *satis* (women of purity and chastity) as deserving our veneration every morning. Were they helpless dependents? It is murdering the language, it is irreligion, to call her who has the power to remain pure, the power to defend her chastity and honour, a helpless dependent.”

In reply to C. F. Andrews’ letter to the effect that morality based on fear of consequences is meaningless:

@ "If a man refrains from untruth for fear of punishment after death, is it not any good? Shall we prefer destruction of moral bonds to their existence, if they are due to public opinion? A friend who advocates birth-control frankly admits that he does not believe in the moral tie and promiscuous intercourse is an ideal state. I wonder!”

There was a public meeting in the evening. The District and Sessions Judge as well as the Sub-Judge were present. Seven addresses in all were presented at this meeting. Replying to them all in a single speech Gandhiji said:

"I miss Satyen Mitra here. I am grieved to know that he is in jail. I hope he will be in our midst in a few days. I cannot give a separate reply to each of the addresses, but I have selected some points which I shall give in brief.

"Let me say a word or two on the Hindu-Muslim question. A double responsibility rests on my shoulders, because neither of the Ali Brothers is today with me. Shaukat Ali tried to join, but was busily engaged in Bombay and could not. Mohammed Ali cannot free himself from his journal. Shuaib is one of the three Secretaries of the Congress. He was to come, but the Turkish Delegation's visit detained him.

"I have heard that the hearts of Hindus and Muslims, which were free from dirt formerly, are no longer so. Both Hindus and Muslims have refused to accept my remedy. That is why we both are keeping silent. We do not wish to take part in the quarrels. There can be no quarrel between two brothers, so long as any of the two is completely free from fault. If, therefore, a quarrel breaks out, both must have committed at least some fault. If any of the two wants very sincerely to avoid a quarrel, there is no power on earth that can create a dissension. So I want to say that both will



be more and more guilty, if the heart is not purified. There is nothing that can compel the two, who have been living together in amity, to fight now.

"Then about the untouchables. I congratulate you for beginning to take water from their hands. I have heard Brahmins and 'Bhadraloks' (refined gentlemen) come in your way, but I hope those who have resolved to wash out the sin will stick to their vow. Their loyalty to Hinduism lies in this self-same act of firm adherence to this work they have undertaken, no matter whether a few are boycotted and some have even to lose their wealth.

Then the third thing—the Goddess Charkha (spinning wheel). She is *Annapurna* (=the Goddess who provides food. Here supplementary food.) Agriculture may give you food, but ghee (clarified butter) it cannot. That ghee only the spinning wheel will give. Whether you are a Government officer or a teacher or anybody else, please spin for half an hour. If you don't, the poor people will become more miserable."

From Noakhali we turned again to the north and came to Tipperah (Tripura) District. We had already been to Chandpur, a city of that district. So we went this time to Comilla. As the eastern part of Tipperah District is hilly, bazaars for the sale of hand-spun yarn are still held there.

1. A noted Indian scientist. He founded "The Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works" and gave away all his earnings to that institution and lived a very simple life. Though a distinguished scientist, he was an ardent lover of Khadi.

2. Pandit Motilal Nehru, father of Jawaharlal Nehru. He too, like Das, had given up his equally roaring legal practice in answer to the call of non-co-operation. But after Gandhiji's incarceration, there was depression in the country and he and Das with several other leaders founded the Swaraj Party to capture the legislature and fight the Government on that field. Though Gandhiji held on to his view of non-co-operation, he made a Pact with these two leaders which made Swarajists Congress representatives in the Councils.

3. Lord Krishna's all-powerful wheel. The old spinning wheel was big in size.

4. The Government of Bengal imposed an Ordinance in 1925, and imprisoned many Swarajists. including Sri C. R. Das' lieutenant, Sri Subhash Chandra Bose.

5. Secretary of State for India and Governor of Bengal respectively.



6. A speech of Lord Birkenhead had raised hopes in the mind of Sri C.R. Das. There was some exchange of letters between the two. But nothing came out of it. See App.III for Gandhiji's reaction.
7. Sri C. R. Das was to preside over the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Faridpur on 2-9-1925. Gandhiji speaks of the speech Sri Das had intended to deliver.
8. The Diary does not give the name of the speaker. It may be Sri Das' message.
9. At the Special Session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September 1920, it was declared that the goal of the Congress was the attainment of Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means.
10. Deshbandhu Das was the President of the Congress held at Gaya in 1922.
11. The Zamindari system in Bengal, only lately ended after the advent of freedom, was one of the most important causes of the shocking contrast between the famished Bengali masses and the few Bengali zamindars with royal power and pelf. The feudal system was perhaps at its worst in Bengal in the whole of India.
12. A Committee of Inquiry into the causes and measures of prevention of political crimes in India was appointed by the British Government under Mr. Rowlatt's presidentship. It issued its Report and the Government passed the infamous "Rowlatt Bills", dubbed "The Black Bills". They raised a storm of protest including Satyagraha by Gandhiji in 1919.
- 13 . Four varieties of fish and their good tastes have been mentioned here by puns on their names: The shloka—means; (1) 'Illisha' is better than nectar (illisha sounds with piyusha—nectar); (2) 'vaachaa' is beyond speech (= vaachaa); (3) 'rohita' is welfare (= hita) itself; (4) 'madguru' is dear to my Guru (mad=my).
14. He went to South Africa as an 'indentured labourer.' Eventually he joined the Satyagraha there. He was seventy, when he sought imprisonment.
15. A tax of 3 [s. was imposed on every 'indentured labourer.'
16. This paragraph is translated from the Gujarati book 'Mahadevbhai's Diary' . It does not appear in the long-hand notes in the original manuscript diary; hence some repetition has crept in.
17. This last paragraph has been translated from the Gujarati book "Mahadevbhai's Diary" and not extracted from the original manuscript.
18. During one of the wars between Devas and Asuras (good and evil spirits), the former were defeated. Someone told them, 'You can beat your enemies, only if the sage Dadhichi gives you his bones—from which you may make your weapon—because that sage is so holy, that he will give up his life for a good cause and his very bones have imbibed that purity.' The gods, therefore, approached Dadhichi with a request to give up his life and let them have his bones. Dadhichi then gave up his life, the Devas forged the weapon and defeated Asuras.
19. बांगलार माटि बांगलार जल,



बांगलार वायु बांगलार फल,
धन्य होऊक धन्य होऊक धन्य होऊक हे भगवान |
बांगलीर प्राण बांगलीर मोन
बांगलार घोरे जत भाई बोन
एक होऊक एक होऊक एक होऊक हे भगवान ||

20. There s a Hindu deity called *Ardha nareeshwara*—the Lord who is Half-man and half-woman. In the performance of all important religious rites, the wife is the indispensable partner of her husband.

21. Under Kali's (Satan's) instigation King Nala played dice, lost his kingdom and deserted his wife Damayanti. By her love and a clever device she brought him round and Kali had to flee. Nala thus regained his kingdom also. By her power of chastity a hunter was burnt to death for casting an evil eye on her.



15.5.1925

The public meeting was held in the morning. Referring to Hakimji's letter (Hakim Ajmal Khan, a staunch Nationalist Muslim leader of Delhi and a physician of the *unani* system), Gandhiji said, "When somebody asks, I am ashamed to tell him that owing to Hindu-Muslim quarrels our country is in bad straits and dependent."

The students astonished Gandhiji by giving him definite figures showing the progress of Khadi in the student world. Here they are: "Students wearing pure Khadi 2%, wearing mixed Khadi 6%, using both mill cloth and Khadi indiscriminately 20%, regularly spinning 2%, knowing spinning 20%, yarn of 10-12 counts and one student works a handloom."

Suspecting that some of these figures might be guess-work, I called the students who had collected them. After a very searching examination, I learnt that for 15-20 days they had moved among all the types of schools—co-operating, non-co-operating, fully government, partly aided—examined 2600 students, and then given the above figures, and that two or three other students had again checked them. These students have thus provided an excellent example of brotherly co-operation and meticulous care in collecting facts. The more other students follow this practice the better for them. The spinners among these students demonstrated their art before Gandhiji and presented him with clothes made from their yarn. Let me give some portions of his speech before these students:

"I am highly gratified at the truthful, humble and complete picture you have given of your present position. Let me tell you also, what I always say to women, namely, Swaraj means *dharmaraj* or *Ramarajya*. Students should never cherish any thought of gaining any other rule. If we want an irreligious rule for India why should we try? We have already got it. No man has to make an effort for taking the downward path, just as water, naturally, takes the lower course. Our effort for Swaraj can have only one purpose—of stopping the country's degradation and uplifting it. If this is true, it is meant that the student should elevate himself to the highest level he can. Student life means the life of *brahmacharya*, of truth, of innocence. And if students lose their character and imbibe unrestrained licence, sham and hypocrisy, the whole country goes to rack and ruin. That is why I make it a point to meet students all over India and ask them to realize very well their responsibility and with it their duty. Though I have nothing to say against your pursuing your studies seriously and mastering your subjects, I give prime importance to development of character and secondary to their



serious pursuit. Let his intelligence be the sharpest and learning the deepest, but the man with a bad character is worthless. That explains why I put the spinning wheel before students.

"May I tell you why spinning is not included in your course? You have no faith in it. You think that its productive power is very little and that there is no organisation to help you to step up the activity. But your want of faith is the one real reason and that again is due to your ignorance of the terrible poverty of India. And if you happen to know of the country's plight, our national consciousness has not awakened to the point of poignant feeling for the poor Indian as our own brother. That is national consciousness which makes us look upon every Indian, even if he is the most wretched, or lives in the farthest corner of India, as our very own. That means, we must feel the pain of the sorrowful as much as he.

"You should not think of the productive power of the spinning wheel or its actual output in terms of money. The student who loses his patience cannot fare well with his studies. If we ply the wheel, we produce at least 100 yards of yarn in half an hour. This should not be compared with any other produce. But if a comparison you must have, let me ask you to think of the tremendous production that can accrue from the wheel, if millions and millions spin 100 yards a day. If you put down this production in figures, you will realize the productive power of the spinning wheel in half an hour.

"And there is another angle from which spinning must be viewed. We should give up consideration of personal, and think of national gain. Only then you will imbibe the faith that though you may not individually earn much, it will confer a blessing on the nation. This it does. because an activity can become nation-wide, only if it is easy for everyone to take up and such is this spinning wheel only. That impels me to urge students to have faith in the spinning wheel and, instead of seeking personal profit, think of the help it gives to the nation.

"And now about its organisation. It would be excellent if you start spinning clubs. But the wheel can be turned without even the need for any organisation. The student who has the resolute will to do his best to remove the horrible poverty of India and decides that he should spin in order to put his will into action, finds it very easy to start spinning. All he has to do is to buy a spinning wheel and learn up the art. And today every facility has been provided for one who wants to learn. In Comilla itself you have an institution which not only teaches spinning, but saves you the worry of getting your yarn woven. It is my advice as well as my prayer to you, students, to do this simple



thing. This spinning wheel is the symbol of a transparent heart, self-sacrifice, and self-restraint. That was why I told you at the outset, the student-life must be religious, truthful, peaceful and chaste, physically and mentally, and that the spinning wheel is a means to obtain those qualities.

"And now other things. Everyone of you—whether you are a Hindu or Muslim or anyone else—must give up hatred. Leave fighting to those who believe in Council work, but you should embrace the Namashudras. If you do this in a religious spirit, you have given your full share to the service of Bharat and the attainment of Swaraj. Every student whether he be in a Government-recognised or national school can do it without fear of punishment. May God give every student the strength to perform this religious act."

There is a very charitable gentleman here, Mahesh Bhattacharya. He is a chemist and druggist. Every year he spends about one hundred thousand rupees in charity. He lives in the Ishwar Pathshala (Pathshala=school). That school and Rammala Chhatravas (= hostel) are both his institutions. The Pathshala has a magnificent building and an extensive courtyard. Its annual expense comes to 18000/-rupees. The Hostel costs Rs. 800/-. Students are given scholarships worth Rs. 560/-per month. All these students wear self-spun Khadi. That means they all know spinning.

At the women's meeting a hundred or a hundred and fifty were spinning. There were among them 7 or 8 families whose every member was spinning. There was, for instance, Mrs. Prasannakumar Mazumdar with all her four daughters. Then there were a lawyer's wife and her daughters. In this way 8 families alone contributed 40-50 persons among the spinners there.

There was a public meeting in the evening. Referring to a mad man's death Gandhiji said: "Who knows that the Lord wanted him in His abode more than me?— We should feel the loss of even a mad man's death. Some people consider me a crank and I let them. The man who dies to keep the resolve he had made is also a mad man. I have the faith that I am prepared to die in order to keep my vow. You too may learn to be firm in keeping your word and your religion. The essence of Ramayana can be boiled down into one sentence: 'Even at the cost of life, our word must be kept.' Somebody may ask, 'Is truth exalted so much in Islam also?' I say, 'Yes'. Read the *Life of Mohammad: the Prophet by Maulana Shibli*. Hazrat Omar also said, 'Only a man of his word has any value.'



16.5. 1925

Let me recall an incident that happened during Gandhiji's visit of Shanti Niketan for a few days, shortly after the starting of the non-co-operation movement in 1920. Three or four youths approached Gandhiji with the scheme of founding an Ashram or an Association. One of them had secured the doctor's degree in medicine and surgery, served in the First world war and resigned from his Government job in response to the call of non-co-operation. With him were two or three young men who were M.A.s and M.Sc.s of the Calcutta University. Gandhiji tested their worth by a thorough cross-examination. He explained, first of all, the great difficulties in founding such a holy institution as an Ashram, specially one based on the principle of *brahmacharya*, though he said, there was need for one. And only after giving them a grave warning he permitted them to found one. Many names were suggested by the young men, in reply to the question, "What shall be the name of the Ashram?" I still remember one of them. "Suppose we call it 'Savitashram'?" said one of them. Gandhiji was a little astonished. The friend explained. "It is the sun (savita=sun) that sustains the whole world. The sun removes darkness of all kinds. Let our Ashram be unto the country the sun that removes its darkness." Gandhiji liked the sky-high ideal symbolised in the name, but he advised them to follow that ideal in implementation rather than in its name.

In 1921, when Gandhiji visited Calcutta again, a friend suggested the name 'Abhaya Ashram' (abhaya=fearlessness) which Gandhiji liked and accepted.

That Ashram was formerly in Dacca, but is now in Comilla. At first there were three doctors (medical practitioners), one D. Sc. and three M. Sc. s in it. Two of the doctors, Dr. Suresh Banerjee and Dr. Nripen Banerjee, are still serving the Ashram, but the third has left. The D. Sc. was none other than Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, whom I have already referred to earlier. He does some independent social work in Mallikanda now. Another inmate, Sri Haripada Babu, who had stood first in his M. Sc. Examination of the Calcutta University, now conducts one of the best national schools in Nawabganj, where we have not gone, but intend to. Sri Pramanik Babu too, who once served the National College in Gujarat as the first Professor of Bengali, was one of the earliest Ashramites, but is no longer one. Many of the first members of the Ashram have thus left.



The reason may perhaps be that the Ashram may have cultivated fearlessness more than politeness or love. Otherwise why should *brahmacharis*, who had joined the Ashram as permanent members, leave it afterwards?

All the same those that are still in it—and they are at least eighteen—are doing their respective work in an excellent manner, and the Ashram still provides one of the incomparable models of the sacrificing spirit of Bengal. Even those, moreover, that have gone out are serving the nation in their own independent way. The doctors living in the Ashram carry on their business in the town, Comilla, and give to the Ashram their whole incomes which provide for the expenses of the other departments. And now the doctors think of opening a hospital also. But the main object for which the Ashram was founded is production of Khadi. The Khadi Department is, therefore, the chief among all others. There is a school also which children of surrounding villages attend. They do some farming besides. As there is a beautiful tank within the Ashram limits, full all the year round, they find it not at all difficult to grow even sugar-canes in the small piece of ground they possess. Spinning has been made a regular part of the prayer-hour. Immediately after the morning prayer ends, all of them spin in the Prayer Hall for an hour. They buy yarn from the Comilla District Yarn Market and get it woven by weavers living around them. The man who began the revival of Khadi in Bengal was Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, once a member of this Ashram. This Ashram itself produces Khadi worth Rs. 20,000 annually.

The inmates of the Ashram gave Gandhiji a beautiful welcome-address. It need hardly be added that along with the address there was the presentation of an excellent pair of *dhotis* made from the yarn spun by the members. Being of general interest Gandhiji's reply is likely to be useful to the public.

"To thank you for the address is merely a formality, since, as you yourselves have stated, I also helped in the foundation of the Ashram. When I was preparing to visit Bengal, I was very eager to meet young men like you and see their work. I know very well the sacrifices young men of your type have made. I know that Bharat has no hope of freedom, so long as many such self-sacrificing men are not forthcoming. His sacrifice itself must be a matter of joy to every young man. I have never regarded renunciation a thing worth a tear and the man who feels unhappy at his renunciation cannot stand it for long. Wherever in my peregrinations I come across examples of heavy sacrifices, examples of young men giving up their lucrative jobs of 500 or 1000 rupees and living upon a mere pittance, instead of feeling any pity for them, I rejoice



at the thought that such young men have lost nothing that really matters and have only freed themselves from the shackles of the craze for earning much money.”

"But there is one thing I want to lay a great stress on. When for the sake of service we renounce something, we accept some other thing in return. I know there are some young men who think that once a sacrifice has been made, they have done their all and achieved their aim. That is a serious mistake. Only with a clear perception of what we want to do in future, we should plunge into an act of sacrifice. That alone ensures a life of self-satisfaction. All our activity, therefore, must have behind it a definite objective. Now, every young man who wants to serve the country should have to my mind only one aim in front of him—that of doing something that provides work for the millions of our unemployed brothers. If that desire of serving the largest number inspires you, you cannot but come to the conclusion that it can be achieved by only one work—that of the spinning wheel. That is why I consider the medical and educational activities of this Ashram things of less importance. (This remark had reference to Dr. Suresh Banerjee's idea of not only starting a hospital but a medical school with it). Both these activities should be given importance to the extent only of making them helpful in the furtherance of spinning. That is why I am glad that in your school also, you carry on the spinning-wheel and Khadi work. I advise the manager of that school to resolve not to admit a single child that does not wear Khadi after a fixed date. Every child's parents must be notified that all the school children shall have to spin and wear Khadi compulsorily. And the same thing about the hospital. I, for one, can think of nothing else but requiring every patient I examine to wear Khadi. As it is, there are quite a number of hospitals. That activity is by no means new. Hence, I hope that all these young men, who have the capacity for it and are wedded to national service and self-sacrifice, should take up only that activity which is the most difficult as well as the most wide-spread and fruitful.

"With these words I request those who are present, and through them those who are not, to study this institution, and if they think it useful to society, to support it. Let me say once more that I am delighted with the institution and close my address with my blessings to it."

Dacca lies to the north-west of Comilla. I had heard in Comilla a story or two about Dacca:

"History of Rampal Dighi—Ballab Sen—His bet with his Mother—application of 'alato' (a red pigment)—Rampal's Dream—jumping on the saddle he rode fast but



curbed the horse suddenly and got down at a place where streams gushed out from a hundred places—Rampal was drowned and the lake was named after him. Ballab Sen—Podo king—battle with Bawa Adam—the reason for his and his whole family's plunging into the sacrificial fire—father of the 'Kulin' system—Shaistekhan left word in writing that the western gate should be kept closed till rice at the rate 640 lbs. a rupee cannot be sold—the gate was opened after 47 years—in the time of Sharfarazkhan.¹

The first programme on arrival in Dacca (17. 5. 1925) was to attend a women's meeting. The address presented there was written in Bengali verse. A napkin, a sari, etc. were presented on behalf of the Dipali Women's Committee.

In reply to the address Gandhiji said:

"I am wandering from place to place to have the *darshan* of a Sitaji. I know the meaning of 'purity of the body' more than you. Sita had a soft heart for the poor. You have formed a Committee. Some among you are educated also. But I don't know if you have that love for the poor which Sita's heart had. In ancient times the spinning wheel had a respected place even in the harem and the use of Khadi was a symbol of the unity between the rich and the poor. I know that you do not always wear Khadi. I pray to you to spin for half an hour daily. Sita's heart never had any disgust or ill-feeling for anybody. You also should have the same kindness for all, including the untouchables."

Three addresses were given at a meeting. Gandhiji replied:

@ "I am breaking my ordinary rule not to speak in English, mostly out of a compliment to the reader of the District Board's address who with exact precision recited the address. It reminded me of Surendranath Banerjee,² when he was not knighted and I was a stripling. I was told how he recited the whole address covering 80 octavo pages. It reminded me of A. C. Mazumdar.³ He began reciting and went through a page and a half and, probably because of a hint from Lucknow friends, allowed parts of others to be taken as read.

"These feats are not surprising in Bengal. (But) the least compliment should be for the speech in English. I want your exquisite music of Bengal. Spare me your rhetoric and elocution. I hope Bengal will recognise that if it must have a common cause with India, it must take Hindi as an essential medium. The time will come when we will understand that Hindi will be essential, if we want to touch the masses.



"I thank you for your sentiments, and don't think I should thank you for your exquisite caskets. They are a burden. I prize the paper, but I prize more the unwritten language of the heart. I want you to have a warm corner in your heart for my message. You talk of the departed glory of Dacca. It is for you to shed a real tear for the departed glory of Bengal. Let Bengal be not any more the exporter of raw produce, but of all its old art. But not until you have tackled the problem of hand-spinning, will you be able to bring about a revival of art. Realise the artistic beauty for which India stands. My heart weeps at the fall. That beauty has departed and I feel that unless we spin our yarn, we cannot revive our art. It is connected with your fabric.

"But what will you do with your art? What will you do for the sisters of ours who are pining away behind the *purdah*? I went 12 miles from Comilla. Women had sent away their husbands and sons to receive a rupee or two rupees decently earned. How will you represent them in Councils, if you don't take up the spinning wheel on their behalf and in the name of God?

"And now about Bhangis (scavengers: they are classed as the lowest even among untouchables). They are the finest servants, because you don't do the work they do. There are 80 children in their quarter. I asked them, 'If I get you a school, will you send them?' One of them retorted, 'Have we not asked for it?' They wanted Khaddar to be cheap. How shall I give them Khaddar cheap unless you spin half an hour for them? They want to wear Khaddar. There are Khaddar depots I hear.

"Don't think I need keep you for many moments. It grieves me, I have not one of my brothers to listen to a testimony, which I hope is a testimony from the heart. I wish heart-unity between Hindus and Muslims after laying all our cards on our heart. Who shall lead in Bengal, if it is not Dacca?"

The students gave their address written in Hindi at the public meeting. It stated that differences between Hindus and Muslims and between touchables and untouchables did not exist among them, that the use of Khadi was increasing but that of the spinning wheel not satisfactorily. Sri Chatterjee read the address given by the public. It addressed Gandhiji as 'Nation's Guru, Mahatma Gandhi.' It said: "500 students had left their colleges, but in the Jatiya Mahavidyalaya (a National College) there are at present only 60. The resolution passed at the Belgaum Congress has not been implemented. Two thousand spinning wheels are working. There is pure Khaddar in the 'Jayanagar Weaving Home' established by the District Congress



Committee, but the Government's red eyes of anger have been cast on it and its workers arrested under the Ordinance."

In reply Gandhiji said:

"I am pining for the presence of one of the Ali Brothers with me here. There was a wire from Mohammad Ali yesterday. He has given an account of the burden that has fallen on him. He cannot spare a moment from his press work.

"After coming to Bengal I have been crying out loudly, 'Why is it that neither of the two brothers is with me at present?' Das (Deshbandhu C. R. Das) has grown extremely weak. He doesn't listen to medical advice. May God grant him long life!"

"I beg the students' pardon for not replying to their address just now.

"What shall I say of the glory and prosperity of Dacca? A time was when 'shabnam'⁴ was sent to England from here. And now it pains me to know that muslim comes from foreign parts in this self-same town."

As there was no time to spare for the students he had asked them to come to him after the whole evening programme. "We shall have some talk," he had said. But the students scooped an advantage from this 'some talk.' Immediately after their arrival, they were asked, 'Do you spin?' A large number raised their hands. But when he clarified his meaning by saying, "Do you spin regularly for half an hour?", all the hands but one went down. This was the third admirable example of the honesty of the student world. (The Chittagong instance has already been given earlier). Gandhiji then said, "Now let those of you raise their hands who believe that they should spin." Nearly all raised theirs. "Well, now let me know how many of you think one should not spin, spinning is harmful." Two raised their hands. One of even these two was not a student. The two were asked their reasons. One said, "It is a violation of the principle of division of labour," and the other, "It is a sheer waste of time and energy." At these answers Gandhiji's heart blared up, just as it had at Sri Kelkar's question at the Belgaum Congress (of 1924). Let me give a few of his piercing expressions:

@ "Do I ever ask you to spin for the whole day? Do I ever ask you to take up spinning as your chief occupation? Where then does the question of violation of division of labour arise? Is there a division of labour in eating and drinking? It means that just as everybody has got to eat, drink and cover his body, spinning also is everybody's *dharma*. And you consider it a waste of time? You claim, you have your



fullest sympathy for the millions of the country. But does that milk of human kindness feed the starving baby? If it doesn't, what is the value of that barren sympathy? Have you a mother's heart for her baby or a cow's for her calf? Even a distant sight of the baby or the calf fills up the breasts of the mother or the udders of the cow with milk. Does such spontaneous love surge up in your heart at the sight of your famine-stricken countrymen and women? If it does, you are certain to express your love in action by turning the spinning wheel. If you spin, you set the ball rolling and others will shed their inertia and start spinning. A friend sings before the crowd and deeply moves their hearts. Is that a waste of energy? Undoubtedly, if he is vainly bawling out 'Vande Mataram,' but spinning has a deep meaning. My idea serves three purposes. It serves as a bond between the classes and masses, even mechanical effort gives you something, and it is something which all can do without much effort or skill. If I asked you to walk to and fro or I asked you to bring shovelfuls of earth, then that has no sense. But this is a thing that can be done by millions and by the most idiotic. A national activity must have all those three characteristics. Students above all must do it, because they are the salt of the earth. They can imbibe new ideas. You cannot put in new wine in old bottles. But students have fire, energy, reason which can be still disciplined, and they have long years of service. For them this is the thing. Imagine what 11000 students of Dacca can do, if they spin for half an hour daily. And do you know that Khadi supports the untouchables, that the best part of the proceeds from calico goes to spinners? The lowest price given to spinners is 10 annas per lb. You may be thinking of England and its mills. But England lives upon exploitation of other countries. Dadabhai Naoroji showed us first that economic drain. That drain is more deadly even than the administrative expense. Manchester's machines must live by exploitation. This cheap conquest of our labour results in making of us a nation of idlers. Dadabhai did not see this remedy for the economic drain. I go one better than the Master."

Giving, in conclusion, a picture of the skeletons he had seen in Jagannathapuri and the famished in Behar and Orissa, he showed how even a single anna's payment by them for their labour would be hailed by them as a veritable boon.

An old man of 75 was presented before Gandhiji one evening in Dacca. He had walked 30-40 miles for having Gandhiji's *darshan* and was weeping profusely. Immediately when he was brought before Gandhiji, he implored him to put his hand on his head (by way of a blessing). In the hope that the man would depart thereafter,



Gandhiji raised no objection and put his hand on his head. But as soon as Gandhiji did so, he prostrated before Gandhiji's feet, rolled his body round and round in a gush of deep emotion and burst into sobs, nobody could make out why. Round his neck was dangling a photograph of Gandhiji and Ba (Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi called by Indians 'Mother,' as Gandhiji was called Bapu, i.e. Father). When the outburst subsided, he said, "I am a Namashudra. O, what a wonderful shower of grace on a man like me! Ten years ago my legs were attacked with paralysis. A number of medicines were tried, I could not get out of my bed and I use to pray to God to release me from my helplessness by death. But then I began to chant your name and now I walk quite as well as any of you; and all this without a grain of medicine!" And then again he began to roll at Gandhiji's feet. Gandhiji stopped him and said, "Dear brother, chant God's name It is God who has cured you. Gandhi has no power to cure anybody." But he would not hear of it, refused to believe it. At last Gandhiji said, "Now, dear friend, will you leave me? And if you take my advice, take off that photo round your neck." The old man took it off at once and kept it in his hand. I think he must have gone away with the firm conviction that the Gandhi who cured him of his paralysis was the one he saw in person and that the photo he had with him was not his perfect copy. On the head of the man who was not intelligent enough to accept his explanation, Gandhiji might even put his hand; but what can he do with those who have eyes and see not, who intellectually can, but will not, accept his appeal?

In reply to a very moving letter from Maulana Mohammad Ali:

(Date of posting) 18-5-1925.

@ My dear friend and brother,

"Before you wrote to me, I had realised your position. Such must be the lot of genuine workers. We were doing little when we were swimming with the tide. We have to exert ourselves only when we swim against it. Now we shall know whether we have strength. It is child's play for a soldier to fight against his foe, however formidable. But not many can stand demoralisation, distrust, indiscipline, and want of faith among their own ranks. You and I have to face that fact.

"My prayers are always with you and for you. My faith in the twins (The Ali Brothers) is also unshakable—not in your method of work however. If you will rigidly set apart time for every activity, you will find a margin left. The busiest man has always time for more. For a God-fearing man the whole day is prayer time. The fixed times for



prayer are merely finger posts. They show that we must have appointed times for all tasks. Have we not dedicated all to God? Even eating may well be prayer and fasting may well be an indulgence. Enough of sermonising.

"I miss you and I miss Gulnaar. All my flowers and trinkets are wasted. Tell her she must not grow too big for me.

"With love to you all."

Mymensing District is two hundred or two fifty miles to the north of Dacca. Cotton does not grow there, but to its north are the Garo Hills, where it grows in luxuriance. There are some people living on the hills, who do not know what foreign or (Indian) mill cloth is like. There are clear traces—of the past life so to say—of Brahmaputra here. There was such a cataclysm in the year 1787, that one big branch of Brahmaputra, which used to flow by the side of Mymensing, changed its course and receded to the west right upto the Bogra District. Now that flow passes through the Pabna and Dacca Districts and meets its old bed again at Narayanganj.

We reached Mymensing on 18.5.1925 in the evening. Owing to the heavy downpour at the time Gandhiji had a mild attack of cold and felt tired, but carried out the fixed programme to the full.

Many zamindars met Gandhiji at Mymensing. The biggest is even called "H. H. the Maharaja of Mymensing." His property is bigger than those of the second class states of Saurashtra. We were his guests at Mymensing. His father was a man of intrepid spirit, which was not cowed down by even such a headstrong Viceroy as Lord Curzon.

There also we saw the same interest, the same refined taste and becoming behaviour, as we have been witnessing everywhere in Bengal. In the villages and even in a town like Amerli of a province like Gujarat, we may happen to see children clad in foreign clothes and yet singing the eulogy of Khadi. But nowhere in Bengal you will meet with such an ugly sight. The same was the case with this zamindar Maharaja. He had the good sense and courtesy to realise that Gandhiji could be given a welcome only in Khadi. Not only did he receive Gandhiji in full Khadi attire, but continued to wear it all the while that he was his guest. He bought Khadi worth Rs. 2500/- and got all his servants clad in Khadi. In his Guest House which could be said to outshine in splendour his own palace, he saw to it that nothing but Khadi met Gandhiji's eyes and every article—chair, bed etc. was covered with Khadi. Many neighbouring zamindars



had Khadi on their person when they came to see Gandhiji and the Maharaja of Susang even informed him that Her Highness the Maharani was a regular spinner. Gandhiji had long talks on Khadi with all of them. He said, 'Please wear Khadi as a duty and not as an act of courtesy to me. Just as you have your own separate *dhobi*, barber, scavenger etc., why not have your own weaver? Why not engage the best spinners of Bengal for your Khadi', order them to spin the finest possible yarn and win back the glory of the old art of Bengal?' It repels Gandhiji a little, when he is asked to put up in a palace. He flinched at first, when he had to enter the Guest House of the Maharaja of Travancore. He explained his reason for his dislike both there and at Mymensing. "Putting me up in a magnificent building like this creates uneasiness both in my mind and the people's. Everyone would wish to come to me, including rambles like myself and pedestrians of no account, and the costly carpets of the palace would be spoiled. I had better stay in some simple house. I am afraid, moreover, that people would be frightened out of entering a palace. But the Maharaja dismissed the objection: "All the gates of this palace shall be open to the public day and night and nobody will be stopped from coming."

1. The editor of the Gujarati Diary says:

"These jottings of Sri Mahadevbhai are published exactly as they are written in his manuscript diary. I tried to learn the stories in full. The following is the substance of the clarification I got:

One of the kings of Dacca was Rampal. As a result of the sacrifice of his life, water gushed out in a dry place and the pond that was formed was called Rampaldighi.

Ballab Sen succeeded him. He had to fight with a powerful king. He carried a dove with him to the battlefield and left the message that the return of the dove to the city was to be regarded a sign of his death. He gained one victory after another, but the dove escaped somehow and flew back to the city. At the sight of the dove the queen—or queens—believed that the king was killed. They plunged themselves into a big sacrificial fire and died. The king returned after his victories and came to know of the tragedy. He also jumped into the same fire and died.

This king is called the father of the 'Kulin' system of Bengal. He considered as 'Kulin' (high-born) those Brahmins in whom he found nine virtues, i. e., observance of religious rites, civility, learning, prestige, deep faith, visit to a pilgrim centre, right attitude, austerity, and charity. Those having the surnames of Ghose, Bose. etc. are 'Kulin' Brahmins, while others are called 'Vaidyas'.

Shaistekhan was Queen Nurjehan's nephew. He was made the Governor of Bengal by the Moghal Emperor. Cereals were dirt cheap in his time. The price of rice was 640 lbs. per rupee! He left word that the western gate must be kept closed till there came forth a ruler who could provide



the people rice at even a cheaper rate. A Governor called Sharfarazkhan ruled Dacca 47 years later. He became independent of the Moghal Emperor. When the price of rice fell even lower than 640 lbs. a rupee during his regime, he got that western gate opened. Both of them are figures in history.

2. Reference to his speech as President of the Indian National Congress held in Poona in 1895.

3. President of the Lucknow Congress of 1916. His speech too was very long.

4. Dacca muslim was once the craze of the elite of Great Britain. They gave it pet names to show their appreciation of its wonderfully superfine texture. One of these was 'morning dew' (shabnam).



11.5.1925

Gandhiji's health had gone down and it was raining cats and dogs. A public meeting was out of the question. It was, therefore, decided to let the welcome address of the District Board be given in the bungalow. But how to meet the people? The Maharaja himself suggested: "You are not keeping well; it would mean a great strain to you, if you go out; but everything can be managed, if only you accept one suggestion. You may keep lying down on a sofa on the verandah and the people may have your *darshan* in a queue, as they enter by one gate and go out by another." Gandhiji said, "Do you think people will care to see me in this terrible rain?" But outside the compound there really was a crowd of thousands—with or without an umbrella—eagerly waiting for his *darshan*. Gandhiji accepted the suggestion, a sofa was brought on the verandah, and he got a spinning wheel placed in front of him. Then from 3 p. m. to 6 p. m. thousands of men continued to pass through the Maharaja's garden to have the coveted *darshan*. Some would climb up the steps of the verandah and touch the wheel, some even the sofa—since everybody knew that Gandhiji was indisposed. Gandhiji spun for some time during the period, but then stretched himself. Any real rest in the midst of this mad downpour and the crowd of thousands passing by him was out of the question. But he kept lying down in the same position right till the evening. All his limbs were aching before it was bed-time. The Maharaja and other friends said. "It was an ordeal for you today." "Strain, it was indeed, and a heavy strain at that. But for the sake of the spinning wheel I am ready to dance, as often as people want me to. If people accept my plea for Khadi even at that cost, I am glad."

About two or three thousand women were waiting for Gandhiji as they sat upon the soles of their feet (with the lower and upper parts of the legs folded up at the knees). Squatting on the ground was impossible as the ground was soaked by a cyclonic shower shortly before the meeting time. On the verandah again hundreds of spinning wheels were working. Gandhiji passed through all the sisters and, spontaneously, they gave him not only their yarn, but also their ornaments and/or money.

A large majority of the spinning wheels were so wretched that one wondered how anybody could like to use them and how one could keep up his or her patience when the thread snapped so often. But it was a glorious sight to see the sisters spinning away even on those wretched wheels and, naturally, the heart bowed down in reverence.



In his address to the women he reminded them of Sita and the story of the avatar (descent of God into some form) of Rama and added that he had nothing to say to them as regards the purity of the heart, (Gandhiji looked up to women as greater custodians of their respective religions than men) but that he would say something about the purity of the body. He then pleaded for the use of Khadi for the preservation of that purity.

Gandhiji's speech (probably at the public meeting of Mymansing):

@ "I am feeling forlorn without the Ali Brothers, through whom I would have reached the mass-heart. But I don't despair of it. Perfect surrender is selfishness double-distilled, but it requires a good deal of insight to realise that such surrender is only surrender so-called. Hindus do not want to rob Mussalmans of Islam or vice-versa. We are fighting for loaves and fishes, nay, for stone. If we search a little deeper, nobody has got these loaves and fishes. He mistakes stones for loaves and fishes, even as the dog goes after the shadow taking it to be his bone. But neither Mussalmans nor Hindus will realise it, until they have tasted the thing and found it to their cost that it was useless. But I am a born optimist. So I say, if they want to fight like cats and dogs, let them do so. It is a curse that we have been kept from flying at each other's throats by the force of (British) arms. Hindu-Muslim unity should be attained not out of a bargaining spirit, but because it must be had. Each must add a common article to his creed, viz., 'We cannot live without the other.' God, who has placed 7 crores (of Muslims) with 22 crores (of Hindus), will have some mercy on us and we shall live together as brothers inspite of ourselves.

"If the masses are to be side by side with us, Khaddar and *charkha* are indispensable. We derive our sustenance from the masses. In every part of the world the middle classes make some return to the masses. Englishmen and Americans can afford to live their lives in the way they do, because they live upon us. If you go to the fields of England, they are smiling, they are not famishing. We are living upon ourselves, we give to other countries more than we get from them. The other countries take away from us the very capacity to work with our hands. We, who have hitherto lived on the masses and sucked their life-blood, are bound to make some slight return to them in the shape of wearing coarse Khaddar. Khaddar is dear, but you want something much dearer, Swaraj, i. e., happiness of the masses. When I know that when I wear Khadi, out of 9 annas 5 annas will go to my sisters, it is a curse if I send 5



annas to Bombay or Ahmedabad. If you pay a higher price for Khadi, it would be a boon to our sisters.

"I saw the sisters slaving at the charkha. You will get cheaper Khaddar when you and I begin to spin. Give me half an hour's labour, you zamindars! Accept me as an expert in the spinning wheel. Singer saw Mrs. Singer plodding away. I like the machine, because it saves the labour of an individual. Man is born to invent.

"I hope, what I have said out of the fullness of my heart will go deep in your hearts."

Another talk (probably during his visit of the Khadi Exhibition):

@ "Spurious Khadi is bad. The solution lies in our making warp out of handspun yarn. I would urge you to banish half-khaddar (=warp of mill or foreign yarn) which is a bastard. I would ask you to burn it. May God give you the desire and the will to carry out your desire."

While the Dacca District is the densest in population per square mile, in numbers, Mymansingh with the population of 4,500,000 is the biggest district in the whole of India. The Muslims everywhere in the district are from 65 to 75%.

Leaving Mymansingh we went north-west and, passing through a part of the Rangpur District which lies to the north of Mymansingh, reached Dinajpur. One of the addresses presented there was from businessmen. It compared Gandhiji with cotton and said: "What a wonderful *lila* of God (One of the pet Hindu theories is that all this creation is God's wonderful or mysterious *lila* i. e. play) it is that peoples' enthusiasm for practising your precepts is not as great as is their devotion to your person! "

It was a charming scene. In the midst of a quiet gathering the President, Jogenbabu (a Swarajist and member of the Bengal Legislative Council), was sitting plying his spinning wheel and around him was a crowd of spinners, young and old, among whom were lawyers, doctors, councillors, zamindars and even the Santhals (aborigines) from the Garo Hills. With immense delight Gandhiji said the following, the while he too was spinning:

"It is a feast to my eyes to see this spinning programme here. I see that most of the spinning wheels here are of the Khadi Pratishtan¹ Mandai (institution for resuscitating Khadi) and I congratulate you for using them. There is no doubt that the best spinning wheel in Bengal is that of the Khadi Pratishtan. And it is an excellent



thing that among the spinners here there are the most respectable men in society. That I regard as an auspicious sign. And since you have brought the Santhals from the Garo Hills to sit with the elite, the scene has become so enthralling that even the gods would like to descend here to see it. When our national life is completely transformed in such a way that Santhals and zamindars, poor and rich, illiterate and educated, Hindus and Muslims, one and all, brace themselves up and join in offering these oblations in one huge sacrifice, I shall take it that the sun of India's prosperity has risen. I hope, not merely today but everyday you will ply the wheel, take God's name and remember, as you spin, that you give half an hour for being in unison with the poor and removing their poverty. I have prayed to the Secretary to change those spinning wheels of the Santhals which are bad for good ones. There is one thing that ails me today. Neither of the Ali Brothers is with me here to see this glorious sight. The spinning wheel appears to me as necessary for the amelioration of India's poverty, as Hindu-Muslim unity for the attainment of Swaraj.

Gandhiji then exchanged a few words with the Santhals:

"Where is the temple?"

"In the heart. Why build a temple outside?"

"Take Ramnam."

Scavengers employed by the municipality gave Gandhiji an address in their quarter. The reader was a Dome (an untouchable community) of Allahabad. It stated that the employees were 250 in number, all of them Domes, and that though none of the Caste-Hindus—*dhobis*, barbers, etc. served them they cleaned their latrines.

Gandhiji's reply:

"I congratulate the Congress workers for arranging my meeting with you. I am glad that you gave me an address. I can realize your troubles, but merely praising me will not help you. I have been informed of your condition and your inner feelings that you are provided with very bad quarters, easily amenable to the inrush of water, and your salary is low. What is the remedy? Let me tell you that the state of crores (=10 millions) of men in India is worse than yours. You get rupees eight and a half per month, but there are some who do not get even so much. We should think of their plight and keep patience. I don't mean to say that no attempt should be made to improve your condition. It must surely be made and you must exert yourselves to raise



your state. But you should at the same time be content at the thought that God has given you at least that much. You live in a dry place for 8 months in a year, but there are people who have to live always in a boat. You should go on sending your applications to the municipality. You may even give it the notice that God will clean the municipality's latrines and that you will go back to Allahabad. You have certainly not become the municipality's bond slaves. But you may at the same time remember that you came here of your own accord, the municipality never invited you. And it is because the municipality has sympathy that it has opened a night school for you. But you must understand what your duty is. How could it help you, if I myself become an untouchable? You must reform yourselves. What is the use of unburdening your sorrows before me? You should do so before God and pray to Him to remove them."

Spinning all the while Gandhiji said the following at a meeting of students:

"A friend told me that he worked the spinning wheel, whenever he had a lustful urge. Another friend said to me that when he got angry and took to spinning, he would cool down. All this means that the wheel gives you the peace of mind so necessary for the observance of *brahmacharya*. Two or three days back one or two boys told me, "We cannot spin, but can mount the scaffold for the country's cause. Give us some stimulating, some exciting, programme." I felt that those students did not observe *brahmacharya*, because they did not like the spinning wheel that was helpful in keeping one at peace with himself. I for one think that the spinning wheel contains all the means necessary to make life completely filled up with truth, purity, peace and the spirit of service. I, therefore, beg from you half an hour's labour for spinning."

The Spinning Exhibition in Dinajpur was a grand affair and the women's meeting excellent. But there was some mal-adjustment in the timings. When Gandhiji got into the night train for leaving Dinajpur, the Chairman of the Reception Committee told him, "You will please forgive me for the inconvenience you were put to owing to some mismanagement. Gandhiji replied: "I can forgive everything, if you carry the work of the spinning wheel to perfection." This shows how mad after spinning wheel and spinners Gandhiji is.

From Dinajpur to Bogra. It is the capital of the smallest district, and has a population of only 11000. But even there there were about 15000 present at the meeting. The town had, besides, the distinction of keeping a purse of 1500 rupees ready for presentation to Gandhiji in addition to the usual yarn which too was plentiful. And to cap it all, there was also an exhibition of spinners more than 100 in number,



among whom were two or three whole families wearing Khadi made from self-spun yarn. One girl, in particular, was so absorbed in spinning that she did not cast a glance either at Gandhiji or anyone else and went on spinning excellent yarn right till the end of the meeting. The girls of one girls' school presented clothes made from the yarn they had spun. There was another present, a fine piece of cloth given by a gentleman, Babu Jagatmohan Sarkar, who had spun yarn of 70-80 counts for that piece. Lawyers, municipal commissioners, and other Hindu and Muslim gentlemen and their children were present at this exhibition also.

In reply to the addresses Gandhiji said:

"I thank you for your greetings as also for your beautiful Khadi. I congratulate you for giving me the purse of 1500 rupees. You have given me freedom to spend it as I like and I have already decided what to do with it. I wish to give the amount to the Khadi Pratishthan on condition that it should be used in making Khaddar cheaper or supplying spinning wheels, free or cheap. You have given your address in a very simple way and I have no difficulty in keeping such addresses with me. It is, moreover, written in your lovely mother-tongue.

"It is a kind of pilgrimage for me to come over here. I am on close terms with Principal Roy (P. C. Roy, a great scientist and Khadi-lover). Our contact began in 1901—through a holy man, Gokhaleji (G. K. Gokhale, whom Gandhiji called his political Guru). That contact has been growing ever since. I know quite well the sacrifices Principal Roy has made and have some knowledge of the work he has done for the flood-stricken people of these parts. I feel myself blessed by my visit to this place. I am glad that you have given a report of your work. Your realization of the power of the spinning wheel is itself a great achievement. When people are afflicted by a flood or famine, there is none other universal remedy for their relief than the spinning wheel. It is an easy thing for the rich to send money for the sufferers and then delude themselves with the thought that they have done something for the poor. But distribution of money in this way is harmful. not helpful, to the distressed. Those on whom such calamities befall, do not lose their physical capacity for work. If they are given some, they will not fail to do it. What we have, therefore, to do is to provide them some employment. It is a sin to give food to the physically fit without taking any work from them. When I see people wandering aimlessly in India, I cannot help thinking that the people are so besotted by laziness, that they cannot think of doing any work to earn their livelihood. But if we do not drive out this sloth, we shall see our country heading for destruction. That makes



me cry out, "Let us all spin!" If our spinning achieves nothing else, it is at least sure to infect some other person and make him spin for half an hour.

"The sights I saw yesterday and today have given me great strength. It is not a common sight to see little children, boys and girls, rich and poor, officers and servants, sitting together and spinning. I see immense possibilities in it. It has the power to drive out our egotism. I hope that such a sight becomes an everyday affair in our social life and not an occasional decoration, when man like me happen to come to you. I consider it an ideal discipline when parents and children, Brahmins and untouchables, sit together and spin.

"It promises marvellous results. I see in it the evolution of true economics and true religion—both at once. But there are certain essential conditions. If we want the spinning wheel to be in vogue all over India, we all must wear Khadi. The power of the spinning wheel is inherent in and dependent upon Khadi. Let people, therefore, leave this meeting with the firm resolve to wear Khadi for the sake of our poor brethren.

"Just as Khadi and the spinning wheel are vital to the life of the nation, so is Hindu Muslim unity—unity among all Indians—an indispensable must. It is besides the prime *dharma* of Hindus to destroy the 'don't touch me' attitude towards the 'untouchables' of today."

There is one Jatin Babu, a *brahmachari* worker in Bogra, who conducts a school where the students are taught the knowhow of service to the country. We can as well call it a 'Normal School' for national workers. It has been named 'Ganamangal Sanstha' (institution for the welfare of the masses). Owing to the enlivening atmosphere created by the *brahmachari* and other sincere workers Gandhiji gave there, as he went on spinning, a short and sweet speech:

"Some young men tell me, 'We are ready to be hanged for the country's cause but we can't spin. What we require is some hot and strong programme.' Now the spinning wheel is both a symbol of deep quietude and one that gives you peace. I put only this programme before the public every where, as for me it means the observance of my *dharma* of non-violence. Non-violence is not for me a policy, it is the principle of my life. It is to me one side of the coin and truth the other. Let us now see how non-violence is religion itself. Your own perception will tell you that if destruction were the chief working principle in the world, no creature would have remained alive today. But so many creatures live in the world and this all-sustaining activity is due to



peacefulness, to non-violence. The world is certain to live for ever. A new world is certain to spring up even out of the ashes of all life on earth. Destruction there certainly is in the world, but that is temporary, short-lived. It is only the life-sustaining activity that is eternal. Were the destructive activity predominant, the holy relationship between husband and wife, brother and brother, guru and disciple, king and subject, which is still being kept up in society, would have ceased to exist. When I saw the limpid water of the Gunga at Haridwar, the question arose in my mind: 'What must be the place where the *Gayatri mantra*² arose in the vision of the rishies (sages)?' And the sight of the wonderful panorama of the sun-rise there gave me the answer. On that day I came to know why it was the sun that had been chosen for adoration in the *Gayatri mantra*. Worship of the sun is nothing but worship of God. It is the sun that has been extolled, because it is the greatest power that manifests the power of God in visible form. Suryanarayan (the Sun-God-Surya is the sun—Narayana is a name of God) knows no rest. His is an unintermittent eternal peregrination. He goes on shedding his light wherever there is darkness, sin, ignorance. That life-nourishing power of the Sun, that protecting power He possesses, is itself the primordial power of the world.

"Who requires the intoxication of excitement? The man who does not wish to work. He who has the inebriation of love has no need of any other. My faith in the spinning wheel goes on increasing day by day, as I go through life's journey. I have ceased to be afraid now lest I am becoming impolite, when I turn the wheel at the time I deliver a speech before you. On the contrary, I am grieved every moment at the thought, 'Why should I be provided with food, when so many on earth die of starvation?' O God! Either take away the food I get or make me always serve in one way or other those countless who are starving. To provide them with work, can I get chemical works opened for these masses of hungry people? 'Can I make them manufacture quinine? Is that sensible? I must do only that thing whereby I can make millions and millions employed in work. It was, as I was traversing my path of love, that this wheel was discovered by me. There is no intoxicant more stimulating than love. The man of love can never kill anybody. Love would only wish to die and not to kill. Non-violence is my religion, my God; truth is my religion, my God. When I go out in search for truth, non-violence whispers into my ears 'Seek ye truth through me.' And so does truth say, "Search for non-violence through me."



@ Gandhiji³: "60% of our imports come from Britain. They will retain the connection only so long as it is an economic proposition. On the day it ceases to be that, they will leave India, just as they left Somaliland. I ask those who have the fever of patriotism in them to make the nation at least wear its own Khaddar. Multiplication of wants is not the test of civilisation. I will not, therefore, ask villagers to wear more clothing than they do. But I would certainly make their villages damp-proof and make conditions of life better for them."

Gandhiji himself has written an article on Dr. Roy's flood relief work.⁴ I shall, therefore, content myself with giving only those facts that are not given by him in the article. Had I the necessary instruments, I would have given a sketch map of the area covered by Dr. P. C. Roy and his 'right hand,' Satishbabu, in their relief work. They could not cope with the whole flood-affected area. Help was indeed forthcoming from various quarters and numerous relief associations were also doing their bit. But Dr. Roy had the genius to combine all these associations into one institution, "The Bengal Flood Relief Committee," to raise hundreds of workers, procure medical aid from a number of doctors and, by medical relief and other means, tackle successfully the many problems arising out of the flood. At places big embankments had to be constructed, but even that difficulty he overcame efficiently. There is a landed property, rectangular in shape and owned by the railway company. It is so situated that the Company's ownership of the property became a serious impediment to the free flow of water from the flooded area along its natural southward course. All the passages through which water could have flown out and the flood subsided were guarded by the railway police to prevent the flow. The railway company cared not a fig for the loss of human and other lives through its stringent blockade. All it cared for was saving its own rail-bars. The army of flood relief workers tackled this obstacle also to the best of its powers. But there was nothing unusual in this flood-relief work. The extraordinary part of their work lay in their perfectly successful implementation of an idea which Gandhiji had once merely suggested. When he heard that the actual flood relief work was closed only after the introduction of spinning wheels in the affected area, Gandhiji's heart leapt up with as much joy as when, early in 1924, he knew of the signal success of the Borsad Satyagraha.⁵ And this delight went up even higher when he found that the work necessary at the end of a widespread mass movement was being done in the flood-affected part. As soon as Satishbabu saw that the hutments of the people were reconstructed, he began to decrease more and more the quantity of rice doled out to the people. It did take some time to propagate the spinning wheel,



but once that phase was over, spinning progressed in no time. The 3000 spinning wheels working in that area since May 1924 have earned for the flood-distressed people 5000 rupees. Where there is not a trace of famine conditions, the people have grown a little slack; but in a very large part the spinning wheel has secured a permanent foot-hold.

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1. See Appendix IV.
 2. The sacred formula in adoration of the Sun (as also the Creator) (Savita=the Sun or the Creator.) We meditate on the superb light of the Sun (or the Creator) who may guide and lead our intelligence (to right thought, speech and act).
 3. The manuscript diary does not state when and where these words were spoken. But an American missionary and his wife did come to meet Gandhiji at Bogra. It is not wrong, therefore, to guess that the words quoted above were uttered in his talk with them.
 4. See Appendix V
 5. Satyagraha against a poll tax imposed as a common punitive measure against the county's supposed connivance at the numerous dacoities committed there.



APPENDIX

- I. The Pilgrimage of Kanya Kumari
- II. Nanda: the Pariah Saint
- III. A Deceptive Speech
- IV. Khadi Pratishthan
- V. Flood Relief



APPENDIX-I: THE PILGRIMAGE OF KANYA-KUMARI

India stretches from Kashmir to Kanya-Kumari¹ north to south and Assam to Karachi (now Dwarka), east to west. All the four boundaries of Mother India end at these places. On Her head there is the crown of Mt. Hindukush, which enhances Her beauty as well as protects her. And Her feet are washed by the holy waters of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Kanya-kumari (= girl-Virgin) is Goddess Parvati at the age when she was performing a severe penance in order to marry the free and unchained soul of Lord Shankara, i.e., God Himself. This (Kanya-Kumari) is one of the extremities of India and we see here nothing but the sea encircling the Cape. There appears even a tinge of two colours here, as it is here that the two waters mingle. Since at this point we face the South exactly, we see here the sun rising on our right and setting on the left. We had not the time to see either of these sights, but we can easily imagine both the morning sun, fading out the stars and emerging from a bath in the 'mahodadhi' (=great sea), the Bay of Bengal. and the setting sun descending from a golden sky and hiding himself into the *ratnakara* (=the treasury of jewels, i.e., the sea), the Arabian sea, for retiring to bed. The guard of the Government Guest House offered us many inducements to stay on till the evening to see the glorious sun-set there, but how can we tarry to enjoy the blissful sight, when we had gone to the place only on a very hurried visit with a tight schedule to follow? I contented myself, therefore, only by purifying my feet with the waves that had purified themselves by washing the holy feet of Mother India. How magnificent must have been the imagination of the *rishis* in that they selected this place for public worship! And how potent the narrating powers of the *Puranis* (=the spiritual story-tellers) which attract to this place an unintermittent flow of pilgrims since ages past! Here, at this boundary which is for us one end of our world, the *rishis* installed the temple of Kanya-Kumari and the temple was lavishly decorated with beautiful designs, as it were, by the itinerant Puranis' tales about the holiness of the site. In me for one, there was no desire left to enjoy the raptures of the beautiful scenery that nature lavishly spreads out there, because I had a better treat—for the mind instead of for the eye. I quaffed plenty of draughts of the ambrosial drink that elevates the soul. Hardly had I finished dipping my feet in the sea at one of the beautiful *ghats* (a bathing place with steps leading right into the water) there, one of my colleagues observed, "There, on yonder hill, Vivekananda² used to go and get himself lost in samadhi (=super-conscious state in which all outward earthly consciousness is lost). Whether this story is factually true



or not, I can quite believe it. It is definitely very possible. A good swimmer can swim that distance. An atmosphere of supernal peace is bound to pervade the place. The gentle and melodious flute-notes of the sea-waves moreover are a powerful incentive to *samadhi*. This talk, therefore, intensified my longing for the life of the spirit. Just by the side of the steps there is a platform which can easily accommodate a hundred men. I had an urge to recite the Gita there, but, suppressing even that holy desire, I rested content with filling my heart with that Holy of Holies who composed the 'Song Celestial.'

After thus purifying ourselves we went into the temple. Being an advocate of removal of untouchability and one who calls himself a Bhangi, I had some doubts whether I would be allowed even to enter it. I asked the priest-in-charge not to take me to that place where in his view I was not entitled to go. I said I would respect the bar. He said "Mataji's darshan is open to the public only after 5-30 p.m. and you have come early at 4. But I shall show you round all other places. You would not be allowed to go right into the *sanctum sanctorium*, where the Holy Image of Mataji is installed, but that ban stands for everyone who has returned from England." "Well then," said I, "I shall gladly respect your scruples." After this talk the officiating priest took me inside and led me in my sanctifying rounds around Mataji's room.

Instead of feeling any pity for the ignorance of the idol-worshipping Hindu, I became more conscious of his spiritual wisdom. The way of idol-worship did not, I felt, turn the One God into many Gods, but it discovered the truth that though 'God is One without a second' (एकमेवाद्वितीयम्): He can be worshipped in a thousand ways, and showed how that could be done. Let the Christian or the Muslim regard himself as no idol-worshipper, but everyone who, in worshipping God in his own way, requires some concrete object to help him in concentration, is in reality an idol-worshipper. A masjid or a church is thus in a way idol-worship itself. There is idol-worship in the thought, 'I shall be purer by going there,' and there is nothing wrong in cherishing that faith. The belief that God can be realized only through the Bible or the Quran is also nothing but idol-worship and that too is all right. The Hindu goes one further and declares, 'Man is free and entitled to worship God in any way or in any form he likes.' The man, who makes a stone or a gold image, invokes the presence of God into it, gets absorbed in it, and thus purifies himself, becomes perfectly fit for redemption or realization of God. All this became clearer to me as I went round and round Mataji's image.



But even there, my happiness was not unmixed with pain. Personally I was allowed to go round. If they would not let me go quite near the Image, it was because all foreign-returned Hindus were forbidden. But the prohibition against untouchables ? It was owing to the stigma of their birth and nothing else. How can *this* be endured? Is it possible that KanyaKumari would be polluted? Is this interdiction handed down from hoary ages? The Inner Voice spoke out, 'No, Never! It can't be so. And even if it really were, it is undoubtedly a sin. Sin does not cease to be sin, just because it has a long tradition behind it'. My mind, therefore, grew more convinced than ever before that it was the duty of every Hindu to perform this great purificatory sacrifice.

Navajivan,
29.3. 1925

Mohandas Karamachand Gandhi

1. This name of the Cape originates from a legend referred to further on in the article and from a temple of "Kanya-Kumari" there.

2. Swami Vivekananda was the first Hindu monk to make himself a world-figure by his stirring peroration at "The World Conference of Religions" held at Chicago in 1893. Being a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa he established, for the first time after centuries, Hindu Ashramas, entitled Ramakrishna Ashrams in foreign lands, i. e., in the United States and England.



APPENDIX-II: NANDA: THE PARIAH SAINT

I

During Gandhiji's sojourn in South India, last March, I heard the story of Nanda, the Pariah Saint, from several lips. We had been in South India twice before this, but had never heard of Nanda. The good fortune this time was entirely due to the fact that the tour was pre-eminently an anti-untouchability tour. 'Nanda, a pariah, was canonised centuries ago by Brahmins themselves,' said a friend who told me the story, 'and today's Brahmins are proving false to their ancestors.' I thought I had better get together the facts about this remarkable saint. I hit upon an interesting story of the saint in Mr. Madhavia's 'Nanda,' and I summarise it here for the readers of Young India.

It is difficult to ascertain the precise date of Nanda's birth, as in the case of many of our saints, but it is fairly certain that he was born about six hundred years ago of pariah parents in Adhanur, a village in Tanjore district. The word 'pariah', which, ever since the late Mr. Gokhale used the telling phrase, 'pariah in the Empire,' has passed into the English language, is derived from Tamil. 'Parai' is drum, 'pariah' meaning a drummer. He, naturally, thus takes charge of the dead cattle, looks to their disposal, treats and tans the hides and sells them. He is also an agricultural labourer. I need not dilate on the pariah's miserable lot, his wretched huts, his squalid surroundings, and the life of filth and mire which has been forced on him. The life, the superior class of Hindus has compelled him to lead, has brought other evils also. He has to stay far away from human haunts, he eats carrion or beef, drinks foul water and inferior toddy or liquor, whenever he can get it, to forget the wretchedness of his lot.

Boy Nanda was like any other of his class in all respects but one. God had blessed him with a fair measure of pity for lower animals, and the bleating of a lamb or the screeching of a fowl under the knife would send a shudder through his body and fill his eyes with tears. He was, of course, used to animal food, but not to seeing animals actually slaughtered. One day he happened to eat stale beef, and got very ill. His mother was very much upset, she thought that the gods were angry, and, as was the custom among them whenever any one in the family was ill, she vowed to propitiate the demon Katteri by sacrificing a goat to him. Nanda got better in the usual course, and the goat had now to be sacrificed. There was no money to buy one with, but there was a lovely little goat in the house itself, which was the delight of Nanda's heart, and



which loved Nanda so much that it would refuse fodder, when Nanda was ill. The choice was, therefore, before them to displease the gods or to displease Nanda, and they prepared for the lesser evil. Whilst Nanda was yet in bed one day, they went and sacrificed Nanda's pet goat, of which Nanda saw the carcass when he awoke. This was Nanda's first shock for days. The iron had gone into his soul and he began to examine himself, and his surroundings. "Mother, what do the Brahmins do, in case their boys get ill? Do they also sacrifice goats like we do?", was the question he put to his mother one day. "Nothing of the sort, my boy," she said, "they pray to their gods and break coconuts before them and offer sweets." "Why should we then kill innocent goats?" asked Nanda. "Their gods are not like ours. they are benign and not fierce like ours. Ours are revengeful and would be satisfied by nothing but flesh and blood." "But then why should we not pray, too, like the Brahmins to their gods?" asked the insatiable boy. "How silly," said the mother starting at the very idea, "how silly! How can we, pariahs, pray to Brahmins' gods? Are we like Brahmins? We eat meat and beef, we drink liquor, we are so filthy. How can we worship Brahmins' gods?"

II

Nanda was silent that day. but the truth within him was not silenced. He vowed that henceforth he would not tell his father or mother, if ever he fell ill. 'No goats would be killed for his sake, and he would pray to the benign gods to cure him. But how were his prayers to reach them, when he was not like the Brahmin boys? 'No meat or liquor for me, therefore, henceforth,' he said to himself. He had heard of the law of Karma being cited by his mother so often. What was that law? Were his Karmas so horrible that he should have to be born a hundred times before he was fit enough to pray to the benign gods? But if he, like the Brahmins, did not touch meat or liquor, and allow no goats to be killed for him, would it not be enough? Or did the Brahmins belong to a superior species? But he had eyes and ears and every other limb like the Brahmin boys. Were their blood and bones different?

One evening whilst Nanda was grazing cattle in a field near a threshing floor, some boys, among whom there was his Brahmin master's son, were playing '*kitti pillu*.' Suddenly the *kitti* came whistling through the air and dropped on the field. Fain would Nanda pick it up and give it to his young master, but how dare he do it? The young master came running, picked it up and, as he was running back, had a fall over a stone and began to bleed profusely. He sprained his ankle also and cried out for help. Nanda ran to the spot at once, was touched by the sight of blood, but stood at a distance. The



Brahmin master could not even bear his going to succour him, called him names and flung a stone sharply at him. It struck Nanda on the temple. he fainted and fell down bleeding. The other boys were there to help the Brahmin boy, but Nanda got only jeers. As soon as Nanda recovered himself he got up and walked back home, lost in deep thought: 'So his blood was equally like any other blood. But why was the Brahmin boy so ungrateful and callous? And if gods heard the prayers of such boys would they not hear his?'

III

The opportunity was coming. Nanda was now a fairly grown-up boy and he lost no time in sharing his thoughts and troubles with boys of his age. He had thus a small band of boys who were fully with him in his views, if not always with him in his plans. Once some pariahs from a neighbouring village came with cholera on, and infected the whole village of Adhanur. Nanda's father was first attacked, and died within an hour. Some of Nanda's own band also were carried off. The elders of the place, who were very angry with Nanda because of his reforming zeal, now openly declared that the epidemic was nothing but a visitation from

the Gods Nanda had offended. They threatened him with all kinds of punishment. In course of time he too was in the grip of cholera and the elders were glad that their forebodings were coming true. Nanda's mother's fortitude was shaken and she urged Nanda to permit her to vow to sacrifice a goat. His friends also followed suit. But he was adamant. Why should he take away a life to save his life? "The moment has come when our faith is going to be tested," he said to his friends. "We have often gazed at the gopuram of yonder Tirruppunker and longed to see the great Shiva. He is putting us to the test. I shall only pray to Him and ask you also to do likewise" . "But we are only pariahs", they argued, "and He is the God of the Brahmins", To which Nanda could now say, "But Brahmins and pariahs are one in the eyes of Shiva. Let me pray to Him and you also pray for me." They obeyed and prayed as best as they could. In another corner of the village were the elders, met in solemn conclave and cursing Nanda and even wishing for his death. Nanda's poor mother fell an easy victim to their evil counsels and said, "I agree my son has erred and we are reaping the fruit of his folly. We are too poor to buy a goat, but I have a *thali* which I can spare. Get a goat with it and sacrifice it to Katteri."

Nanda's prayers had been heard. He had not slept in the night, but had been praying, and at the end had something like a vision. God Shiva of Tirruppunker had



appeared before him and blessed him. He woke up absolutely cured and when he told his friends what had happened, there burst forth a shout of victory to Mahadeva.

Nanda's mother in her turn sacrificed a goat, and also sung praises to Shiva. Nanda now thought of a pilgrimage to Tiruppunker to offer his thanks to the God who had saved him. He had enough presents to carry with him as his band had also now fully cast in their lot with him. They took big pieces of leather and also 'gorochana,' a perfume used by the worshippers and obtained from certain parts of carcasses. To these they added a few coconuts and bananas. They had their baths and smeared their bodies with sacred ashes and marched forth to Tiruppunker. On reaching the temple they went round it thrice and sent word to the priests, who sent their servants to receive the presents. The presents delivered, they stood in front of the temple gates, to get a glimpse of the image. Nanda could see some of the lights and the worshippers, but no image, as the huge figure of Nandi hid the image from view. Nanda went from side to side, but to no purpose. His grief knew no bounds. The sweet smell of 'gorochana' and frank-in-sense choked him and made him senseless. "Oh, I am a pariah and a sinner, and my sins have taken the form of the Nandi bull to hide the God from me!" he cried and again fell in a trance. When he awoke, to the surprise of all, the stone-Nandi had leaned to one side, giving a full view of Mahadeva! To this day the Nandi at Tiruppunker is not in front of Mahadeva, but slightly bent towards one side and the story goes that God did it out of pity for Nanda.

IV

It is said that Nanda and his band out of gratefulness dug a tank before the temple of Tiruppunker, and kept on making free gifts of leather and 'gorochana' to the Brahmin temple. They also made it a point to attend temple festivals, even though it might be from a distance, and offer their gifts to propitiate the Brahmin Gods. At one of these festivals, Nanda heard for the first time a Brahmin 'puranik' telling the story of Nataraja at Chidambaram; Nanda drank in every item of the story, one thing going straight to his heart: "He who sees Nataraja at Chidambaram crosses the ocean of life, even if he be a chandala (pariah)." Those words contained nectar for him, and he impatiently asked the Brahmin, "Pray, tell me where is Chidambaram." "Only about a day's journey," replied the Brahmin. "And does Nataraja save even chandalas in very truth?" "Certainly," was the reassuring reply, and the Brahmin even gave his authority for it,—the 'Sthala-Purana.'



That gave Nanda the signal for another spiritual effort and he hastened to start to the North, telling his friends that he had set his heart on seeing Nataraja and being free from death and birth. "How can we take a Brahmin too literally?", they must have remonstrated. But Nanda stuck to his resolution, until a clever friend laid his finger on what he thought was Nanda's weakest spot—his obedience to his master. "We are servants yet. We came here, because we were off-duty, but how can we take a holiday without so much as seeing the master?" And Nanda immediately consented to go back to Adhanur. All the hours of the day Nanda thought of nothing but Nataraja and often saw visions of that God's eternal dance and play in the objects around. People began to regard him as mad, as he would often stop in the midst of work and stand gazing at the sun, and when accosted would say, "I was lost in admiring Nataraja's dance in the sun." Nanda's master was shocked at these antics and he at once ordered him to be brought in his presence. "What is this madness, Nanda? Or are you itching for the whip?" he asked. "I am itching to see Nataraja, pray, permit me to go, I shall soon come back," was Nanda's reply. The master was even more angry at what to him was Nanda's presumption. "Have you forgotten that you are a pariah?", the wise man argued with him. "I have not. But the Tiruppunker God was once merciful to me, and I doubt not that even Nataraja also can be seen by me," Nanda replied. "A Brahmin like you assured me that even a chandala could be free from birth and death by seeing Nataraja."

The wise men of the village told Nanda's master that it was all the mischief of that Brahmin *puranik* and asked him to permit him to go to Chidambaram and return wiser. "But he must first harvest the six fields," said the master. At this Nanda danced with joy and straight went to the fields, sickle in hand. Before daybreak he was back to tell the master that the harvesting was complete and that the crops were there properly stacked on the threshing floor. The master could not believe it. "You must have hired labourers. Speak out the truth," said he. "I worked the whole night," said Nanda, "and none helped me, except it be the merciful God Nataraja." The master proceeded to the threshing floor and was surprised to see many days' and many men's work done by Nanda single-handed in the course of a night. That was the very threshing floor near which the proud master, as a lad, had disdained to look at Nanda proffering his help, and had struck him on his temple, the scar still bearing witness to the story. All that passed before the Brahmin master's mind as in a flash and tears of contrition washed all vanity off his heart. "Oh Nanda, my Nanda, come and hug me. All these years I did not know you," he cried in a broken voice, "Forgive me and bless me."



But Nanda drew back and simply said, "You are my master and I your slave. You need not ask for forgiveness. Pray permit me to go to Chidambaram."

The permission was now given out of a warm and contrite heart and Nanda and his friends reached Chidambaram the next day. Nanda prostrated himself before the temple as he first sighted the top and went round the village as soon as he reached it.

But how was the temple to be approached? There were 2999 'Dikshitar' guarding the temple. They took the gifts but scouted the idea of Nanda ever seeing Nataraja. Nanda cited the authority of Sthala-Purana, the only scripture he had heard of and that too only by name. "Right enough," said they, "but there is no authority in the text for a pariah to enter the temple." So Nanda sat disconsolate the night through, before the temple-wall, now hoping and now fearing, and yet for ever praying.

Whether it was the result of these prayers or some thing else, the Dikshitar of Chidambaram had the same dream that night. Nataraja appeared before them and said: "Nanda, the Adhanur pariah, has come to see me at my bidding. Though a pariah he is pure in thought, word, and deed. His love for me is without bounds. Make him pure in body and bring him to see me." And they met in solemn conclave to interpret the dream. "We must obey Nataraja's command straight away," said one. "But he is a pariah and we have to make him pure in body," said another. "The easiest way to do that is to give him a bath in the Homakkulam," said a third one. Yet another said, "No, he must first be burnt to ashes and the ashes taken to Nataraja." A kind-hearted Dikshitar was shocked at this and said, "Agni alone can make him pure, it is true. But don't take the text literally. Even cow's dung, burnt to ashes, will do." But others had set their hearts on a drastic plan and wanted to punish the pariah's presumption, if possible. "Nanda must purify himself by passing through the fire," they insisted. These things reached Nanda's ears, and he jumped and danced with joy and begged of them to get the fire ready. 'Even if Nataraja burns me up,' he said to himself, 'He will do it because He thinks it the best way to end this life of slavery.' And so he had a bath in the Homakkulam, smeared his forehead with sacred ashes, and with the wet cloth round his loins walked thrice round the blazing fire, saluted the temple gate, and leapt into the flames with prayer on his lips and joy in his heart.

For some time there was deathlike silence all round, and then arose a peal of joyous cry: "Hara, Hara, Mahadeva!" as Nanda came out unscathed, his wet cloth still dripping with water.



The humiliation of the Brahmins was complete. They saluted Nanda and led him to Nataraja's image. They showed him over the sacred spots as they went, but Nanda saw them not. As he saw Nataraja he gazed and gazed on him, until he was one with that Benign Presence.

Nanda the Pariah, is now one of the Three Score and Three Shaivite saints of the Tamil land, his image being worshipped like other images in most of the temples.

10-5-1925

M.D.



APPENDIX-III: A DECEPTIVE SPEECH

Lord Birkenhead's pronouncement is deceptive in a double sense. It does not read as harsh on second reading as it did on first, but it disappoints more on the second than it did on the first. The harshness of it is unintended. The Secretary of State could not help himself. He has spoken, as he has felt or rather been coached to feel. But his promises are only apparently alluring. A closer perusal leaves one under the impression that the maker of them knows that he will never be called upon to fulfil them. Let us take the most tempting of them. It says, in effect, 'Produce your constitution and we will consider it.' Is it not our thirty-five years' experience, that we have made petitions that have been rejected "after careful consideration?" Having had that experience, we dropped the beggar's bowl in 1920 and made up our minds to live by our own exertion, even though we should perish in the attempt. It is not draughtsmanship that His Lordship really asks, it is swordsmanship he invites, with the full knowledge that the invitation will not be, and could not be, accepted. The evidence is in the speech itself. He had before him the Minority Report of the Muddiman Committee, i. e., of Dr. Sapru and Mr. Jinnah, two among the cleverest lawyers we have in India and who have never been guilty of the crime of non-co-operation, and one of whom has been Law Member of the Viceregal Council. They and their colleagues have been told that they did not know their business. Has then a constitution framed by Pandit Motilal Nehru and endorsed by, say, the Right Honourable Srinivasa Sastri and Mian Fazli Hussain¹ a better chance of favourable reception? Is not Lord Birkenhead's offer a trap for the unwary to fall in? Supposing an honest constitution is drawn up just to meet the present situation, will it not be immediately regarded as preposterous and something infinitely less offered in its stead? When I was hardly twenty-five years old, I was taught to believe that, if we wished to be satisfied with 4 annas, we must ask for 16 annas in order to get the 4 annas. I never learnt that lesson because I believed in asking for just what I needed and fighting for it. But I have not failed to observe that there was a great deal of truth in the practical advice.

The silliest constitution backed by force, whether violent or non-violent, will receive the promptest consideration especially from the British, who know only too well the value of at least one kind of force.



There is the Bill taken to England by that tireless servant of India, Dr. Besant. It is signed by many eminent Indians, and, if some others have not signed it, it is not because they will not be satisfied with it, but because they know that nothing but the waste paper basket is its destiny. It has not been signed because those who have refrained do not wish to be party to the insult of the nation, which its summary rejection will imply. Let Lord Birkenhead say that he will accept any reasonable constitution that may be prepared by a party or parties overwhelmingly representative of Indian public opinion and he will have a constitution in a week's time. Let him publicly assure Dr. Besant that the Bill will have every chance of acceptance, if it is endorsed by Pandit Motilal Nehru and others whom he may name, and I shall undertake to secure those signatures. The fact is that there is no sincere ring about the offer.

It is no fault of the Secretary of State for India that his offer does not read sincere. We are not ready as yet to demand anything. Therefore, naturally, it is for the British Government to give, and for us to reject, if what is offered is not deemed enough for the time being. For us what the new Commander-in-Chief considers as unattainable is the only thing worth living for, fighting for, and dying for. One's birthright is never unattainable and Lokamanya taught us that Swaraj was our birthright. The definition of that Swaraj is to rule ourselves, although we misrule ourselves for the time being. We, the English and the Indians, are in a hopeless muddle. Lord Birkenhead thinks the British Government are trustees for our welfare. We think that they hold us in bondage for their own benefit. Trustees never charge as their commission seventy-five per cent of the income of their wards. His Lordship says, we cannot be a nation with our 9 religions and 130 languages. We contend that, for all practical purposes and for protection from outside the Indian border, we are one nation. He thinks that non-co-operation was a dreadful mistake.

The vast majority of us think that it alone awakened this sleeping nation from its torpor, it alone has given the nation a force whose strength is beyond measure. The Swaraj Party is a direct result of that force. He says that in Hindu-Mussalman dissensions the British Government have "kept their hands unsullied." It is the certain belief of almost every Indian that they, the British Government, are principally responsible for most of our quarrels. He thinks that we must co-operate with them. We say that, when they mean well or when there is a change of heart, they will co-operate with us. He says that no gifted leader arose to make use of the Reforms. We



say that Messrs. Sastri and Chintamani, not to mention others, were gifted enough to make the Reforms a success, but, in spite of all the goodwill in the world, they found that they could not do so. Deshbandhu showed a way out. His offer stands.

But what hope is there of his offer being responded to in the spirit in which it has been made? There are the different viewpoints which make us, English and Indians, see things contrarywise. Is there any chance, then, of finding a common meeting ground?

Yes, there is.

We, the two peoples, occupy an unnatural position, i.e., of rulers and ruled. We Indians must cease to think that we are the ruled. That we can only do when we have some kind of force. We seemed to think we had it in 1921 and so we fancied that Swaraj was coming inside of a year. Now no one dare prophesy. Let us gather that force—the non-violent force of civil resistance—and we shall be equal. This is not threat, no menace. It is hard fact. And if I do not now-a-days regularly criticize the acts of our 'rulers,' as I used to before, it is not because the fire of the civil resister has died down in me, but because I am an economist of speech, pen, and thought. When I am ready, I shall speak freely. I have ventured to criticize Lord Birkenhead's pronouncement to tell the bereaved people of Bengal in particular and of India in general that I feel the unintended prick of Lord Birkenhead's speech just as much as they do, and that, whilst Motilalji will be fighting in the Assembly and leading the Swaraj Party in the place of Deshbandhu, I shall be leaving no stone unturned to prepare the atmosphere needed for civil resistance—a vocation for which I seem to be more fitted than for any other. Has not the singer of the Gita said, "Better by far is the performance of one's own dharma (duty), however humble it may be, than another's, however loftier it may be?"

M. K. Gandhi

Young India,

23-7-1925.

1. A member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.



APPENDIX-IV: KHADI PRATISHTHAN

I have elsewhere dealt with the development of spinning as part of flood and famine relief. It is an experiment standing by itself. But the experience gained therein by Acharya Ray and his right-hand man, as he loves to call Satish Babu, was not to end with the experiment. They are both chemists. Their scientific minds compel them to explore the possibilities of the wheel and Khaddar, as a permanent supplementary industry for the Bengal agriculturists. From a small experiment it has developed into a big organisation called Khadi Pratishthan. It has branches in many parts of Bengal and contemplates opening more. Its object is to manufacture and sell pure Khaddar and popularise the wheel and Khaddar through publications, lantern-lectures, etc. In order to give it a more stable character, it has been converted into a public trust. I have before me the trust-deed and the balance-sheet. I mention these facts, as I promised an inquirer at a public meeting at Pabna that I shall deal with the Pratishthan work in the pages of *Young India*. I was recommending the universal adoption in Bengal of the Pratishthan Charkha, as I have found it to be the best available in Bengal, and as experiments are being daily made to improve it. The inquirer in question thereupon complained of the high prices of Pratishthan Khaddar. And I promised to deal with the complaint through these pages. The charge may be considered true in a sense. The idea is to manufacture Khaddar on the largest scale and to introduce the wheel in every home. The authors of the trust want to make Khaddar self-supporting and improve the quality of yarn. The management must work in those centres too, which are not at present favourable for Khaddar manufacture. Thus it pools all the Khaddar it manufactures and charges an average price. It follows, therefore, that those who operate in favourable centres only can sell Khaddar cheaper than the Pratishthan. This is no matter for embarrassment for the time-being, as the few centres that are manufacturing pure Khaddar have their own customers who do not concern themselves with the prices. The Pratishthan sells Khaddar even now at a loss but it sells to minimise the loss. It cannot always be run on donations. I am satisfied that every attempt is being made to reduce the price of Khaddar sold by the Pratishthan. It cannot be too widely known that nobody has any private interest in the Pratishthan. The main actors have their own sources of income. They have given to the Pratishthan. They take nothing from it. So far I have inspected five other organised centres of Khaddar manufacture. These are the Abhoy Ashram at Comilla, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh's Ashram at Malikanda, Pravartak Sangh's at Chittagaon, Satsang Ashram at Pabna and Duadando Khadi Kendra. The latter I have not seen personally, but I had the pleasure of meeting



the principal workers and seeing their Khaddar and wheels at Hooghly. The Pravartak Sangh has hitherto dealt in half-Khaddar too. But it has now definitely decided to deal exclusively in pure Khaddar so far as Chittagaon is concerned. It had already started the experiment at Kutiandu but the management made the final decision for the whole of the Chittagaon District during my visit there. They have still half-Khaddar at their Calcutta depot and at the head office at Chandranagar. But they are striving to do away with half-Khaddar altogether at the first opportunity. They accept the principle that it is not in the interest of the Khaddar movement, to deal in half-Khaddar. All these activities are good. Some work is being done officially too by the Congress organisations. As a matter of fact, I regard all these organisations as Congress activities in spirit though not in name. What is, however, necessary is to co-ordinate these scattered forces and economise time, talent, labour, and funds. The heads of these organisations must meet together, compare notes, and evolve a joint programme of action. It must come in time. In any case, the question is whether the time can be hastened. The Khadi Pratishthan has an advantage over all in that it has men who have dedicated themselves solely to the spread of the message of the Charkha. It has great organising talent at its service. It has a celebrated name behind it. It has, therefore, limitless scope for expansion. Hence, it is that I commend its activity to the whole of India in general and Bengal in particular. I invite the critics to examine it critically and demonstrate its shortcomings, if they discover any. I invite sympathisers to study its accounts, which are an open book, and help it. And I invite the indifferent to throw off their indifference and, after studying it, oppose its activities or support them. Dr. Ray has a world-wide reputation as a scientist. But the millions of his countrymen will not know him for the fine soaps he may manufacture, nor yet for the careers he has found for many a young Bengali. They will know him for the light and comfort his Khaddar work may bring into their humble cottages. Let his organisation be like a vast banyan tree giving shelter to all small sister organisations, that would receive help and guidance from it. The Khadi Pratishthan is more than the Chemical Works, great as they are. For the former has its roots in the country's soil. It is not a supergrowth. It will evoke the best in every one of its organisers, if it is to grow into a huge national organisation. May it fulfil all the expectations of which it seems to me to give promise.

Young India,

M. K. Gandhi

4-6-1925.



APPENDIX-V: FLOOD RELIEF

It was impossible for me to visit Bengal and omit the flood area and the relief given there by Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray's Committee. It was a place of pilgrimage for me first, because of my association with the Acharya since 1901 and secondly, because of the successful manner in which he demonstrated the efficacy of the Charkha as an instrument of relief and an insurance against future distress. If the villagers were well-instructed in the methods of dealing with floods and famine and were also accustomed to an occupation besides agriculture, which is impossible in times of flood or famines much time, money, and labour that are generally required on such occasions could be saved, when people are taught at such times to depend upon charity for their sustenance, they lose their self-respect and also the use of their limbs. Demoralisation then sets in and at last such people are reduced to a state worse than that of mere lower animals. For the latter have at least pleasure in living. The former are dead to life. I, therefore, wanted to see as much as I could with my own eyes what the Charkha-mad chemist had done in the relief area.

I was taken to Bogra and thence to Talora where I met the distinguished countryman in his element. 'This hut is more precious to me than the palatial Science College. I got more peace and quiet of mind here than elsewhere. And the Charkha is growing on me. It gives rest to a mind distracted by study of books.' Talora is a little village where the Relief Committee has one of its centres. The Committee has bought a piece of land about 20 bighas and erected bamboo huts with thatched roofs amid surroundings of great natural beauty. There is malaria in East Bengal, which is nature's revenge for man's neglect of her laws. But East Bengal has vegetation which gives it a beauty that is hard to excel. Man has succeeded in making it malarial, but not yet in robbing the land of its natural beauty.

Here in restful surroundings I learnt the whole story of the Relief operations. The address presented to me would not adorn me with a single adjective. Its six typed foolscap-sides are a recital of facts and figures which I propose to digest for the benefit of the reader.

The great flood overwhelmed parts of Rajshahi and Bogra districts in the September of 1922, devastating nearly 4,000 square miles of Northern Bengal. The loss was estimated at one crore rupees. The first difficulty felt was that of organizing the Relief organisation and co-ordinating the activities of Relief parties that sprang up



like mushrooms. Everyone who knows anything of relief works knows that the mere will to serve or money are of no avail. if the requisite knowledge and ability are wanting. By judicious handling, overlapping and ignorant management were checked. The affected area was divided into fifty centres. The head of this vast organisation was no other than Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose, now His Majesty's guest in the Mandalay fort. He was assisted by Dr. Indra Narayan Sen Gupta. This agency distributed food-stuff to the value of Rs. 25,606 and clothing worth Rs. 55,200 besides 80,000 pieces and 75,000 old jackets and shirts. It distributed also fodder of the value Rs. 1,274 and 52 waggon-loads of straw received as gift. Ten thousand huts were constructed under its supervisions. Materials were brought to the doors of the villagers, labour charges were given to them in instalments after the previous ones were properly utilised and inspection reports submitted. Supervision was so strict that there were only three cases of Defalcation—of Rs. 1,500, Rs. 350, and Rs. 200 respectively. These were soon detected and money was duly realised. The construction of huts cost Rs. 1,12,755. If at Kalikapur land was to be reclaimed embankment was a necessity. It was strictly speaking the District Board's work. But that body being unable to shoulder the burden the Committee built the embankment a mile long costing only Rs. 5,775 and reclaiming 6,000 bighas of land. Gradually as things settled, the Committee thought of engaging the villagers in some work, if they gave them food and clothing. So they were given paddy to husk. A quantity was advanced to each distressed family which had to return husked rice to the centre appointed. Each family was entitled to retain the fixed quantity for its maintenance. There were 14 such operating centres. 20,000 mouths were fed for four months from these centres. Out of 50,000 maunds of paddy 27,400 maunds of rice were realised. There were no defaulters. This operation cost Rs. 43,000. Side by side with this relief medical assistance was freely given.

But this did not satisfy the Committee's ambition. It wanted to deserve the generous aid it had received from the public by doing permanent work. It wanted to make the people self-supporting. I must give the details of the introduction of spinning in the language of the address:

"When the rains set in, it was found difficult to continue the husking operations any longer, but relief was still necessary in almost all the centres. There were cases everywhere which demanded attention even in good harvest times. They had no lands to plough. no harvest to reap. These cases became desperate when the persons happened to be women. Such cases were by no means rare in the area under notice.



Relief by spinning was thought out and was introduced slowly in some of the centres. The first of these was Khamargaon, where the tradition of spinning was in the memory of old women. But there was not much progress made before the middle of 1923, when vigorous attempts were made to popularise the Charkha in this area. To organise spinning was felt to be more difficult than all other previous stages through which the workers passed. It was an ordeal to them. Hitherto the eagerness was on the part of the people, but now the eagerness had got to be infused in them. To introduce spinning workers must be expert themselves. Most of the workers who had done hitherto creditably fell back in the new test. During the latter part of 1923 selected workers were trained in a centre opened for the purpose at Raghurampur, where practical training was given. By this time all the centres now extant were started except three—which have been opened in 1924. Three centres have since been closed for want of sympathy from local people. In 1923 the total yarn output in the five months of the initial stage of the nine centres was 61 maunds, the cloth woven was 10,000 yards in length and the total sale of Khaddar in the year was Rs. 4,896.

"In 1924, the output of yarn from 9 centres was 390 maunds, 90,300 yards were woven in the weaving centres and Rs. 76,225 was the total sale proceeds of Khaddar produced in the year.

"At present Khaddar work is being conducted from 10 spinning and 3 weaving centres; 199 villages are served by the workers and 2,987 Charkhas have been distributed among the same number of spinners. Most of the spinners are Mussalmans, Hindu population being very small in this area. They do not constitute even 5 per cent of the total spinners.

"Of 200 weavers in the weaving centres there are only 12 Hindu weavers. 104 weavers weave only pure Khaddar and their earnings vary from Rs. 110 to 150 per year. The maximum earnings of a spinner named Foyzan Bibi and a weaver Yosmat amounted to Rs. 7-13-3 and Rs. 31-0-0 a month respectively.

"At Nimaidighi, a village under Talora centre, where 130 Charkhas are now working, during the six months of the last year the total earning of the village by 122 Charkhas was Rs. 1,248 which comes to Rs. 1-11-0 per month for each spinner, and at Shaol, under the Tilakpur centre, 11 weavers earned Rs. 1,174 in six months, or one weaver on an average earned Rs. 18 per month. This is certainly a good income for a villager.



THE CHARKHA: AN INSURANCE AGAINST FAMINE

"The difficulties of the people of Bogra were not less acute when compared with those of 'Bill' area round about Atrai. Severe drought followed in the rear of the flood, 60 per cent of the crop in the greater portion of the Kahaloo and Dhupchanchia Thanas failed; Relief measures were urgently invoked; the District Magistrate of Bogra was impressed with the utility of Charkha as a Relief measure and he allotted to us this portion to look after. We conducted the operation from our Talora, Champapur, Durgapur and Tilakpur centres.

Talora ...	33 villages	Spinning Charge	Weaving charge	Ginning	Total
	424 Charkhas	Rs. 4,344	Rs. 4,519	Rs. 535	Rs. 9,398
Champapur ...	24 villages	385 Charkhas			Rs. 3,797
Durgapur ...	18 villages	135 Charkhas			Rs. 1,415
Tilakpur	8 villages	67 looms			Rs. 2,810

"Thus the grand total of money given as spinning, weaving and ginning charges in the above four centres for the 7 months from March to September 1924, is Rs. 17,420. It will thus be seen what an immense potentiality lies in the adoption of the Charkha not only against famine but as an additional income to the peasant folk during the slack season.

"The centres were opened on the Committee's own lands either purchased or rented from zamindars. The total area of our lands is 43 bighas of which 25 bighas are in one plot at Atrai. Speaking on an average, there are three sheds in each centre, one for workers' residence, one kitchen and one store room. Each centre has a working area from 25 to 30 sq. miles comprising about 10 to 30 villages. Villages are grouped together and each worker is entrusted with one group, having generally to attend to 100 wheels a week and is expected to visit 13 to 20 spinners a day. As soon as a spinner acquires some proficiency in spinning she is given a quantity of cotton sufficient for one week's consumption and exactly on the day of its expiry the worker re-visits her for collection, pays her a pice to the tola of 10 counts of the yarn spun. All the yarns thus collected are properly labelled and sent to the Base Office, where they are checked and sorted and sent to weaving centres.



Workers of those centres distribute them among weavers to be woven in accordance with orders from the Base. Woven stuffs again are all sent back to the Base to be washed, packed, and finally to be disposed of at Calcutta.

"The present strength of our workers is 62, nearly all of whom are tolerably expert in the art of spinning and its concomitants; 48 among them can spin 15 counts at the rate of 400 yards or above per hour. The highest speed attained, as has already been reported, was by a worker named Osman Kazi i. e. 820 yards of 20 counts and by Meajan Paramanik, 790 yards of 20 counts per hour."

Brilliant as the results are, they are nothing compared to what they are likely to be. A stage must be reached, when it will be no longer necessary to take cotton to the doors of the villagers and receive yarn from them but when they will get cotton and sell yarn in the ordinary course as they are doing in the Feni District in Bengal today and in several villages in the Punjab, Rajputana and elsewhere. The organisation of the Charkha seems to me to be so complete that I do not anticipate any difficulty in the evolution of the movement in the direction indicated.

This experiment marks too, real progress in the Hindu-Muslim Unity. A predominantly Hindu organisation is helping a predominantly Mussalman population with the sole purpose of improving their economic status. I had the good fortune to watch 32 volunteers spinning. All spun at the rate of over 400 yards per hour but the Mussalman spinner spun 720 yards per hour. Let me note that these volunteers are paid the market wage. Satish Babu, to whose genius the whole of this organization is due, told me that he had found by experience that it was better to pay the wholetime voluntary workers full wages, if one is to expect exact discipline from them. The wages he pays the 62 volunteers average Rs. 25 per month.

M. K. Gandhi

Young India,
4-6-1925.

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