



Day-to-Day with Gandhi

[SECRETARY'S DIARY]

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— *Narayan M. Desai*

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— *Publishers*



Publishers' Note

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

It would not be an exaggeration to say that such a publication is definitely an enriching addition to the world's literature. It is an irony of fate that Mahadevbhai could not live long to edit his diary himself. True to his devotion he died in harness. Late Shri 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 Narayn Desai for this generous offer.

Sarva Seva Sangh has already brought out 9 volumes of Hindi edition chronologically right from 1917.

The English translation of Mahadev Desai's Diary is being done by Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanath. We have published uptill now 7 volumes of English edition.

This Eighth volume is a bit late to our previous schedule. We propose to bring out the ninth volume before the end of this year.



Preface

One of the most touching and characteristic articles of Gandhiji is 'Indulgence or Self-Denial' (Appendix I) and deserves the first attention of the reader, as it reveals in a nutshell Gandhiji's many-sided personality—his indefatigable industry, the fervour of his feelings, of his pen, of his attitude towards work, of his faith in and surrender to God, etc.

That article (as well as the whole book) shows what his meaning of 'rest' imposed upon him by 'the elaborate instructions' of his doctor is. He must take rest indeed, but also give 'personal attention' to the Ashram in order to perform a necessarily long-delayed duty. A very simple statement that, but it means looking after a whole colony of inmates—men, women, and children, teachers and taught, masters and assistants, nurses and patients. And mostly he was himself the doctor of all the patients. That meant an effort to harmonize varied, often conflicting tastes, abilities, accomplishments etc. And it is Gandhiji who wants to look after the Ashram, i.e. one who cannot feel happy unless he goes into the minutest details of everything he handles, of the work done and to be done, of the management of all the departments, of the school, of the individual aspirations and joys and sorrows of the boys and girls etc. etc.

As if that is not enough work for his 'rest period,' he wants to put the affairs of the All-India Spinners Association on a sound basis, which, he himself says, requires 'constant supervision and attention to details.'

'He is a work-worm then,' somebody may coin the word and dismiss him. Let him pause before he denounces. That article shows with what balanced judgement he sacrifices what is dearest to his heart. It is best to quote those concluding portions as they give a good glimpse of the Inner Man in Gandhiji.

"But whether the Fund (Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, for his favourite cause, Khadi, be it remembered) is collected or not (in the absence of his tours), the decision is made. *Man Proposes, God disposes:*"*

This from one who lived a whole life of Herculean efforts and starry successes. The tours through Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam and Southern Peninsula have, therefore, to be cancelled. He explains the reason:



"*My unexpected* fast of seven days upset the man-made apple-cart. The Ancient of Days has asserted Himself once more and without warning set aside the whole plan. The friends (in Bihar etc.) will appreciate my difficulty."

After this perfect resignation to the Divine Will, he goes on:

"For me this year of grace is both an indulgence and a self-denial. It is an indulgence because I hope to fulfil the long cherished desire of being in the midst of boys and girls (they are the first) and the fellow-workers of the Ashram. It is a self-denial, because it was a pleasure to me to be with so many friends in the different provinces and be the recipient of the affection of the masses between whom and myself there is a bond which defies description but is never the less felt alike by them and me. *I see in the fellowship with them the God I adore.* I derive from that fellowship all my consolation, all my hope and all the sustained power I possess. If I had not realised that bond in South Africa now fully thirty years ago life would not be worth living for me. But I know that whether I live in the Ashram or whether in their midst, I work for them, think of them and pray for them. I want to live only for them and *so for myself*" (p. 368-69).

Who can deny that Gandhiji was a Bhakta (devotee) within and a man of action without?

Lest anybody hastily concludes that Gandhiji was a partisan who ignored, if not disliked, the rich, let him remember that the rich also always crowded round him and helped him with head, heart and hand (donations), and that he advised them to be 'trustees' of their property.

This long preface of the Preface was necessary in order to remove some unjust apprehensions of Gandhiji's spiritual stature. He was the Gita's *Yogi* who saw God in everybody and everything.

Thus Gandhiji confines himself to his Ashram and his town, Ahmedabad, during the whole period the book covers. There is no breath-taking, dynamic 'action' and so no spectacular achievement, but he withdraws into the solitude of his heart and struggles on that plain against the dark forces that always surge round the truth-seeker (even Jesus and the Buddha are not spared) and that have to be fought and conquered by God's grace.

But he cannot help throwing glances on the outer world, as he knows that all is one within and without and that his 'within' means not only his mind and other inward



implements, but also the two activities noted above. Hence, he expresses in his usual vigorous and terse way his reactions to the case of the untouchable in Madras who is acquitted on merely technical grounds of the offence of entering a Hindu temple. As everybody can profit from its perusal, let me quote a small paragraph.

"It is a curious situation. We resent, and properly, the treatment meted out to our countrymen in South Africa. We are impatient to establish Swaraj. But we, Hindus, refuse to see the incongruity in treating a fifth of our own co-religionists as worse than dogs. For dogs are not untouchables. Some of us now-a-days even keep them as drawing-room pets." (Appendix II).

Can anybody, with his hand on his conscience, say that there are no untouchables in his heart or in his society or country? Let us, therefore, learn to have something of Gandhiji's burning sympathy for the despised of any sort.

Was Gandhiji only a Bhakta and a man of action, but not a philosopher? For the answer, the reader may turn to three paragraphs (p. 48), from which only one sentence is quoted here:

"I have, therefore, no objection in calling it (the world) real and unreal and thus being called an *anekantwadi* or *Syadvadi*."

If that is not sufficient, he may read Gandhiji's article, 'What is natural' (p. 201), where he gives his views on the problem of free will vs. predestination.

But he was far more a Spirit out for self-realization than a philosopher weaving magical webs of ethereal thoughts. On p. 275 he says:

"Thus Dharma is a difficult and complex thing. The faithful may believe that there does exist some power. Call it God, or give it any other name, *but recognise It and be firmly set in Its recognition*. Our heart and mind must be fixed upon one thing only—truth and *ahimsa*. If we base our earthly life on that foundation, it will be saved from disintegration."

What follows is still more revealing:

" If we want to implant on our hearts the principle of universal love, which is the natural outcome of non-violence, we must believe that there is sin in us also, so long as a worst sinner exists in the world. The reason is that 'no man is an island'..... A man who wants to gain liberation releases himself from the clutches of the three



gunas (poise, activity and torpor) to the extent that his contact with and dependence upon them decreases-just as there is in science, 'Nature abhors vacuum.' (p. 276).

It is well-known that truth is God in Gandhiji's eyes. The article 'Truth vs. Brahmacharya' (p. 104) shows his frank acceptance of his imperfections:

"But the very thought of encouraging people to believe a fallible man to be infallible was more than I could bear.... Why should it not be sufficient for a man to know that I am a genuine seeker, that I am wide awake, and that my striving is ceaseless and unbending."

Even if, therefore, his devastating candour seems to do some harm to others, he insists that he would not fail to openly avow his error when he sees it.

Gandhiji's spiritual experiences come out in an illuminating way, when he speaks on the temptations of Jesus (p. 260).

"When he (a man) conquers the first temptation (of hunger), he gains mastery over his senses. That endows him with strength. That strength itself is the second temptation..... When a man thus gains mastery over strength, he becomes a master of *Siddhis* (miracle-working powers). These *Siddhis* are his third temptation." (p. 260).

These weekly discourses of Gandhiji on the Bible and his elucidations of the hymns sung in the Ashram are indications of the real Gandhi, but it is best to leave the reader to go through them and form his own judgment.

On a lower key is his bold statement on the problem of street-dogs, but it brings a hornet's nest about his ears, as his series of nine articles entitled, 'Is this Humanity' shows. Lovers of non-violence will find much to learn in them.

Another very interesting feature of this book is Gandhiji's views on Art. He regards that Art as the best which helps humanity in its onward march, namely, the art of living a noble life. He is no lover of 'Art for Art's sake.' The views are expressed in the form of an imaginary dialogue which in itself is a piece of literature from Shri Mahadev Desai's pen.

It would be doing grave injustice to him (M. D.), if no mention is made here of at least some of his brilliant articles. Borodada (p. 53) is not merely a lucid sketch of a revered old man's personality, but provides good material for patriots and philosophers alike.



He could not have come so close to the Mahatma, unless there was something of the Mahatma in him. Two articles, 'Natha Patel' (p. 87) and Zaverbhai Patel (p. 166) show Gandhian sympathy for the suppressed classes and Gandhian love for Khadi. But he was above all a sincere God-lover like Gandhiji. His two articles on 'Tukaram's Biography' (p. 178 to 185 and p. 195 to 200) and another on 'A Saint's Ascension' (p. 309 to 320) are a treat to the reader and show that M. D. is at his best when he recounts the glory of a saint.

C. Rajagopalachariar was an advocate all over. Though his plea for the untouchable in the Temple-Entry case at Madras is at once clever and interesting, he shines most brilliantly in this book in his speeches at Nagpur where his forceful advocacy converts even the sceptic intelligentsia to the Khadi cult (p. 346 to 356). This is his call to the educated:

"Try to live on Rs. 2-8-0 per month and visualize the life of living India—the India of the villages." (p. 354)

In answer to the oft-repeated argument that Khadi is a retrograde step, he has this stunning rejoinder to give. "Yes, as retrograde as asking a dishonest man to go back to honesty." (p. 356)

To give a fitting close to the Preface, one of the most interesting and instructive parts of the book has reserved for the last place. Shri Vinobaji Bhave is not merely a scholar and a *Bhoodan* leader of world-fame, he is Gandhiji's spiritual successor also. His expositions on the Gita and the Upanishads (p. 17, 19, 21, 41, 45) are sure to impress and enlighten the reader.

—Translator

* Italics are mine everywhere—Translator.



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Travel Diary of a Philosopher

'The sculptor owes the enormous esteem in which he is held to the fact that our body, thanks to its having been clothed throughout many centuries, has lost the power of its innate expressive values, for which reason we regard it as a revelation when an artist realises it in his creations. The Poet owes it to the fact that most people have lost almost all their sensitivity and must be shown an alien sensation, which awakens a sympathetic echo in their souls, in order to feel.'

'It was not for nothing that Socrates was the ugliest of Greek-it is not without reason that we are surprised to find intelligence in a perfectly beautiful woman. Physical beauty and individual significance do not only belong to different dimensions, they are antagonistic so far as, everywhere in nature, where the type predominates the individual suffers accordingly. Beauty in its real sense is always super-individual, that is to say typified beauty, and a type is generally violated by strong individualities.'

(From 'Travel Diary of a Philosopher', p. 24-25, by Count Keyserling, translated by J. H. Riss.)



3.1.1926

Letter to Herr W. Marcher (Gollingen):

"I think part of what you have heard is true, i.e., success of my movement is undoubtedly threatened, or more accurately, it appears to be threatened. But it is not true to say that I have been compelled to draw back any single one of my ideas. I remain just as firm in my faith in them as where I started.

"The main principle of my method being universal, there is no doubt that you can apply them as well as we. But a successful application of these principles means a change in the mentality of people."

A rather simple-minded reader of Gandhiji's Autobiography asked him, "Had you not better dropped the reference to your father's lustful nature?" Gandhiji's reply:

@ "I have not written about my father without careful thought and reverence. The reference is relevant to my own character. I do not think that the highest form of affection needs blinding one's eyes to the blemishes of loved ones or their suppression from the public when their expression becomes relevant."



5.1.1926

Vinoba came here (Sabarmati Ashram) this week, made some remarkable comments on the Upanishad. Mahadevbhai wrote the following article based on these comments in *Navajivan* d. 19.1.1926).

Upanishad¹

Kenopanishad is one of the shortest of the 10 chief Upanishads. Ishopanishad is shorter still. In the Kenopanishad the *rishi* (*guru* or sage) explains to the disciple the knowledge of God, of Brahma, of Paramatma (Supreme Soul), in detail. He tells him also what true knowledge by which a man gains *Mukti* (final beatitude) means. But after all this elucidation,

the disciple again tells the preceptor: उपनिषदं मां ब्रूहीति: meaning, 'tell me the Upanishad.' The preceptor is amazed at this remark of the disciple at the end of all his dissertation. He answers: उक्त ते उपनिषद ब्राह्मीं वाव ते उपनिषदमब्रूमेति: i.e. "you have been already explained the Upanishad. I have told you of that same Upanishad which deals with Brahma." But the

disciple is not satisfied, he repeats his request. That makes the preceptor ponder deeper and then he understands why the disciple was not satisfied and persisted in his query. "Yes," he realizes "I told him what is Brahma and what the knowledge of Brahma means. I have talked to him what the final attainment means, what the goal to be gained is, and things pertaining to a perfected soul (*siddha*), but I have not told him *how* a *sadhak*² becomes a perfect soul (*siddha*). Without telling him that, any talk of the goal is incomplete, if not unnecessary. What the disciple should be told is not the Upanishad of the Soul Perfected, but the Upanishad of the *sadhak*, i.e. 'the knowledge of the means whereby he can attain the final beatitude.' The preceptor thus realized the reason for the disciple's dissatisfaction and told him the Upanishad of the *sadhak*:

तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा |

वेदाः सर्वाऽङ्गानि सत्यमायतनम् ||

Which means the Upanishad of the Perfected Soul, i.e. the experiential knowledge of Brahma, is gained by means of *tapa* (religious austerity), *dama* (self-restraint), ceaseless *karma* (right action), *swadhyaaya* (repetition of study or



continuous practice of the Vedas and truth. He thus characterised *tapa*, *dama* and unceasing *karmayoga* as the bases of *sadhana*, the repeated study of the Vedas, i.e. of the scriptures, as its constituent part, but the observance of truth in mind, speech and action as the very abode, the very home, of *sadhana*. "No matter if the bases, *tapo* and *dama*, were there, and if even the component, the study of the Vedas, was there but if the heart, the home of the *sadhana*, namely truth, were not present, the whole *sadhana* becomes lifeless. The prime necessity for a *sadhak* is, therefore, to understand this Upanishad of the *sadhana* and act upon it, since the *sadhya* will of itself come up to him in its natural course, if the effort is all right. The same thing has been emphasised in the Bhagwad Gita:

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते॥

(To these, ever in tune with Me, worshipping Me with affectionate devotion, I give the yoga of pure thinking, whereby they come to Me).

In this couplet the Lord has given an eternal assurance or promise of success to all *sadhaks*. The words themselves are the Lord's promise and by them He binds Himself with His devotees forever. He says in effect: "Keep your intellect clean, make it pure by self-restraint and firm faith, and then, take it from Me, I will give you the *yoga* of right thinking i.e. imbue your intellect with spiritual wisdom. Whoever purifies his mind by loving devotion to Me, to him I give a *Yoga* whereby he attains Me. He tells us, "Don't bother about other things. Simply make your intellect pure by means of strenuous effort, self-restraint, devotion to duty, repeated study, and to crown all these, by truth: Then your *sadhana* is sure to meet with success. *Mukti* (final beatitude personified) will then be at your service like a housemaid."

Vinoba has made it a rule to say something on the Bhagwad Gita in the morning and on other subjects in the evening. This is the substance of his discourse on the Gita this morning:

In the 18th Canto, the Lord shows three kinds of '*shraddha*' (faith), three of '*buddhi*' (intellect) and three of '*dhriti*' (firmness). Out of these, I shall say something about the three kinds of *buddhi*. The scripture has been upheld as the final authority, but the intellect that understands the scripture's meaning is not all of the right kind. The knowledge of a man whose intellect is *sattwic* (virtuous or excellent) is true knowledge; of a man with *rajasi* (endowed with passion) intellect is either partly true



or vitiated by want of conviction. But the knowledge of a man with *tamasi* (ignorant or dark) *buddhi* is decisive, and has no doubts about its truth but it is rooted in illusion. This last may be termed Satanic intellect. Milton's Satan is a very apposite example of this kind of intellect. Persons having the *rajasi* kind of intellect are assailed by doubts.

1. "Said to be from उप (upa)—नि (ni) सद्—(sad) = 'knowledge derived from sitting at the feet of the preceptor. But according to Indian authorities it means, 'to destroy ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit and cutting off bonds of worldly existence.' Another meaning is, 'True knowledge regarding the Supreme Spirit'—Apte's Dictionary.

2. *Sadhak*—One who strives to gain something, *Sadhana*—His effort, *Sadhan*—His means, *Siddha*—One who has gained it, *Sadhya*—The Goal to be gained.



9-1-1926

During the evening discourse Vinoba said:

"I have been asked to go through the booklet on the abridged form of the marriage ceremony and select *mantras* that may be helpful to us. How can I be interested in any form of marriage ceremony, abridged or complete, when I am not interested *in* marriage itself? There are some *mantras* (sacred verses) that have no bearing on marriage. Some others are merely for warming up enthusiasm, for instance the song of the woman grinding corn with a hand-mill. Some others express sentiments that tend to harmonious living like the *mantra* सहनाववतु, सहनौ भुनक्तु etc. (May He protect us both, may He feed us both etc. Originally a joint prayer by the *Guru* and his disciple). There are some other Sanskrit verses which do not seem to be of any worth. Some are even objectionable as they are not written in chaste Sanskrit. You can use even filthy language in Sanskrit. But one verse caught my eye:

धर्मैकार्थे च कामे च नातिचरामि, नातिचरामि, नातिचरामि |

"That means I will not commit any transgression in matters of *dharma* (religious and social duties), *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (love). In these three things (out of 4 *purusharthas*= classes of human exertion) I will not act in an unfriendly manner. That also is a negative abstention not a positive injunction. Whatever I do in matters of *kama* or *artha* or *dharma* I will do in loving co-operation with only you and none else." That is all the words mean.

"But the fourth kind of human exertion, the one for attaining *mukti* (redemption) has been dropped altogether in the vow. And it seems to me that the omission is deliberate and significant. In the other three kinds of action, if ever I do anything, I shall do it in loyal comradeship, says the vow. But if I (the bride or the bridegroom) want to strive for *mukti*, I am entirely free to go it alone. In that matter it is not at all necessary for me to get your (husband's or wife's) approval or wait for your company. This freedom of action alone justifies the Gopis' inordinate love for Lord Krishna as being no breach of the marriage vow. Since they were in love with the Lord God Himself, they did not, and had no need to, think of their husbands or their marriage vow. And that is why, even such a devout law-giver as Narada (a devotee of the Lord Krishna) has extolled the love of the Gopis by making it the subject of comparison as regard the ideal love for God in his simile: 'यथा वर्जनारिणाम्' (like the love of the cowherd women of Vraja, i.e. Gopis). And so has Shaandilya (well-known sage



of the cult of devotion) said: यथा व्रजवल्लभीनाम् (like the love-lorn maids of Vraja) ; and Kabir (a famous mediaeval saint-poet honoured by both Hindus and Muslims) has gone to the length of saying, "Millions of Kabirs were swept away in the flood of the love of Vraja's Gopis." He means that the piled-up love of millions of Kabir was nothing before the love of the Gopis. Hence, that vow धर्मे चार्थे च etc.—is very significant and suggests a deep meaning.

"In other vows I am not interested."



10.1.1926

In his exposition of the three kinds of *dhriti* (steadfastness) as shown in the 18th canto of the Bhagvad Gita, Vinoba said this morning:

"After giving all other characteristics of *kshetra* (field), the author of the Gita says in the 13th Canto—संघातश्चेतना धृतिः (XIII-6) (and *sanghata*, *chetana*, and *dhriti*). Here, the meaning of the word *dhriti* depends upon *sanghata* and *chetana*. *Sanghata* means collection or a piling up or some combination for a definite object. *Chetana* does not mean *chaitanya* (consciousness) but the vitality that makes the body function, while *sanghata* is that energy which keeps the body steady. (*Sanghata* thus means static energy and *chetana* dynamic energy.) And *dhriti* is the conserving or holding energy—like the bridle that guides a running horse. We may call *sanghata* the saddle, *chetana* the whip, and *dhriti* the reins (of our life-horse)."

At the evening prayer Vinoba said:

संध्या झाली,
संदेह माझा गेला,
आत्माराम हृदयीं,
प्रग टला हो ॥—आ०

"*Sandhya* (twilight or unison with God) has come,
My *Sandeha* (Doubt) has gone away,
Atmaram has shone forth in the Heart."

I read this (Marathi) verse 15 years ago and set it to tune myself. In those times of ecstasy I interpreted that verse to mean: *sandhya* (unison with the Oversoul) has already taken place. I need not now perform *sandhya* (twilight rites of worship) since my *sandeha* (spiritual doubt) has been dissolved and *Atmaram* (the Self within) has manifested Itself. But today I understand the verse differently. I now take it to mean: As the result of *sandhya* (unison with the Divine) my doubt has evaporated and now the Self within shines bright in the Heart. Tukaram has said "I was a devotee and now have become Pandurang (the Lord Himself¹) and yet I

go on worshipping Him in hymns, because it has become my nature to do so. In the Bhagwad Gita it has been said:



कर्मणौव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः |

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ||

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः |

स यत्प्रमाणां कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते || (गीता ३|२०-२१)

For through action alone Janaka² and others achieved perfection; even with a view to the guidance of mankind thou must act.

Whatever the best man does is also done by other men; what example he sets the world follows.

* * *

Gnyaneshwar comments on this: 'The man of knowledge must make it a point to be active in work.' Shankaracharya says, 'Just as music continues to vibrate in the memory even after it ends, so even after a man's *sadhana* ends successfully and he becomes a *siddha*, the echoes of his *sadhana* continue to be heard.' Ramadas (a mediaeval saint) in his "Verses on the Mind" goes even further and says even the state of *mukti*

is kept up only by *sadhana*. That means *sadhana* is needed both in the beginning and after the end.

[The following article by M. D. was published in "Navajivan" d. 10-1-1926]

Religion Insulted!

In telling the 'Self-spun Story' (in 'Young India' dated 7-1-1926), Sri Rajagopalachariar has melted the hearts of those who would not wear Khadi on the ground that it was rough. But he did not know that the whilst he was graphically narrating tragic talc, another such story was calling out for his help. There is a holy town Tirupati near Madras. It is a place as renowned in South India for its redeeming power as Tarkeshwar in Bengal. People have the faith that a visit to that temple redeems the most fallen soul. Nearby is a similar holy place, Tiruchinnur, which too is invested with the same holy power. A depressed class member of the Mala caste went into that temple and had the *darshan* of the deity. He was therefore charged under Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code, under which an insult to religion or a defilement of a sacred place is punished. The Magistrate held the accusation proved and sentenced him to a fine of Rs. 75 or, in default, one month's rigorous imprisonment.



Nobody need wonder how the Magistrate had the cheek or the heart to condemn the man. Let me give the whole case as viewed by that august upholder of justice in his own words:

"The accused has been going to the pilgrimage of the Tiruchinnur Temple for the last 10 years. On the 13th October last he went there according to his usual practice. Witness No. 3 for the plaintiff is the shopkeeper at whose shop the accused has been buying a coconut and camphor regularly. This time also he bought them and asked the shopkeeper, "Are Malas allowed to go into the temple?" The shopkeeper said they were not and then the accused went away. But within a short time plaintiff No. 2 saw the accused among the "garbagudi" crowd. He gave this coconut and camphor to the temple priest and put 4 annas on the *arati*-tray (a tray having lights waved before the deity) as his gift. He was then given *prasad* (something given as a mark of the grace of the deity) and then he went away.

Plaintiff witness No. 4 was standing nearby at the time when the accused was inquiring of the shopkeeper if Malas were permitted to enter the temple. The inquiry raised his suspicion. To find out the accused he got into the crowd of worshippers and saw the accused near the '*suvarna-dwaar*' (gold-plated door). Then plaintiff witness No. 5 saw him coming out of the temple with a piece of coconut (given as *prasad*) in hand.

Plaintiff witness No. 6 is the 'mirasdar' (Officer-in-charge) of the temple. He and plaintiff witness No. 2 submit that Malas are forbidden to enter into a Hindu temple and that if they do, it becomes polluted and unfit for worship till purificatory ceremony is performed. They attest that the temple was purified accordingly on that date because of the accused's entrance. Plaintiff witness No. 7 is the Sanskrit Pandit of the temple and holds the Mahamahopadhyaya' (=very great scholar) degree. He also affirms that Malas are prohibited from entering a Hindu temple and quoted scriptural texts in support.

"Moreover, the accused himself admits that after buying a coconut and camphor from the shopkeeper he went to the place where the chariot is halted, i.e., where he used to offer his worship. But just then, he heard people coming towards him and loudly shouting in chorus 'Govinda', 'Govinda', (Lord Krishna's name). Their fervent cries raised his devotional spirit to an ecstasy and when he came to, he found himself standing near the flag-pillar in the temple. Then he was seized with fear and ran away out of the temple."



With what minute details the whole charge has been described! What a pitiable story comes out inadvertently from the language of the convicting judge! Since he quotes the accused's own statement, the judge himself indirectly admits that the accused is a man of truth to the core—is as truthful as the judge himself and the plaintiff's witnesses! And what was this truth-speaker's crime? Not only did he go as far into the temple as the gold-plated door, but also put 4 annas in the tray of lights! Terrible crime indeed!—committed to boot after assuring himself from the shopkeeper that Malas were not allowed to enter the temple and pollute it! And how is the pollution of the temple proved? Because a purificatory ceremony is performed afterwards and because a *Pandit* holding the degree of 'Mahamahopadhyaya' stands before the judge, quotes some scriptural text and gives his verdict that the temple is defiled by a Mala's entry. That proved the crime upto the hilt and any further probe was superfluous!

This atrocious story reached the ears of Sri C. Rajagopalachariar.

He was stunned. Friends urged him: "Will you not kindly go there and help the accused as an appeal is going to be filed?" He went. The defence pleader in the court of appeal thought he had better got the case conducted by C.R. himself. (C. R. was a leading lawyer till he non-co-operated). When requested by him, C. R. (Rajaji) replied, "I may argue the accused's case as a friend, not as a defence-lawyer. Ask the Magistrate. Does he permit me?" The Magistrate agreed and Rajaji conducted the appeal (at Chitoor Court on 23-12-1925).

Rajagopalachariar appeared in a court after nearly seven years. But no, I am skipping over one important event. If we leave out of count his presence in a court as an accused and his conviction ending in imprisonment during the civil disobedience movement, this was his re-appearance after 7 years. To the question why he presented himself in the court though he was a strict non-co-operator and fully believed in the boycott of courts, I shall come presently. But first let me continue the case-history and give a substance of his arguments. The lower court had not allowed the accused even to put up his defence under a queer plea. The accused had begged that Ganapati Shastri (a reputed Sanskrit scholar-and-poet) of Tiruvannamallai, Swami Shraddhanandji (a leading Arya Samajist Sanskrit Scholar) and Gandhiji be called as defence witnesses as exponents of the scripture on his behalf. The Magistrate refused to call even one of the three on the ground that the accused wanted only to waste the court's time by calling in these witnesses. Rajagopalachariar said: "Is it justice to allow



the plaintiff to put up a Sanskrit scholar to plead his case and refuse the defence the opportunity to rebut his arguments? When moreover he rejected the defence application to call the cited witnesses on his behalf, the Magistrate had observed: "It was a belief established by custom that the entry of Malas into a Hindu temple meant an insult to religion." That means that the Lower Court had already decided to convict the accused even before the case was heard! This one fact established the whole proceedings in the Lower Court as illegal.

The appellate Magistrate interrupted and asked Rajaji: "Did Mahatma Gandhi advance his claim to enter the temple at Kanyakumari?" Rajaji: "I am coming to that question and for it will show how and why the accused entered the temple." Continuing the case Rajaji dealt with the accused's object in entering the temple. He affirmed that the accused never intended to insult anybody and had gone there only for worship. In the faith and devotion in which he went into the temple, there was nothing of malice prepense." The Magistrate : "But worship and devotion also must have some limit." Rajagopalachariar: "I hope Your Honour is not speaking the language of an athiest. Has there ever been a limit to the fervour of devotion? But the fact is that the accused always kept himself out of the temple. Only this time the repeated chants of 'Govindaa', 'Govindaa' inebriated him and he too ran with the crowd into the temple. The man's person was not unclean. He had worn clean clothes and had on his body all the impressions of the 12 letters (Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya—Om, Bows to the Lord Vasudev) and the wheel like all other devout Vaishnavas. His object was only to go as near the Holy Image as possible. He has done nobody any harm, raised no halabaloo It is not known that anybody was pained at his sight in the temple. The poor man was quietly going to Madras after the *darshan*, when the police arrested him! "

Rajaji submitted a third plea. How is an insult to religion legally proved? Can you say that religion was insulted just because the temple was purified by somebody by sprinkling water? The accused did not intend to insult religion. All he did was to steal the Lord from the temple, keep Him in the casket of his heart and walk away. Is that any crime?

"And religion is one thing, castes and communities another. It is possible that the feelings of a community may have been hurt by this incident, but there is no law in the Penal Code to punish an act that hurts the feelings of a community."

The Magistrate: "But he can be charged for criminal trespass."



Rajagopalachariar answered that argument too. "Here there was nobody to stop him. Everyone saw him going in, but nobody protested or prevented him."

The Magistrate: "May not the entry of this untouchable have offended the feeling of the temple priest and others?"

Rajaji: "But how? There is not a shred of evidence to prove it. Is the fact of the purification of the temple a proof? No witness has come forward to show how he was pained."

Though he stood for the accused as only a friend, Rajaji was every inch a lawyer once. He cited precedents from law-books, and quoted the observations of former judges to the effect that the Section was applicable only to clear instances of insults to a deity. Adoration of a deity has never been stigmatised as a crime, he said. He referred also to the custom prevailing in a famous temple of Ramanujacharya, where untouchables were allowed entry on a particular day. The Magistrate himself quoted an instance of another such temple. If the entry of an untouchable was an insult to religion and so a crime, Rajaji argued, what a contradiction it was to freely let untouchables commit that crime on a particular day! The Magistrate admitted: "Yes, this case can stand only if insult to religion is proved."

But Rajagopalachariar was not the man to leave the matter at the point of an individual untouchable's acquittal on technical grounds. He appealed to the judge: "Are you going to use the Criminal Code as a handle for the preservation of untouchability?" And then this was his final argument: "Forget for a moment the question of the accused's *bonafides* in entering the temple. Even if he wanted to establish the untouchable's right, the section under which he is charged is inapplicable. That section is solely and wholly for insulting religion, it does not provide any punishment for demanding a right. If somebody snatches an article from someone else on the ground that it belongs to him, the charge of theft cannot be proved against him. 30 years ago the situation was different. But today the untouchable's claim is *bona fide* as there are many who make that claim and many Hindus who accept it."

The Magistrate: "Is an untouchable's claim to enter a temple *bona fide*?"

Sri Rajagopalachariar: "Had there been no agitation on the question of untouchability, it would have been a different matter. But today people have seen the truth and hence the claim for entry into Hindu temples is *bona fide*."



The Magistrate: "If the people have seen the truth, legislative bodies would take cognisance and do what the people want."

Sri Rajaji: "Law-makers have not yet seen that truth. The claim nevertheless is honestly made."

The Court: "You must then file a civil suit to establish the claim."

Sri Rajaji: "If your Honour doesn't consider me perverse, I wish to make my claim right here. The criminal court is specially suitable for such a case. When, in the year of Grace, 1925, the whole untouchable class makes an honest claim to be regarded as Hindus, its demand for entry into Hindu temples must also be taken as *bona fide* and not as an insult to religion. Let me repeat, I appeal to Your Honour to believe in the veracity of the accused's statement and interpret it in that light. I pray, you will accept that he was a genuine devotee, that he entered the temple in devotional ecstasy, and that he is not a liar. But instead of acquitting him on the ground that the alleged insult has not been proved in his case, I wish you will acquit him on the ground that no insult can possibly be involved in his act, since he entered the temple on a *bona fide* claim. He is an untouchable but he believes that he is a Hindu and as such he believes also that he has the right to worship in a Hindu temple. If he is convicted for the offence of entering the temple, there are many Hindus who will come forward to substantiate his right. And he has made that claim in perfect peacefulness. He did not enter by breaking the door or even opening it. The charge of insulting religion is absolutely untenable here. In view of the facts that removal of untouchability has been made a mass movement by Mahatma Gandhi, that it has been made a plank of the Congress programme, that there has been a great awakening among the so-called untouchable castes, and that many high-caste Hindus have begun to regard them as touchables and Hindus, the right of this depressed class Hindu to worship in a Hindu temple should be regarded as honestly claimed."

The Court: "I accept that right must be accepted in law, but to say that it has been accepted is a different proposition."

The Magistrate delivered his judgment the next day. He stated that the charge of religious insult or of hurting any body's feelings was not proved and that the accused was, therefore, acquitted.



The Magistrate thus did not release the accused on the ground that the entry of a depressed class member into a Hindu temple did not involve any insult to religion, but on the ground that in that particular case that insult was not proved. After finishing all his legal arguments, Rajagopalachariar tried to awaken the conscience of that Hindu Magistrate, but how could a man with his eyes immersed day in and day out in law-tomes, look up and come out of his mind's groove?

I have given the arguments of Sri Rajagopalachariar in great detail in order that Hindu conscience, when it comes to know of such incidents, may awaken and take the proper view of the question. It is definitely no insult to Hinduism, if a depressed class Hindu enters a Hindu temple. It is rather the other way around. Hindu society makes itself the butt of the world's ridicule and reduces its own religion to a mockery, when it is still possible for it to frame up such a case in order to send a depressed Hindu to jail and lengthy legal arguments have to be advanced in a court to save him.

Now let me come to the question why, inspite of being a leading non-co-operator, Sri Rajagopalachariar went to a court and defended the accused. One has got to discuss the question because it has been raised rather loudly. Even those who keep the depressed classes miles away from themselves are among those who say that Sri Rajagopalachari should not have gone to the court, as he was a staunch non-co-operator.

In a long letter to me d. 24.12.1925, Rajaji has put his case very beautifully. I quote some extracts:

"I was highly incensed when I came to know that an untouchable was condemned for his 'crime' of devotional ecstasy in which he got into the temple along with other devotees. I was called to Chittoor. The lawyer asked me, "Will you not plead in defence of this innocent victim?" I said, "I would—if I was allowed to stand for him as a friend." The court gave the permission. I had nothing on me to distinguish me as a lawyer. I was bare-headed, with only a shirt and my usual Khadi-sheet as an outer covering. On a special occasion, I think, every rule can best be observed in its true spirit only by its breach in letter. Here is a God's good man—a devotee with all the insignia of a *Vaishnava* on his body and a coconut and camphor in hand—rushing into the temple in an excess of devotion, worshipping his God and then going away without making any fuss. And then, when he is quite outside the precincts, the police arrest him for 'polluting the temple and insulting religion' and get him punished. As I thought over this blatant injustice, I resolved not to stick to our principle of non-co-operation



with law courts in letter. I thought I would further the cause of removal of untouchability by telling the court what I felt about this so-called crime of the untouchable.

"The poor man was neither a *satyagrahi* nor a reformer and in no sense a fighter. He was only an humble untouchable, who regarded himself a Hindu and believed in the *Hindu dharma*. He had the implicit faith that every year the God in the temple was calling him for offering his devotion and contribution to the *arati* (waiving of lights) waived at His altar. I could not gather the courage to advise him to suffer quietly the punishment of the court. He was not a man of stern stuff—not a *satyagrahi*, who would suffer the punishment and go on repeating the crime. And we have not yet identified ourselves so closely with this class of simple devout untouchables that we can put the sword of *satyagraha* in their hand for their defence. Many of the present (untouchable) rebels against customs and usages do not know what God is. They are clamouring for equality in religion, not for the right to worship in holy places considered sacrosanct as Hindu temples, but for political rights. But this humbled untouchable was of a different kind. He used to go to the temple every year for the last many years and would go back to his home after leaving in all humility his poor man's contribution of coconut and camphor at the outer door. It is possible that this year he may have heard the echoes of the cry of the Gandhian age and the heart-strings of his humble soul may have been thrilled. The poor man even asked somebody, "Can Malas go into the temple?" The coconut dealer said they could not. The man did not dispute the point. He was going to return after only putting his present near the temple flag-staff, as usual, but just then he heard the resounding cry, 'Govindaa', "Govindaa" raised by pilgrims to the Tirupati temple. That crowd of pilgrims was running the whilst it was uttering this exhilarating cry. As it was passing by, this man was infected with its zeal and he got into it. With those of others his coconut and camphor also were allowed to be offered to the deity. Everything ended quite all right and, as the poor man was going back to his house in Madras, he was arrested on the way, charged in the court, and convicted. Who can fathom the thoughts that thronged in this humble untouchable's mind and swept him into the temple at that blissful moment?"

Religion and life are not different water-tight compartments. A religion that does not impress itself upon, or is not co-related with, our daily life is an airy nothing and has no real value. If a man or *muni* (a man observing silence) chanting the *Gayatri mantra* in seclusion sees another person burning in a fire or at the point of death, and



if he, even on hearing the man's cry of distress, does not rush to his help but continues chanting the *Gayatri* we shall not call him religious, we shall only call him inert. It was Rajagopalachariar's duty to save that accused Panchama (=belonging to the fifth class, i.e., an untouchable). That duty was greater than the one of adhering to a literal interpretation of non-co-operation. He could not stick to his non-co-operation principle, if he kept to the letter and gave the go-by to its spirit. If a religious rule is not deliberately broken in cases like the above, the rule proves useless, becomes a matter of dead routine.

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1. According to Hindu thought everyone can attain, not Godliness merely but, Godhead also, become God Himself by incessant concentration on the Lord—just as a caterpillar becomes a wasp, by its one-pointed thinking.
 2. A philosopher-king of Mithila who, owing to his complete self- realization along with incessant selfless activity, is always cited in India as an ideal man of action. His sense of 'mine' was extinguished so completely that when he was told that his capital was on fire he said: "If Mithila is on fire, nothing that is mine is on fire."



11-1-1926

In his morning discourse Vinoba explained '*tamasi dhriti*' as given in the following verse of the Gita:

यथा स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च |
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा पार्थ तामसी ॥
(*Gita*, XVIII-35)

That intellect which rigidly adheres to vain dreams, fear, grief, despair and pride is perverted and springs from the darkness of ignorance. We call a man who thus persists in his erring attitude a man of no sense or of evil mind, but that is not right. The man does possess *dhriti* (steadfastness) but it clings to bad qualities like inertia, sleepiness, fear etc. No man is really helpless. It is possible to give up bad habits of fear, of sleepiness etc., but the man who tenaciously sticks to them is a man of this *dhriti* of dark ignorance. There is a character, Mr. Obstinate, in "Pilgrim's Progress." That man has this *dhriti*. Contrarily, if an attitude holds fast to truth and brings great good, that could be *satyagraha* of the highest type. But if untruth mixes up into one's rigid adherence to anything, that attitude is *tamasi* or one of rooted perversion. Such a man will persist in his ignorant thoughts and actions. Men who get themselves involved in numerous worldly entanglements do nothing but *tamasa-tapa* (worst kind of exertions) and have *tamasi dhriti*. Bhartrihari says: तपो न तप्तं वयमेव तप्ताः। (We did not light the fire of austere purifying penances, but were ourselves consumed in the fire of crematorium). Such people, instead of lighting any holy fire, are themselves burnt. They do not perform any religious penance.



12-1-1926

The hymn sung today was “जाके प्रिय न राम वैदेही.....” etc. (All those who do not love the Lord: Rama and His spouse Sita here: must be shunned like the worst of enemies, even though they happen to be the nearest friends and relatives).

Vinoba spoke on the thoughts that this hymn provoked in him:

"It is said that Tulsidas sent that poem to Mirabai in order to console her, when she said she was persecuted by her relatives in-law, because of her love for Lord Krishna and their alienation from Him. But Tulsidas and Mirabai were not contemporaries. There was a big gap of time between them. We may therefore take it that Mirabai may have gained solace and strength from this popular hymn. Tukaram also sings in the same strain:

जेणों नारायणीं घडे अंतराय | होत्कां बाप माय त्यजावीं तीं |
 येर प्रिया पुत्र धनाकोण लेखा | करिती तीं दुःखा पात्र शत्रु ||
 प्रह्लाद जनक विभीषणों बंधु | राज्य माता निंदू भरतें केली |
 तुका म्हणे सर्वधर्म हरिचे पाय | आणिक उपाय दुःखमूल ||

"Those who lead you away from the Lord must be given up though they be parents. What then to say of your friend, wife, son, or wealth? They are only enemies as they make us miserable. That was why Prahlad¹ gave up his father, Vibhishana, his brother, and Bharata condemned his queen-mother. Everyone of these *dharmas* towards others must be laid at the feet of the Lord. Tukaram says, any other action will only lead to sorrow."

Tukaram has thus given the very same instances of Prahlad, Vibhishana and Bharata as have been given by Tulsidas. All devotees of God have thus played on this same tune. But the root of this idea is in the Bhagwad Gita. In Canto XVIII-66 There is this line: “सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मोमेकं शरणं ब्रज |” It means that surrender to the Lord is the one highest *dharma* of everyone. There may be many *dharmas*— as of mother, father, son etc.—but all these *dharmas* have their limits, as they are superseded by the overwhelming *dharma* of devotion and surrender to the Lord. This last *dharma* has no bounds. The fact that the *dharma* of *mukti* is not included among those which bind both bride and bridegroom to the vows of co-operation shows this same thing, viz., no



vow can come in the way of an individual's *sadhana* for *mukti*. The origin of that verse in the Bhagwad Gita can be traced to this verse in the Upanishad:

अत्र पिता अपिता भवति माता अमाता |
लोका अलोका देवा अदेवा वेदा अवेदा: ||

Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad (4-3-1922)

His father ceases to be his father, his mother mother, his kinsmen kinsmen, his Gods Gods, his Vedas Vedas (of that man who is consumed with the one passion of attaining *mukti*).

" In this verse the real *dharma* of man has been raised to its highest pitch. It is man's *dharma* to gain *mukti*. None can stand in the way of that Supreme Dharma. If a nationalist defends his violence on the ground that he did it for the sake of his country, the Lord will rebuke him and say, "Did I create you a nationalist?" Similarly, He will ask a son, "Did I create you a son? No. I created you a Man. Why don't you think of your duty as a Man? First think of that duty."

Khwaja's² letter. He is sunk deep in debt to the tune of Rs. 60,000. He cannot now go on without resuming his legal practice. Nobody cares for the Jamia. A never casts a glance at it. B is immersed in his medical practice. C has many irons in the fire. D simply does not care. E is engrossed in the Khilafat. (All of these leaders were pillars of Jamia, the National University of Aligarh). Why then, he asks, should Gandhiji be so particular about keeping the Jamia alive? He adds, he non-co-operated at the command of Gandhiji and requests him to allow him to give it up and resume legal practice.

Gandhiji's reply:

@ "My dear friend,

"I have your pathetic letter. I must not strive with you any longer.³ Much as it is against the grain, I must resign myself to your severing your official connection with the Jamia and, what is worse, your re-joining the Bar. The idea of your having a debt of Rs. 60,000/- is unbearable. And is it not tragic to think that you expect to wipe that huge debt in your two or three years' work at the Bar? As if our poor countrymen were not sufficiently ground down under the heels of unscrupulous officials and lawyers, we, their servants, should also take part in the loot! But it cannot be. So I must shut



my eyes and be party to one of the noblest of men doing the thing from which my whole soul recoils with horror.

"Yes, you have my full permission to leave the Jamia and rejoin the Bar. But some day I expect you to do what the Arabs of yore did, or, if it is the same thing to you, what your ancient countrymen did—leave all to serve humanity, i.e., God. I cannot conceive the possibility of your always remaining in the life to which you would now return. But even if you did,

you may believe me when I tell you that I shall love you all the same because you are honest and God-fearing. I am sending your letter to Hakim Saheb (one of the Trustees), urging him to let you go.

"P.S. Remember me to Khurshed Begum who, I hope, is quite well."

Letter to Rajagopalachariar:

@ "My dear C.R.

"I have your letter. Shankaral will see to the tour.

"I am dealing in this week's *'Young India'* with the appeal you argued. It was perfect. And, of course, you were right in taking it up. Mahadev has given, I think, 5 columns to it in *'Navajivan'*.⁴ The current *'Navajivan'* is all you. For it contains also your 'Handspun Story' which I liked very much.

"But I am concerned about your prohibition campaign. Of its intrinsic value I have no doubt. But we cannot force it upon the Swarajists. The others taking it up means nothing. And as we do not and may not enter the Councils, we cannot but reason, and that too privately, with the Swarajists. Do you know that at Cawnpore, instead of withdrawal, I suggested concentration on prohibition both of liquor shops and foreign cloth, till we were ready for civil disobedience? But Motilalji would not have it. We must let them know what is best. We should help where we can, never embarrass. That is how I feel about them. Mahadev showed me Satyamurti's (a Swarajist leader of Madras) fling at you. I thought there was considerable force in his argument. If you have answered it, you should send me the cutting. Do not expect me to read what you do not send or what Mahadev or Devadas (Gandhiji's youngest son) does not give me.

"I appreciate what you said about Paddison. Poor Andrews! He must waste money on cables (re. Asiatic troubles in S. and E. Africa). But he is cheap even at that. His self-effacement is a marvel to me.



"Narasinhan (C. R.'s son) is getting on well. He talks to me always in Hindi. He is happy and healthy. You must let him stay here longer. His eyes are bad. He can, therefore, make slow progress in straightening spindles. And he must stay longer to gain the Hindi ear. This is enough even for a love letter."

An Arya Samajist⁵ from Nairobi requested Gandhiji to give them a message. Gandhiji's reply (in Hindi):

"I wish to send only one message to the Arya Samajists. Rishi Dayanand was a *brahmachari* (observer of continence in thought, word, and deed), a *Satyagrahi*. For the sake of Truth he gave up his home and even his parents. If the Arya Samajist becomes a Satyagrahi for the cause of his country and religion and observes self-restraint, there is no doubt that it will do good to the country and religion."

1. Prahlad was a child Satyagrahi who disobeyed his king-father Hiranyakashipu's order not to worship Lord Vishnu. Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, forsook him after giving him due warning and joined Rama's forces. Bharata, Rama's younger brother, blamed his mother and refused to accept the throne which she had contrived to get vacated by Rama for his occupation.

2. Principal, National Aligarh College of 'Jamia' (National University for non-co-operating students).

3. See page 74, 75 (Vol VII—"Day to Day with Gandhi.").

4. See App. II.

5. Arya Samaj was founded by Rishi Dayanand Saraswati. It believes in taking Hinduism back to the pristine purity of the Vedas. It performs Vedic sacrifices and zealously champions social and religious reforms. As such Swami

Dayanand and his followers are against idolatry.



13-1-1926

In his morning sermon Vinobaji said:

"*Sattvic dhriti* (firmness of the best kind) is essential for Yoga. This is clear from the 6th Canto (Gita) onwards. There is बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया (with reason or intelligence i.e. *buddhi*, held securely) in VI—25. And it has been repeatedly stated in the Gita that even devotion is impossible without that *dhriti*. The 6th Canto begins with the description of Yoga and at its end the *yogi* has been held above the man of austerity, above even the man of knowledge as well as the man of action (VI—46). But the last verse says: "That *Yogi* is the best even among *Yogis* who worships Me with faith, who keeps Me ever in his heart and adores Me." (VI—47).

Thus a *bhakta* (devotee) also has got to be a *Yogi*. The prevalent belief that even without any healthy change in our actions in life, our *mukti* is certain through devotion is mistaken. It is difficult to keep the mind fixed in God, when we may be enjoying worldly pleasures at the same time. Remember the word of Swami Ramdas who says that a complete transformation in one's actions is indispensable. Devotion has no meaning, so long as there is no change in one's way of doing things. Hence, devotion is impossible without *dhriti*. And the Lord has everywhere praised that *bhakti* which has *dhriti* to prop it up. The characteristics of a man of steadiness in experiential knowledge (*sthitaprajna*) are given in Canto II. Those of the *Yogi* are then given (VI) and then of the man of spiritual wisdom. But the *Bhakta* is the crown of them all. *Bhakti* without renunciation is neither *bhakti* nor *Yoga*. In consonance with the Lord's saying I am the manliness in man (पौरुषं नृषु VII—8). There must be the evidence of courage in *bhakti* also.



14.1.1926

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् |
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

'He is the true seer who sees, abiding in all beings, the same Parameshwar (God)—Who is imperishable among the perishable.'

समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् |
न हिनस्त्यात्मनाऽऽत्मनां ततो याति परांऽऽगतिम् ॥

'When he sees the same Ishvara abiding everywhere alike, he does not hurt himself by himself and hence attains the highest goal.' (*Gita*, XIII, 27-28)

Vinobaji recited these two verses from the *Gita* and said in elucidation:

"The 13th and the 15th Cantos are those of knowledge of the *Atman*. The former Canto explains 'knowledge' and 'the thing to be known.' The *Gita* gives eighteen means-cum-characteristics of '*jnyana*' (knowledge). All these qualities have been described in such a way that they can be regarded as means to get knowledge from one point of view and characteristics of knowledge from another. In the same way a wonderful verse upholding non-violence (the second verse quoted above) has been inserted in it. In the first of the two verses I sang (XIII—27), it has been shown that the Soul is indestructible and the body is always perishable, i.e., the destruction of the body is unavoidable. If the destruction of the Soul is impossible and that of the body certain, what is destroyed in reality in an act of violence? Who is destroying whom? We use the word '*atma-nasha*' (soul's destruction), but that is only conventional, a matter of loose thinking. In reality there never is a thing like '*atma-nasha*.' In an act of violence what really is destroyed is (the perpetrator's) *buddhi* only. This *shloka* suggests all the three, *kriya* (act), *swaroop* (natural character or true constitution) and *phala* (fruit or result) of non-violence. The 'act' of non-violence is to refrain from violence. Its 'natural character' is to refrain from an act of violence from the knowledge that everything and everybody is pervaded by God. And 'the fruit' of such conscious and intelligent non-violence is attainment of final beatitude. God is everywhere self-evident like the sun. To persons steeped in the consciousness that every atom in the universe is God—just as every particle of gold is gold itself—, there is nothing like *himsa* (violence), there is neither killer nor killed. But in the act of *himsa*, i.e. 'killing' in our ordinary parlance, there is *atma-nasha* of another kind. When a cow



is slaughtered, no *himsa* (killing) of the cow really takes place. The *himsa* of a cow would happen only when the cow becomes enraged. In the slaughter of a cow, what happens really is the destruction of the slaughterer's *buddhi* (sense or intelligence). If, therefore, you want to have cow-protection, you must stop the destruction of the *buddhi* of the men who slaughter cows. The way to stop this '*atma-nasha*' is giving up of lust and anger, as everything harmful is generated from anger. But the man who kills someone and says, "I killed only the body, the soul is indestructible and I have done nothing wrong," is labouring under a delusion. The reason is it is not the killer but we who have got the knowledge of the soul. Hence, when somebody wants to kill our body outright, it is only we who can tell him, "You may kill this body, but my soul is immortal," Shankaracharya says, "Vishnu is immanent in everything and everybody. How is anybody's 'destruction' ever possible then?" And there is this Upanishadic saying, "Stand firm like a tree, no matter if anybody comes and cuts you." That shows that it is not the killer who is entitled to defend his violence on the ground that the soul is indestructible. It is only the person against whom violence is used who can rightfully maintain that his soul can never be killed."

Vinobaji's evening discourse:

"I gave six years to the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*; six others to the *Vedas*; and now I am spending this whole year after spinning and weaving. After a personal experience of spinning and serious deliberation over it, I am now able to say for certain that a particular speed-rate is the indispensable minimum that everybody should acquire."



सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं श्रुणा मे भरतर्षभ |
 अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ||
 यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् |
 तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ||
 विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् |
 परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ||

(Gita XVIII 36, 37, 38)

'Hear now from me, O Bharatarshabha (Arjuna), the three kinds of happiness—the highest of which, attainable only after repeated practice, leads man to the end of pain (36). That happiness is called *sattvika* (of the first degree) which in its inception is like poison, but in the end is like nectar since it is the good fruit of enlightened intelligence. (37) That happiness is called *rajasik* (passionate i.e. of the second kind) which, arising from the contact of the senses with their objects, is at first like nectar but in the end like poison.' (38)

In his explanation of these three verses Vinobaji said:

"After the preliminary statement that this universe *is* composed of three *gunas* (qualities or natures) *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (balance, activity and inertia) the Lord gives examples from each of them, so that a man may choose the kind of quality he would like to imbibe. In Canto XVII He shows the three types of *shraddha* (faith), *ahara* (food), *Yagna* (sacrifice), *tapa* (austerity) and *dana* (charity). In XVIII, He similarly gives the three different types of *tyaga* (renunciation), *jnana* (knowledge), *karma* (action), *karta* (doer), *buddhi* (intelligence), *dhriti* (steadfastness), and *sukha* (happiness). Nobody should think that, taken on the whole, the two kinds of happiness *sattvik* and *rajasi*—do not differ materially. They do differ because while their antecedents are transient, their consequences are permanent. Those two kinds of happiness, in the first of which the result is eternal happiness and in the second eternal pain, can never be put on an equal footing. Numerous instances can be quoted from our everyday life to prove the great difference. For examples, early rising, renunciation of all kinds, etc. And what, moreover, does *sattvic* happiness spring from? From the propitiousness (*prasaad*) of intelligence fixed in the Self. Propitiousness also is of two kinds: of the



mind and of the intellect. Propitiousness of the mind means its purity. That of the intellect poised in the Self is of the kind described in the *Yoga* aphorisms of Patanjali, namely, the propitiousness that arises from *maitri* (friendliness), *karuna* (compassion), *upeksha* (indifference) and *mudita* (rejoicing). Three kinds of *bhaktas* have been described in the Bhagawat (a gospel of devotion) (1) the lowest i.e. those who regard an idol as God and worship it; (2) the middle, i.e. those who have attained the poise described in *Yoga* and (3) the highest, i.e. those who see nothing but God manifested in every creature and in every object. There is for instance Tukaram who says, "The whole world has become one filled up with joy to me." The *Sattvic* happiness described in the *Gita* is thus that of the middle kind of devotees. We should remember that the *jnyani* (the perfect man who knows) surpasses even that *sattvic* devotee. He becomes *nistraigunya* (beyond all the three *gunas*)."

Dealing with the eclipse on that day, Vinobaji said in the evening:

"The eclipse was complete in Sumatra. Many Whitemen from numerous countries have gone there in order to watch the eclipse. They are scientists, and have gone there for scientific research. Many of us here ignore the eclipse altogether, as we have neither the Westerner's zeal for science nor the orthodox Hindu's earnestness to keep religious rites. We have dismissed these rites as nothing but rank superstition and that is neither here nor there. The idea that a *Rakshasa* devours the Sun and then the Sun, by his own strenuous exertion and valour, frees himself is, to say the least, a valuable lesson for spiritual aspirants. Let alone the question whether the Sun is really in the grip of a monster. But under the belief that it is suffering we invite suffering on ourselves in sympathy with the Sun. We thus identify ourselves with the whole creation. How can we afford to ignore and give up this vital vibrant sympathy with God's creation? "See the Poem of the Shining One" is a Vedic outburst of joy. What again is the idea in the vow of some people not to eat their meal in the spring season, without hearing a cuckoo's song? It is this. 'There is no day when I don't hear the cuckoo's lively song.

It is unhappy today for some reason or other and doesn't sing. And when it is unhappy, how can I have the heart to take a morsel?' Then there is another custom—to never fail to see the crescent moon. Everyone who knows his own shortcomings and is intent on removing them should ponder over the idea behind custom. It is to remind him that he should grow like the digits of the moon, and thus to exhort him to greater exertion. The Star—Dhruva (pole-star)—is to be seen daily, so that we may imbibe from that



sight the firmness, the fixed resolve, the holiness and the devotion of the child Dhruva, whose story is a wonderful saga of total concentration and devotion.¹ The Lord Vishnu presents Himself, but the child in his excessive absorption does not know the fact. At last the Lord touches the child's cheek with His conch and then a Sanskrit verse, as profound and resonant as a Vedic song, comes out of the child's lips; we sing this verse योऽन्तः प्रविश्य मम वाचमिमां प्रसुप्ताम् (I bow to that Omnipotent Lord, Who penetrates my being and awakens my sleeping speech, other limbs, etc. and breathes life into me) in our prayers. And words cannot express the holiness of that sage-couple, Vasishtha and Arundhati. Why is every newly-wed couple shown those two stars Vasishtha and Arundhati? ("The Big Bear" is called "*Saptarshi*"—Seven Sages—in India. One of them and a faint star nearby are called Vasishtha and Arundhati). Arundhati's character is described in '*Yogavasishtha*'. She was as close to her husband Vasishtha, as the shadow to the corresponding object. You could never fail to see Arundhati, wherever you saw Vasishtha. That was the one-pointed devotion of Arundhati for her husband. And just as though our shadow is always with us, we do not bear in mind its existence, so Vasishtha did not have the cognizance of Arundhati, though she was always at hand. What a sublime example of detachment and yet one-pointed mutual love between husband and wife? So they were made into stars for perpetual remembrance as models of married love. And can we set any limit to the future reaches of science? This earth was once a very hot sphere. Today it has cooled down. In future it may perhaps grow icy cold. At that future date the earth may be destroyed, the sun may be as cool as the earth at present and it may be peopled with men. When these things are within the bounds of possibility, should we not better start from now to harmonise our lives completely with God's decrees?"

1. King Uttanpada (whose legs go up, i.e. an aspiring soul) had two queens, Sumati (wise intelligence) and Suruchi (pleasant to the senses). Sumati, the unfavourite queen, had a son Dhruva (firm resolve). When this child, Dhruva, wanted to sit on the lap of his father-king, Uttanpada, Suruchi stopped him as the child was the unfavourite queen's son. The child's self-respect was deeply hurt and he resolved there and then to go to a forest to worship Lord Vishnu. Six months of terrible penance and concentration brought the Lord to him. He grants him the boon of many years' rule and then ascent to heaven as the Pole Star.



16.1.1926

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः |
निद्रालस्य प्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ||

'That happiness which stupefies the soul both in its beginning and as its result and which arises from sleepiness, idleness, heedlessness is happiness of the third or the dark kind.'

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः |
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मूक्त यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ||

'There is no being or thing, either on earth or in heaven among the Gods which can be free from these three *gunas* born of *prakriti* (nature).'

(Gita XVIII 39, 40)

Explaining these verses Vinobaji said:

"That happiness which is created from sleepiness, sloth and heedlessness and which casts a spell on the soul both in the beginning and in its effect is *tamasi* happiness. In saying that that happiness fascinates the soul, we mean that the man sinks into the mire of ignorance. There have been cases of men moved by passion, i.e. of men possessing *rajasi* qualities, who have attained *mukti*. But there has been no case of a man full of *tamas* (sloth and heedlessness) who has gained it. That is why a *mukta* (a freed soul) has been described as अपगततमस्कः विरजाः| one without *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. When the *Gita* says there is no man on earth who is free from the three *gunas*—*satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—what is meant is the three *gunas* of his physical nature. These three *gunas* are all of the body. The state of being free from all the three *gunas* is that of the soul. Every creature as such possesses this (*tamas guna*) of nature. So the body has but to take the sleep that is necessary for its sustenance. But it must give up more than necessary sleep, give up *tamas* in that way and enjoy *sattvic* happiness. But even that man who enjoys *sattvic* happiness can go to the state which is beyond the three *gunas*, only by giving up attachment to *sattvic* happiness."



Three Vital Questions

21.1.1926

(Gandhiji's article in 'Navajivan' translated in M. D. in Young India of 21.1.1926)

A friend has asked me three questions in a most humble spirit.

(1) You regard the four divisions of caste as based on birth. You also believe that a man's caste does not prevent him from doing the duties attaching to other castes and that any man, irrespective of his birth, may have the qualities of a Brahmana, or a Kshatriya, or a Shudra. If this is the case, where is the use of maintaining this division, and consequently an order of superiority and inferiority? Why should the accident of birth make a man a Brahmana, or a Kshatriya, or a Shudra? Why attach so much importance to birth?

(2) You believe in Advaitism (non-dualism) and you also say that the world has neither beginning nor end and is real. Neither are you a dualist, for you believe in the freedom of the individual Atman. 'Would it be improper then to call you an Anekantavadi or Syadvadi (believer in the doctrine of the manyness of reality)?

(3) You have often said that God is an impersonal Absolute Being, free from passions or attributes, which means that He is not the author of the Universe, nor does He sit in judgement over man's virtue or vice. And you talk of the will of God every now and then. How can a God without any attribute have a will, and how can you conform your will to His? Your Atman is free to do whatever he likes. If he does not succeed in doing it, it is the result of his past doings. God has nothing to do with it. And yet *you* cannot be talking of the will of God to beguile the common folk, for you are a *Satyagrahi*. Why then this fatalism?

(1) In accepting the four-fold division, I am simply accepting the laws of Nature, taking for granted what is inherent in human nature, and the law of heredity. We are born with some of the traits of our parents. The fact that a human being is born only in the human species shows that some characteristics, i.e., caste is determined by birth. There is scope enough for freedom of the Will in as much as we can to a certain extent re-form some of our inherited characteristics. It is not possible in one birth entirely to undo the results of our past doings, and in the light of it, it is in every way right and proper to regard him as a Brahmana who is born of Brahmana parents. A Brahmana may by doing the deeds of a Shudra become a Shudra in this very birth, but the world loses nothing in continuing to treat him as a Brahmana. Caste as it exists



today is no doubt a travesty of the original four-fold division which only defined men's different callings. And this trifling with it has been its undoing. But how can I, for that reason, discard the law of nature which I see being fulfilled at every step? I know that if I discard it, I would be rid of a lot of trouble. But that would be an idle short-cut. I have declared from the house-tops that a man's caste is no matter for pride, that no superiority or inferiority attaches to any of the four divisions. A true Brahmana will feel it an honour to serve the lowliest of Shudras. In fact, a Brahmana, to be a Brahmana, should have the qualities of a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Shudra plus his own. Only he should predominantly be a man of divine knowledge. But caste today is in the crucible, and only Heaven knows, or perhaps the Brahmanas know, the final result.¹

(2) I am an *Advaitist* and yet I can support *Dwaitism*. The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *Anekantvadi* or a *Syadvadi*. But my *Syadvada* is not the *Syadvada* of the learned, it is peculiarly my own. I cannot engage in a debate with them. It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly, I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and *vice versa*. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My *Anekantvad* is the result of the twin doctrine of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*.

(3) I talk of God exactly as I believe Him to be. Why should I beguile the people into error and work my own perdition? I seek no reward from them. I believe God to be creative as well as non-creative. This too is the result of my acceptance of the doctrine of the manyness of reality. From the platform of the Jains I prove the non-creative aspect of God, and from that of Ramayana the creative aspect. As a matter of fact we are all thinking of the Unthinkable, describing the Indescribable, seeking to know the Unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate, and even often



contradictory. That is why the Vedas describe Brahma as 'not this.' But if He or It is not this, He or It is. If we exist, if our parents and their parents had existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere. And that is why all of us with one voice call one God differently as Paramatma, Ishwara, Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Allah, Khuda, Dada Hormuzda, Jehova, God, and an infinite variety of names. He is one and yet many; He is smaller than an atom, and bigger than the Himalayas; He is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass Him. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. But I need not labour the point. Faith is essential in this matter. My logic can make and unmake innumerable hypotheses. An atheist might floor me in the debate. But my faith runs so very much faster than my reason that I can challenge the whole world and say, 'God is, was and ever shall be.'

But those who want to deny this existence are at liberty to do so. He is merciful and compassionate, not an earthly king needing an army to make us accept His sway. He allows us freedom and yet His compassion commands obedience to His will. But if any one of us disdains to bow to His will, He says : 'So be it. My sun will shine no less for thee, my clouds will rain no less for thee. I need not force thee to accept my sway.' Of such a God let the ignorant dispute the existence. I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him and am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His glory.

1. In view of the fact that Gandhiji countenanced only mixed marriages of 'caste' and 'untouchable' Hindus in later life one can assume that the above views were considerably changed later on.



21-1-1926

[The following two articles d. 21-1-1926 and 28-1-1926 by M.D. are reproduced from 'Young India'.]

Another Invitation

Mrs. Langeloth and Mrs. Kelly, delegated personally to present to Gandhiji the resolution of invitation to visit America on behalf of the Fellowship of Faiths, League of Neighbours, and Union of East and West, visited him last week. They were evidently prepared for the reply, but the resolution had to be presented. Not without considerable hesitation said Mrs. Kelly: "Would you not visit America, Mr. Gandhi? We would very much like to hear from you your message. Money, I know, is no consideration to you, but I may say that your visit can help us to render you pecuniary assistance in your work here. There are private homes there ready to receive you and to look after you whilst you are there.' 'I know,' said Gandhiji, 'I would be overwhelmed with affection if ever I went to America. But as I have already explained to other friends, I am not as yet thinking of going there without having finished my work here. I must work away amongst my own people, and not swerve from my path. Dr. Ward writing to me the other day said he was entirely at one with me in thinking that my visit would not be of much use in the present circumstances. And don't you think he is right? I know crowds would gather around me to hear me, I would get receptions everywhere, but beyond that my visit would have no other result.' 'Don't you think, Mr. Gandhi, we are ready to receive your message?' rejoined Mrs. Kelly. 'Look at the gathering under the auspices of Fellowship of Faiths. No less than ten faiths were represented there, and when a lecture about you was broadcasted, millions listened to it with intense interest. Mr. John Haines Holmes also earnestly desires you to pay a visit. We are growing and we would like to accelerate the growth.' 'I know,' said Gandhiji, 'you are growing. But a gentle steady growth would be more enduring than growth induced by lecturing campaigns and fire-works display. You must, at present, study my message through my writings and try to live up to it, if it is acceptable to you. I could not hope to make you live up to it unless I have succeeded in making my own people do it. Every moment of my time is therefore usefully employed here and I would be doing violence to my inner being, if I left my work and proceeded to America. Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. Langeloth seemed to be convinced and they now turned to putting a question or two before they left. 'Mr. Gandhi, is it true that you are a reactionary? I have heard some of your own people say so.' 'What do they mean by reactionary,' asked Gandhiji. 'If they mean that I am a civil resister and law-breaker I have been that



all these years. If they mean that I have discarded all other methods and adopted non-violence, symbolized by the spinning wheel, they are right.' Mrs. Kelly could not say, but I could well guess what was at the back of her mind from the questions that followed. In his remarkable autobiography Henry Ford refers to a species of reformers whom he calls 'reactionary,' meaning thereby those who want to go back to an old order of things. And Mrs. Kelly's next question was, 'Is it true that you object to railways, steamships and other means of speedy locomotion?' 'It is and it is not' said Gandhiji with a smile. 'You should really get the book in which I have expounded my views in this connection—'*Indian Home Rule*.' It is true in the sense that under ideal conditions we should not need these things. It is not true in the sense that in these days it is not easy to sever ourselves from these things. But is the world any better for those quick instruments of locomotion? How do these instruments advance man's spiritual progress? Do they not in the last resort hamper it? And is there any limit to man's ambition? Once we were satisfied with travelling a few miles an hour, today we want to negotiate hundreds of miles in an hour, one day we might desire to fly through space. What will be the result? Chaos—we would be tumbling upon one another, we would be simply smothered.'

'But do masses desire these things?' put in Mrs. Kelly.

'They do,' maintained Gandhiji. 'I have seen mobs getting almost mad on Sundays and holidays. In London a long unbreakable train of motor cars at every corner is quite an usual phenomenon. And what is all this worry and fateful hurry for? To what end? I tell you if by some sudden catastrophe all these instruments were destroyed, I would not shed a single tear. I would say, it is a proper storm and proper cleansing.'

'But supposing you need to go to Calcutta, how would you go unless by train?' asked Mrs. Kelly.

'Certainly by train. But why should I need to go to Calcutta? Under ideal conditions, as I have said, I need not traverse these long distances, not at any rate in the shortest possible time. I shall explain myself. Today two good people come from America with a kind and loving message. But along with the two come two hundred with all sorts of motives. For ought we know a large number may be coming just in search of further avenues of exploitation. Is that the benefit of quick locomotion to India?'

'I see', said Mrs. Kelly, 'but how can we go back to the ideal condition of things?'



'Not easily. It is an express moving at a terrific speed that we are in. We cannot all of a sudden jump out of it. We cannot go back to the ideal state all at a jump. We can look forward to reaching it some day'.

In short, the reactionary turn, if at all it was, meant a return to commonsense, meant a restoration of what appears to commonsense to be a natural order, distinguished from the present unnatural order, in a word not everything overturned or everything petrified, but everything restored to its proper place.

But I do not think the friends quite saw the drift of the argument. For they too were hurrying through space. They had to catch a train and were afraid to get to the station too late.



28-1-1926

Borodada

Borodada, the sage and sire of Shantiniketan, passed away in the early hours of the 19th. As I read the telegram bringing the news, my memory went back to the privileged days in Shantiniketan, six months ago, when we sat listening to this prophet, and the words:

आनंदं ब्रह्मणी विद्वान्निविभेति कदाचन |

(He who has known the joy of *Brahman* knows no fear) repeated by him over and over again resounded in my ears. Three years ago also I had seen him. He was then full of non-co-operation and anxious to know everything about Gandhiji who was in jail. Every other moment he broke out in boisterous, almost reckless laughter, as he thought and spoke of the discomfiture of some force or other opposed to non-co-operation. This time too there was the same noble defiance of the forces of darkness. All isms, he said, will be shattered to pieces under the bombshell of Truth—but this time, unlike all previous occasions, there was a brooding sadness in his face. 'Your coming,' he said to Gandhiji 'was an oasis in the desert. May the memory of these days carry me safely through the dreary voyage still to be done.' It was not merely the sadness of parting from Gandhiji, it was sadness of the Great Separation from *Brahman*. All his life long as a prominent member of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, and as a writer of numberless religious and philosophical essays; he had thought of this *Brahman*, talked about It, sung Its praises in his poems, but he felt still a wide gulf between It and him. 'You will please keep your body,' said Gandhiji as he took leave of him, 'until you have seen what your heart desires to see, And there was a tremour in his voice, as he echoed, 'Yes, I will.' Ever since he prayed and meditated until he got it at last. On the 15th of December at Wardha Gandhiji had a letter from him containing just one sentence: 'Thanks to your prayers'—I am quoting from memory—'I have now got that beyond which there is nothing to desire,' translating the ancient text:

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः |

The body was now no longer useful to him, and within a few days of this realization he shuffled it off.

* * * * *



As one thinks of him, he is strongly reminded of Whistler's portrait of Carlyle – 'clothes loose and careless, the bony fleshless face, the firm challenging chin, force every where, brains and will dominant, strength redeemed by the deep-set eyes, most human and beautiful, by turns piercing, luminous, tender, gleaming.' But there was in him none of Carlyle's sadness and despair. He greeted one and all with a familiar sweetness. Let him know you are doing your little bit towards liberating the nation and he would simply dote on you like a doting father. And though he was nearer ninety than eighty, he had retained his memory, and as he talked he would go on drawing from the vast resources of his Sanskrit learning, philosophy and science, astronomy and mathematics, and present his argument as simply as a child could understand it. Steeped as he was in our ancient lore, he had studied Western philosophy and science no less, if only to strengthen his love for our own. All that he has written—his articles and essays and his poems—bear witness to his deep love of Aryan culture and his burning patriotism. The poet owes not a little of his love of Sanskrit and his attachment to the Upanishads to Barodada. Few men lived more exposed to Western influence than he, but he kept his head erect, refusing to be swept with the tide.

* * * * *

It was non-co-operation that really brought Gandhiji and this sage together. He had his dreams of free India, he had lived and laboured for them, and during the evening of his life, went and settled in Shantiniketan, teaching the boys there so long as he could. But his dreams often haunted him, and in non-co-operation he saw the coming of the dawn. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,' the poet has said, 'but to be young was very heaven.' And Borodada felt all the vigour and freshness of youth coming back to him, and to be in these times was to him, 'very heaven.' Often he would talk to young men about the potency of the movement, often would he write to Gandhiji to strengthen and support his position. 'How I wish I had the strength to turn the wheel today! But alas, I can only give you my mental support'—he would often say.

What a meek and humble spirit, what a faith, what a love for Gandhiji! 'I can simply quote the scriptures, you are living them,' he would say and embarrass Gandhiji sitting near his feet like a *Shishya* before *Guru*. But that is nothing compared to his love for even the meanest soldier in the Gandhian army. The blessings of one fired with such rare faith and fervent patriotism must be largely responsible for keeping Gandhiji's faith in his movement as bright as ever.



* * * * *

And as he would flare up at the slightest criticism of Gandhiji, even when it was just, Gandhiji has often said that his love for him was something excessive. And so it may have been. But it was not blind, unthinking love. He had his own idea of how freedom can be brought about, and Gandhiji's scheme of things fitted in beautifully with it. He was thankful that a fitting method was found and enunciated and that if he was too old to see his dream fulfilled, God had other instruments ready to achieve it. Some of his letters written to friends and dearest ones in those days show how he had grasped the spiritual meaning of the movement. In one of it he says:

"The *Yogashastra* says that an attitude of friendliness (*maitri*) towards one who is better off than you purges the mind of all jealousy, an attitude of sympathy (*karuna*) towards one worse off than you purges the mind of ill-will; an attitude of respect (*mudita*) for one who is virtuous purges the mind of malice. But as regards the man of sin, you should observe an attitude of indifference (*upeksha*)—not friendliness, not respect, neither hatred. Which means that indifference (non-co-operation) becomes a duty in respect of the British bureaucracy, so skilful in daylight dacoity. Mind you, neither respect nor hatred, but non-co-operation."

And this from another letter:

"We are piling up our indebtedness by gradually receiving tainted gifts from the British diplomats. If someone intervenes and cries 'halt' and begins husbanding the scanty resources still left to liquidate the old debt, will you stop him and say, 'No, go on receiving the gifts?' It reminds me of an ancient school of philosophers who said, 'Ghee is the elixir of life; let us drink it, even if we get into debt.' To me it is clear as crystal.

Our co-operation with the Government is the co-operation of the stork with the fox who invited him to dinner! Let us pause awhile and consider. We all know Gandhi acts from the higher plane which is free from *kama* and *krodha* and the other passions. He is not lusting for war. Everyone of his actions is actuated by Ahimsa. He does nothing in excitement, nothing in the heat of the moment—not even a thing which is approved of by all. We should, therefore, throw in our lot wholeheartedly in his pure, unsullied, holy endeavour. My faith is unshaken that it is impossible to find in this *Kaliyuga* (iron age) a man of the sterling worth of Gandhiji. Why not make the best use of that pure gold?"



In those days he lived and moved and had his being in non-co-operation. He talked of nothing else, he thought of nothing else. What service to the cause can be greater than this, rendered at his old age?

He was convinced that the country is on the right path, that inspite of pitfalls, it is not going to swerve from the path. And that was sufficient for him. He was not impatient to see actual *swaraj*. 'One step enough for me.'

* * * * *

It was a spiritual bond between him and Gandhiji. I will translate a passage or two from his discourses on the *Gita*, from which he drew his inspiration as much as Gandhiji:

"The *Gita* is the oilless lamp eternally burning in our temple of knowledge. Let all the philosophies of the West shine their brightest, the light of our little lamp will shine above them all, eclipsing them. The gas this lamp emits purifies our atmosphere and clouds of that gas break into life-giving showers which soothe our afflicted hearts. In moments of doubt and despair, just a drop of this divine nectar is sufficient to revive our drooping spirits:

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् |

'Lift the self by means of the Self,
Do not allow it to droop.' "

One more passage full of his characteristic imagery:

"The world came by Atman as a result of ages of penance. Atman renders the dreary desert of the world a paradise. Put in one scale all the earthly treasures and Atman in the other, Atman will far outweigh them. If existence was the only predicate of Atman, no one would have troubled to know it. But it not only exists, it spreads Light and Bliss. The predicate **आस्ति** (=is) means it is the only Reality, **भाति** (shines) means it is the only light and **प्रिय** (=dear) means it is the only Life and Love. Even as a well has to be dredged to clean it of all its impurities, Atman has to be kept untarnished by means of discrimination, detachment, and discipline of the mind. Without these, enjoyment of Ananda (eternal bliss) is impossible. Even as the Sanskrit language includes grammar, rhetoric, literature, etc., Atman includes knowledge, strength, love, and bliss. This is apparent. But it is not equally apparent that a knowledge of the Sanskrit etymology presupposes a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar in all its details.



When this is done, only practising the art of writing can teach you how to utilize the knowledge of grammar to practical account.

Without this preparation you are not fitted to drink deep of the Sanskrit spring. If instead of going through this course the pupil says to the teacher: 'Grammar is a dreary business, syntax is a hard task, why not start with "Shakuntal" (Poet Kalidas' drama) at once?,' it would be an impossible ambition. In the same way if the pilgrim to the Promised Land says to the Evangelist, 'Discrimination and detachment and all the rigid discipline of the mind are a dreary affair, why not show me a short cut to Eternal Bliss?' his ambition would be even more impossible. The *Yogashastra* of Patanjali, has therefore laid down five steps to the goal: Faith, Incessant Effort, Remembrance, Concentration and Knowledge. The *Gita* also declares Faith to be the first step—Faith in Atman being the only Reality. No realization without perfect preparation."

* * * * *

And Borodada applied this severe test to himself, and also to the nation aspiring for *Swaraj*. During the days of his repose at Shantiniketan the sage diverted himself sometimes by writing humorous skits and sometimes by composing little poems, of which the subjects were the birds and the squirrels that played fearlessly about him, and often by making boxes and toys of paper of various shapes and designs for the little boys that surrounded him. When he was quite 85 he prepared in his own hand—he retained his firm, beautiful calligraphy to the last—a system of Bengali shorthand! He kept himself in touch with the movement he cherished so much by having select papers read to him, and whenever the spirit moved him he wrote letters to Gandhiji. During the last days, however, his permanent interest became Atman—Self-realization. And God blessed his effort in the fulness of time. On the day before his death, writes a friend who was constantly in attendance on him, he dictated a poem describing the Joy and Bliss that he had found—the Ananda of Self-realization which knows no sorrow nor fear.

Let us treasure the memory of a life, so full and fruitful, so pregnant with inspiration, and in which the contemplative and active parts were so harmoniously blended.



29-1-1926

(Note in 'Navajivan' by M.D.)

Gandhiji's Health

Telegrams and letters of inquiry about Gandhiji's health have been pouring in. He has no fever since Tuesday last (d. 26.1.1926), but as he had high fever earlier, he is feeling very weak and is going to take complete rest for some time. He will meet those only, between 4 and 5 p. m., who have an urgent business and made a previous appointment. Correspondents who may have already written to him should keep patience for replies. Intending correspondents may better postpone writing to him altogether, but if they think they must, be as brief as possible.



31-1-1926

(Article in 'Navajivan' d. 31.1.1926)

Rennuciation without Detachment

रे शिर साटे नटवर ने वरीए

He who wants to love the Lord
A warrior brave must be;
No middle course, but win or die,
Must hold his life in fee.

He must count the cost, and not
Be swayed by the moment's whim;
When once he joins the glorious fray,
Must e'er keep up his vim.
Fie on the man who first is brave
And then in the coward's way
To save his skin, minds not disgrace
And headlong runs away.

I was strongly reminded of the above hymn of Brahmananda, when I read of the petition made by a non-co-operating lawyer of the Andhra Province for his reinstatement. He had practised for 12 years, non-co-operated in 1921, and had been sent to jail for one year for civil-disobedience. He fell ill there and remained an invalid for 2 years after his release. In 1924 the Hight Court gave him a show-cause notice and as he could not be present in the court, he was disbarred. After his recovery this year he applied for re-enrollment. Some of the sentences in the petition deserve re-production: "I forgot myself in the heat of the moment and joined the non-co-operation movement. I have not taken any part in that movement since my release from jail and never intend to take any in future The petitioner now realizes his mistake and gives a solemn promise that, if he is allowed to rejoin the bar, he will work only as a loyal upholder of the Government that conducts these courts of justice." As if this disgrace was not enough, the sorry picture was completed by the petitioner's counsel and the judges. When this Government itself does not possess the chivalry to show sympathy for a surrendering enemy and give him due respect rather than humiliate him still further, you cannot expect any better treatment at the hands



of its servants. The counsel stated that his client had not only refrained from taking any part in non-co-operation, but had eschewed politics altogether. The judge then quipped: "But that was because he was ill!" The lawyer had therefore to reassure him: "After his recovery also he has not taken any part in non-co-operation or politics and even though there is no harm in joining politics now, he does not wish to do so." Proceeding further the counsel argued, "The petitioner is an honest non-co-operator. Whatever may be his other shortcomings he has the great merit of sterling character," meaning thereby that his promise not to take part in politics in future must be taken at its face value. It was then an Indian judge who had a fling at the character of non-co-operators. "Yes, yes. There are a number of men of 'sterling character' among them." The counsel had then to assure the Bench that two gentlemen, well-known in legal circles—a subjudge and himself—testify to the petitioner's honesty of purpose. Even after the petitioner was compelled to go through all this distressing humiliation, the Chief Judge of the High Court filled up his cup of disgrace by some of his remarks in the order granting his petition.

This case has been highlighted in the Madras Press and become the subject of strong criticisms. As the victim of all this disgrace was a reputed lawyer of Andhra Province, it was but natural that the case should receive so much notice. But it is painful to find that the press comments sidetrack the issue. Shree Prakasham states that the law in India is either contrary to its counterpart in England or at least is interpreted differently in India and England. While in England nothing is done to men like Sir Edward Carson and the present Secretary of State for India, though they issue threats of armed resistance, in India a lawyer is disbarred for simple civil disobedience! He adds that the High Court should have no right to disrobe a lawyer except for moral turpitude. Others have denounced the Congress for not raising a National Servants' Corps for non-co-operating lawyers—a dereliction of duty that compelled a man of such high rectitude to go through this very harrowing experience.

This case, its proceedings in the court, and the comments in the Press either show the depth to which we have now sunk or cast such a lurid light as to shock us out of our slumber of unconsciousness as regards the real state of our mind. Were it not so, can you imagine a freedom-fighter thinking, of the laws of his enemy and craving for his mercy? Can you imagine a patriot, eager to lose his life for the country, whistfully thinking of what provision the Congress has made for his maintenance? No promise of maintenance was ever given to induce the people to join the struggle. On the contrary, economists and calculators were warned a hundred times to keep



themselves away. But we were enamoured of spectacular cases of renunciation without caring to know whether there was sufficient detachment in those who renounced. The weakness lay in ourselves and now we are trying to find out extraneous causes for our plight.

We are talking glibly of our high character and education, but in reality, we do not consider wherein lies true education or high character, and are swept away in the tide of popular thought. Even our illiterate brothers teach us the proverb, "The mouth that chewed the betel leaf should not be given pieces of charcoal." Should we by getting educated lose our very strength and support – our manliness? What is the good of an education that does not inculcate self-respect in us, does not teach us that what really matters in life is sticking to our resolve at any cost? What is the use of that education which robs us of character and makes it impossible for us to earn our bread by physical labour, rather than give up our honour in times of stress?

There is a Shakespearian expression, 'Cowards die many times, brave men but once.' What is meant by 'death' here? What is that 'death' to which we refer in our prayer, 'Lead us from death to immortality?' 'Death' in both these expressions is the death of our honour, our character. If, after taking a solemn oath a man breaks it every third moment, he dies as many times as he breaks his word and becomes a sinful, fallen, soul. And he, who loses his life in order to keep his word, becomes immortal through the same physical death.

Our future fight will be fought by soldiers who first fully count the cost, and do not beat an ignominious retreat once they join the arena. It will be fought by men who, when they respond to the Trumpet Call, will fight to the death on the battlefield, heart within and God overhead, and not by men who in a flush of emotion rush to join the ranks and then repent, when their ardour cools down.



31-1-1926

An Autobiography

(This article by M. D. was published in 'Navajivan' d. 31.1.1926 along with his following introductory note:)

(Scores of letters daily arrive in Gandhiji's mail from people of all stations of life, all religions, all provinces of India and different parts of the world. No body has sorted them out for classification into letters, useful and useless, relevant and irrelevant, to the point and rambling, considerate of the addressee or inconsiderate, short or diffuse, in a charming and legible or disgusting and eye-straining hand, sweet or bitter in tone. But the fact stands that our mail contains letters of all these types. Could we at present afford to be in a light-hearted mood, were we discussing the literature of correspondence or at ease after the advent of *Swaraj*, we would certainly have discussed all these points and provided amusement to the readers. But as we cannot, at present, indulge in pleasantries just for the fun of it, as there are many others who can deal with the literature of correspondence, and as *Swaraj* is still a far cry, we select only those letters for discussion which deserve publication for their intrinsic value. The letters that I give today—after all this preface—are such as will provoke thought in us, teach us something and give us an idea of the far-off—even unexpected—places into which the light of truth and non-violence has penetrated like the light of the sun. Both these letters are autobiographies in brief. Scores of autobiographical letters do arrive in our mail, but all of them are not worth publication in the 'Navajivan'. But these two letters, it is a pleasure to note, are not a strain on the eyes or a waste of time, though they cover full 22 pages of closely written matter. They have found a place here only because it has been felt that their publication would purify the reader. Their language is English but a quaint English, like that which our Indian businessmen, innocent of any study of English, learn to use after a long stay in Burma or Africa. Despite the language, however, the letters are really an artistic creation. Let me also add that the words '*brahmacharya*', '*dharma*' and '*kaliyuga*' (= iron age) which occur at three places in the letters are used by the writers themselves. They are a couple staying at Gratz in Austria. I give only the substance. The first is the wife's letter.—M. D.)

Many many respects. God bless you and your colleagues! It had to be a Herculean effort for us to be able to write a few words of thanks for all the good you have done us. It is only now that I am able to write to you, since, after half an hour to one hour's study everyday for a whole year, we have picked up English just enough to be able to write. Ever since we read '*Young India*' translated into German, we have been very eager to learn up English.

When I re-read '*Young India*' of January 12, I was reminded of the fact that it was by then a year since you were operated upon and it was that fact that tempted me to write to you. I wrote down my letter first in German and now I am sending my English translation. You will please forgive me for writing this letter, as being so far



away from you, we cannot serve you in any way—though we have been regarding your country as our 'fatherland'.

I am very sorry that I do not spin, but I pray for the success of the efforts of all your colleagues, who confer a blessing upon the world through their service of your country. People here regard India as a menagerie of quaint beasts and a home of magic. Nobody knows anything whatsoever of non-violence, which is going to save the world from doom and through which Indians are going to render a great service to the world. It is so disgusting to read the local paper, when they describe Indians as a 'coloured race' and look upon your fight for freedom as a war between Whites and Blacks.

But the still more painful fact lies in the way India's image is tarnished in many other ways. They say that Indians get their sons and daughters married in early teens, because they are a fiercely passionate people. Even if that were true, what right has the European got to call the Indian kettle black? The marriages here are only business contracts of a kind and there are many parents who make their children's marriages profitable bargains.

Owing to the queer social concepts of my parents I too had to suffer terrible at first. I am happy now and have only spiritual relationship with the man whom I have now married and we live as brother and sister. But my first marriage was so unhappy that I could free myself from my troubles only by getting a divorce, as soon as I became a little more independent. I say I became 'independent', because I got my mother's personal property to use. From that heartless man with whom I was first united in marriage, I have taken not a penny. I was always a bright student since my childhood. Though I had never any taste for 'dancing' and allied arts and though I loved animals and was very eager to serve suffering humanity; I was not allowed by my parents to take up medicine, my pet subject. My father died when I was only three and my mother re-married. My new father was obsessed with the idea that girls should not be taught any profession. Instead of letting me study medicine he married me to one of his nephews. This nephew was a doctor and I agreed to marry him only when he promised to teach me medicine. But right from the day of marriage, there was no end to the atrocity he inflicted on me. For 8 years I suffered, but never submitted to his passionate overtures. And when I ceased to be a minor and came of age, without intimating him I divorced him and sneaked away to Vienna. I could have finished my study of medicine from the amount still left with me from my mother's money, but the



war broke out just then. My connection with my parents broke down completely, as they did not approve of my wish to be a doctor and I did not receive any letters from them. After 2 years' preparation I gave the Preliminary Examination and then began to study medicine. My present husband joined me in my study. I married him just a few days before he joined the Navy during the war.

I have already said that there exists only spiritual relationship between him and me. We understand each other better on that account than other married couples. I often blamed myself when I found that it was at first very difficult for my husband to observe *brahmacharya*. But when we read your articles, we both realized that even my husband stood to gain spiritually by it. How shall I thank you for it? But in thanking you for that only, I cannot thank you for the numerous other spiritual benefits you have conferred on us. Your greatest service is that of 'ahimsa' (non-violence). My husband served in the war as a doctor in a Naval Hospital. The sight of nations resorting to the arbitrament of the sword to settle their conflicts was nauseating to me, but as I should live with my husband, I applied for service as a nurse in a War Hospital. My application, however, was rejected. I, therefore, spent my time in reading Kant, Schoppenheur and science. But I also used to read books that supported peaceful settlement in place of war. In order to keep up my communion with my husband we used to read, by previous arrangement through correspondence a fixed part of the Bible at exactly the same time. This wonderful separation from my husband proved to be a superb bliss in the end, as I realized the importance of silence in a solitary place. What wonderful peace reigned there; I read avidly and felt that the rhythm of Homer's songs was sublime, but later on found that that of the billows was sweeter still. Nature used to entrance me as a wonderful creation of God. I used to go to a church nearby, but one day I heard the prayer, 'O God; Grant victory to our arms', and I gave it up. I was deeply pained that day to find God's name so badly misused. How nice would it have been, if I had already then read your book '*Hind Swaraj*'. But I was even then deeply convinced that international disputes could never be settled by means of arms. And one day when the *padre* asked me, 'Why don't you attend the church?', I told him plainly, 'I don't want to go there to listen to the language of hate and strife. He was deeply pained. "You are only a child", he said, "you have no experience of the world". "But does the voice of my conscience betray me?" I countered. And so I again resorted to solitude. I knew no fear—though bombs would fall near enough to be within my sight. I could have got the safety and comfort of living in houses beyond the range of bombs, but I decidedly preferred solitude and once even my window panes were



shattered. As the war dragged on, I got more and more time to reflect over the question of the goal of life and how to achieve it. Formerly, natural scenery delighted me as a marvellous creation of God but, as days passed, I began to experience deeper and deeper peace and got more and more equipped to appear before God's presence, whenever He chose to call me back to Him. At the same time I began to feel that since it was God who saved my life during the war, I need not now study medicine—how can any physical science teach us the knowledge of the Self? Mountains of labour but all for nothing! For ten years I tried in vain to study medicine and after that period my conscience told me there was no sense in learning it.

Not only the natural glorious view of the outer world, but Kant's philosophy and music also gave me great strength and solace. I lost myself in Bach's, Beethoven's and Hyden's music. And then the war ended with Austria's defeat and my husband came back to me. We were allowed to leave Italy and return to Gratz. My husband decided on principle not to start private medical practice, but he took service in an institution as a teacher of diagnostics. The salary was small but we managed to do with it. Our needs were only a few and I began to do some work as a music teacher. But is that not better than stuffing patients with packets and bottles of medicine that are only pilliatives at best, but not real cures? But I learnt something else also from it all. I found not only Western science full of atheism, but Western art too. I mean by 'art', its use. Everybody prostitutes art as a means of money-earning. Who cares for real art? I was once employed as a tutor to a minister's wife. She liked my voice, but remarked, 'Why don't you wear a little more becoming dress? You will fascinate others, you are a blonde' But I love simplicity and refuse to give it up. My sisters of India! How beautiful is your Khadi! It is not only simple but brings prosperity to the poor man's homes.

Even religion here has degenerated into a preserve. It is impossible for a non-conformist to follow the religion he believes in. People frown at us because we love simplicity, do all our work with our own hands, and scatter grains on our terrace for birds to peck. When we talk of kindness to animals and saving trees from the axe, they laugh at us. And I am so fed up with the orgies of drink here! We are trying to preach temperance, but who would care to listen to our lone voice? People here are steeped in sense-pleasures of all kinds. Poems are written praising revelries of food and drink. A report of a food exhibition held in Munich recommended that one should religiously cultivate the taste of a particular fish taken with another specified one!



But we know we must not be impatient. We have but to attend to our own *dharma*. We must understand our *dharma* in our particular situation and live accordingly. Thank God that we have one consolation, however. We have begun reading the *Bhagwad Gita*. I read it first 3 years ago and talked to my husband of its sublime teaching. For the last year and a half we regularly read one chapter from it before going to bed. These gems of your country's wisdom are unknown here, even to the so-called educated men except to a few *pandits* here and there. Of Valmiki's Ramayana only one canto has been translated into German and none at all of the Hindi Ramayana of Tulsidas. And yet the people here are so crazy that they love to cherish ignorance of these wonderful uplifting books of their cousins, the Indian Aryans, and applaud to the skies the discovery of some ancient volume in Greek or Latin, if it is on sex. How colossal is our ignorance of even the *Bhagvad Gita*, which stands unequalled in its power to give peace to the soul!

But why should I blame others? I myself was once enamoured of Latin and Greek. And now I am repenting for the many years I wasted in studying them. As a penance I took up Sanskrit a year ago and after learning up the Devanagari (Sanskrit) and Urdu scripts, I have already started to study Hindi as some little recompense for what I have gained from India, though it does not mean any service to her. For that I have to content myself at present with only offering my prayers for her. If ever in future I am born in India and serve her, that is a different story.

Gita has thus become to us the light of hope in the darkness of despair and we spend our whole day in quietude by reading it. I read Romain Rolland's book on you in its German translation and came to know of your effort to revive the spinning wheel and some people's opposition to it. We wondered how there could be some Indians who did not understand that the spinning wheel was the bread of life for India's poor. Why cannot the people of that country whose art is famous all the world over and whose architecture is a marvel, understand the simple fact that the revival of the wheel gives a great impetus to the indigenous art of India? Take only the architecture of Ahmedabad. Do not the structures of Sidi Saiyyad's Masjid and the temples of Hathising's Vadi shame the art of old Greece! To me it seems that the style of domed buildings in Europe has been adopted from the Hindu temples of India.

My hearty thanks to you once more. We are trying our best to propagate your literature and to reform our own lives.



It was your book *Key to Health* that convinced my husband that simple natural treatment is the best remedy for physical ailments. In order to avoid medicines, I had to tell a lie the other day. From two hours' singing at a stretch and exposure to blasts, I caught cold and there was severe pain in my sides. Fever mounted up inside, though the cold outside registered—10 degrees. I belittled it and said to my husband, 'It is influenza'. I would often shake down the thermometer so that it would not show my high temperature, because I was afraid I would otherwise be sent to a hospital and compelled to take drugs. I still repent for that lie, as I am accustomed to speak the truth. I persuaded myself that I was lying in order to save my husband worry at the time when he was about to go out for his service. The fever persisted for 12 days. I could not gather the courage to apply cold packs, as besides the climate, which was very cold, our house was still more so. But even during that fever I continued to cook and wash. 'When my husband came home he would find me lying on a sofa like a good little woman. But throughout these days I took very hot water and lemons and for food a piece or two of toasted bread and milk. But how could such a put-up show last long? On the 12th day my husband saw me lying unconscious. He examined me and found it double pneumonia. But neither did he compel me to take medicine nor send me to a hospital. But I recovered in a few days and God thus kept up my resolve.

And I have as much aversion for spices, cocoa, coffee, etc., as for drugs. We have never taken a drop of liquor for the last many years. But I gave up tea also after I read your book. As it spoils the voice, I took tea only sometimes, not daily. When I read of the oppression inflicted on the peasants in tea-plantations, I found a moral argument in favour of giving up tea altogether. Before I began reading your book, I was fond of smoking, but that too I gave up at a stroke once for all. We did not take coffee even before we read your book, but now we are taking wheat-coffee, though we do not get good wheat here. It is difficult to do without salt, as in this cold country vegetables cannot be boiled without it. We, therefore, use salt, but in vegetables only. Again and again we read your book and take instructions from it. Milk we have found the most difficult to dispense with, specially in winter. We used to feel that pork taken once a week was a necessity for health, but now we are trying to find out the way to avoid it. There are plenty of fruits in summer and it is not difficult to be a vegetarian then, but in winter pork seemed to be essential. But last winter, even before we read your book, we tried to give up pork also. The climate was very cold but we refused to eat pork, since we began to feel a repulsion for it. We have never taken any other kind of flesh, fish or poultry. We did not touch beef also—even before we learnt that the cow was a



sacred animal with the Hindus. Many years ago when once I lovingly passed my hand across the back of a cow, she looked at me with such tenderness from her beautiful eyes that her brows wrinkled and I have never forgotten that loving glance. Since then it became impossible for me to kill any animal. I am so glad to know that Muslims are going to give up beef in consideration of Hindu feelings. As I am slenderly built, I can go on doing my work without taking any kind of flesh, but my husband finds it difficult. Now that we have read your book we have resolved not to touch that ugly food, pork, next winter. In summer we can put in greater work on fruits, vegetables, and bread than others on their non-vegetarian food. It was summer when I began to translate this German letter into English. It is already autumn now and we shall soon have seven months of winter. As if to cheer us up with good news before winter sets in, your book '*Young India*' has arrived.

I sometimes fasted in my childhood, but never in my *Kaliyuga* (dark age)—if I don't call it '*Kaliyuga*', what other name can I give to that period of my life when I was carried away in exclusively intellectual education? And now from your book '*Key to Health*' I have learned to go on a fast for one day in a week.

And now in conclusion, our many respects to you on your happy birthday. May your work be a glorious success! Your birthday is a day of celebration for India and also for us. We are always trying your principles in our lives.

2

(This second letter was published in 'Navajivan' on 7.2.1926)

Many thanks for providing me, through your articles, so much material for developing my mind and soul.

The principle of non-violence alone will save the world. For about a year past my wife and I have been studying English by ourselves for half an hour daily. Our object is to thank you and read your articles in English, as very few of them have been published in German so far.

I am forty and I have now got what I was seeking for the last 20 years. Your articles have entirely changed my outlook towards fellow human and sub-human creatures. I am only now beginning to understand the omnipotence of God and the meaning and purpose of life. My studies so far had failed to teach me anything of real worth about the world and its Maker. I studied law, geography, history, anthropology,



but in the end I felt, "No, I should rather study medical science so that I can understand what 'man' is." But even that proved useless.

It is enough to point to our over-crowded hospitals, mental homes, and jails, and specially our allopathy with its countless drugs—to show how poor we are in our knowledge of man.

Our medical science means innumerable physicians and their theories that contradict one another. They have based these theories from cruel experiments on living men and beasts. And with what result? A big zero. They have indeed made some discoveries and invented things of only a superficial value, but about the one fundamental thing that matters, they are simply groping in the dark. Proprietors of pharmaceutical factories go on manufacturing medicines endlessly and doctors go on filling up bottles with them—like the blind leading the blind!

I have been for the last 6 years a teacher of diagnostics in the University here and it is from that experience that I say that for the cure of diseases there is nothing to match natural remedies—the sun, light, air, proper diet and proper way of living. The sight of the congestion in hospitals, lunatic asylums and jails, makes me wonder what the efforts of doctors and experimenters come to, when all these institutions are always so full! All their efforts must be going to naught. Would it not be better, if they toiled for something else. Our Western medical science has never thought over the goal of life. Had it done so, it would not have concentrated its thought on the body and allowed our abysmal ignorance about the relationship between the body and the soul to continue. In consequence of our medical science of this sort, people are seeking nothing but physical ease and comfort—as if life is meant only for that! I believe there can be no real medical science without *dharma* or the fear of God.

In my search for true knowledge, I dived into many occult sciences also. I went through Theosophical books too. But I have not become a member of any such institution or circle, since we have heard ugly rumours about them—perhaps they may be imposters, not seekers of truth!

So now we have settled quietly and are in quest of 'the body' in silence and solitude. I must here freely acknowledge my debt to my wife whose experience of the Self has gone a great way in scattering the clouds of the learned ignorance of her husband who has a double degree! After coming out of atheism I have been saved from drifting into mysticism and now I have firmly decided to remain content with



whatever can be gained by purity of character and action, instead of worrying over metaphysical concepts and principles.

We have been attentively reading the Bhagwad Gita for the last many years. We also read *Young India* and Tagore and Bose.

But my favourite book is '*Key to Health*' which I read specially for my own uplift. I find in it a clarity of thought and depth of experience that is marvellous. That alone can help man in his life's journey. We are trying our best to weave into our lives the principles propounded therein.

Many people regard it impossible to put into practice the thoughts you have given in the chapter on sex-control. We, however, are acting upon them. But here, in Europe, such spiritual relationship between man and wife is dismissed as simply Utopian. My wife was at first against marriage and in favour of this Platonic love between us. But only out of fear, in order that such sacred relationship may not be tainted in an unguarded moment, I insisted on marriage and we solemnized it. Hardly anybody believes it possible for us to live simply as brother and sister and those who do, consider us cranks or fools. But from self-experience I say that it is not impossible to avoid physical relationship altogether, though it is true that I found it very difficult in the beginning to do so. For that also I have but to thank my wife. How fine if people understand simply this one thing and abstain from sexual relationship except for the deliberate object of progeny! But in Europe what prevails is the chaos of total ignorance in this matter. Sex-control, I think, is the measure of a man's evolution. That is why I am sorry that Mr. Roniger, who has translated your book, '*Key to Health*', has put in an addendum in which he states that it is impossible for a man and wife to live together without being involved in sex-relationship.

An effort has thus been made in the translation to wipe off the effect of your writing. And Prof. Levi has written the Foreword which also is only an echo of the addendum. In the translated German text too there are some bewildering blunders. That was why we were so eager to read all your articles in English itself. Let me give a small example of the confusion in the German translation. This is what you mean to say as given in the English translation: 'Hot water taken immediately before going to bed at night or after brushing the teeth in the morning will be found very helpful to sufferers from constipation.' The German translation for it is: 'For constipation I advise hot water and brushing the teeth immediately after getting up in the morning or before going to bed.'



Once more I thank you for bringing me from darkness unto light. I have now got the solace and satisfaction which Western sciences had failed to give me and have come to know the spiritual path that leads to eternal peace. I will try to be fit for your high principles and spread them in the climate around me in my humble way. It has taken so long a time to translate this letter from German into English that your birthday is now at hand. Our heartiest greetings on that day."



7-2-1926

The Spinning Wheel in Mysore

(Article in 'Navajivan' d . 7-2-1926)

An announcement was made a year ago that H.H. The Maharaja of Mysore himself had taken to spinning. But from the spinning activity that is going on in the State, this much at least is certain: The Maharaja must be in its favour. "*The Hindu*" has given a long detailed report of the 'Grand Spinning Wheel Exhibition and Spinning Contest' held in Tipu Sultan's Palace and organised by the Bangalore Spinning Association. Among the competitors there were 12 educated ladies, 2 of whom were even wearing the veil. A very remarkable speech was delivered by the Director of Commerce and Industry who was the President on the last day of the whole function.

In that speech he gave a very well-reasoned and silencing answer to the critics of the spinning wheel. At first he stated that this question should not be viewed from the angle of the selling price of Khadi or the rate of the spinners' wages. And then he hit the nail on the head when he said that the spinning wheel was to be judged on the extent of India's poverty, on the wheel's capacity to relieve it, on the number of the unemployed population in India and on the type of industry that could be offered to that large number. There was a time, he pointed out, when no country in the world produced as much and as excellent cloth as India did and then he said:

"Why, only a hundred years ago the weaving industry was a flourishing occupation. In spite of numerous customs duties and other restrictions, 50 lakhs of bales of Dacca Muslin alone and 6 to 15 thousand bales of other cotton goods were exported to England.

"The flimsy machine-made cloth brought about its destruction. But we ourselves are really more responsible for our ruin. Our taste degenerated, we lost both our unity and our high standard of appreciation of true art. We began to look for cheap things and, fascinated by tawdry luxury goods dumped into India by foreign steamers, we made our lives artificial."

He then extolled the simplicity and beauty of Khadi and gave some figures: "Exact calculation has ascertained that a man can earn 2 ½ rupees per month from 2 ½ hours daily spinning. Now suppose that 2 persons from a family of 5 spin for 2 ½ hours daily. That means that 50 lakhs of rupees per month, i.e., 6 crores per year would be added to the miserable income of the starving families of the State. Do the critics



of the wheel say that we may dispense with these 6 crores a year? There is no doubt in my mind that this industry has a bright future and if the elite—the educated, the cultured and the rich classes—start patronising Khadi, the industry would receive a great impetus.



4-2-1926

A Patriot's Wail

(Gandhiji's article translated by M. D. in 'Young India' of 4-2-1926)

A friend has thus unbosomed himself:

"In your weeklies you write nothing about the agriculturists, who form the bulk of the population of India. In most parts of India the agriculturist is a mere tenant, at the mercy of the Zamindar, and dragging on a miserable existence. Do you not think these Zamindars and Talukadars are a pest in the country? Cannot we solve the problem by dis-possessing these Zamindars and distributing their land among the poor?

"The headman and the *sahukar* are another pest. They exploit the poor agriculturist on all occasions.

"The agriculturist himself does not know his own interests. Everywhere in Gujarat he has taken to growing cotton, and has thus made food-stuffs dear. Could not the Swarajists get some legislation passed requiring them not to exceed 5 bighas of cotton cultivation? India needs only 2 million bales of cotton. Why should we grow 6 instead? Cannot we carry on a village propaganda for concentrating more on the cultivation of food crops?

"The *Patidars* in Gujarat are mad after tobacco cultivation. And for whose benefit? Possibly we are more responsible for the vice of smoking than any other part of India. Can we not persuade them to grow fruit trees instead?

"And why do you not say something strong about our miserable widows? Their orthodox parents or guardians are never going to listen to reason. Why not encourage the widows to take the initiative?

"And then there are our numerous evil customs and usages, our wretched dowry system, our postnuptial and postmortem dinners and so on.

"And what a woeful number of sub-castes!

"Why not resume bonfires and picketing of foreign cloth?"

I have boiled down a very long letter which, though rambling, is the cry of an agonised soul.



I have not been writing much about the agriculturists advisedly. For I know that it is impossible for us to do anything for them today. There are a thousand and one things that need to be done for the amelioration of the lot of the agriculturists. But so long as the reins of the Government are not in the hands of the agriculturists' representatives, i.e. so long as we have no *Swaraj—Dharmaraj*—that amelioration is very difficult, if not impossible. I know that the peasant is dragging a miserable existence and hardly gets even a scanty meal a day. That is why I have suggested the revival of the spinning wheel.

And the need for internal reform is as great as that for legislative reform. And internal reform can be only partly achieved when numerous volunteers are found to take up village work as the mission of their lives. The evil habits of ages cannot go in a year or two.

We may not forcibly dispossess the Zamindars and Talukadars of their thousands of *bighas*. And among whom shall we distribute them? We need not dispossess them. They only need a change of the heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants' woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give a major part of the produce, keeping only sufficient for themselves. 'We had better wait for that day until the Greek Kalends', some one will say. I do not think so. I think that the world is moving towards peace, i.e., *Ahimsa*. The way of violence has been tried for ages and has been found wanting. Let no one believe that the people in Russia, Italy, and other countries are happy or are independent. The sword of Damocles is always hanging over their heads. Those who have the good of the Indian agriculturists at heart, must pin their faith on non-violence and plod on. Those who think of other methods are vainly flattering themselves with hope of success. The agriculturist never figures in their calculations, or at any rate they do not know their condition.

What I have said above applies equally to the *sahukar* and other exploiters. Nothing but their own profit appeals to them. But there too the remedy is the moral education of both. The oppressed need no other education except in Satyagraha and non-co-operation. A slave is a slave because he consents to slavery. If training in physical resistance is possible, why should that in spiritual resistance be impossible? If we know the use of the body, why can we not know the use and power of the soul?

Till he is educated who can persuade the agriculturist to limit or stop his cultivation of cotton and tobacco?



And reform of immoral customs and usages? How can it be brought about? By lectures? Here too an education of popular conscience is necessary. Those whose consciences are awake should act according to their convictions and accept the consequences. We may before long look forward to a measure of fusion of sub-castes.

Smoking is, in a way, a greater curse than drink, inasmuch as the victim does not realise its evil in time. It is not regarded as a sign of barbarism, it is even acclaimed by civilised people. I can only say, let those who can, give it up and set the example.

Remarriage of widows is necessary to a certain extent. The reform can be brought about only when our youths have purified themselves. Are they pure? Do they profit by their education? Or why blame their education? From childhood up a slave mentality is sedulously cultivated in us. And if we cannot think freely, how can we act freely? We are alike slaves of the caste, of a foreign education, and of an alien Government. Every one of the facilities provided us have become our fetters. There are so many educated youths amongst us. How few of them have thought of the widows in their homes? How few have resisted the temptation of lucre? How few regard them as their own sisters and mothers and protect their honour? How few have had the courage of their convictions and defied their castes to do their worst? Whom is the poor widow to approach? What comfort can I bring her? How few of them are readers of *Navajivan*? How few even of those who read it can act up to their convictions? And yet I have occasionally devoted the columns of *Navajivan* to the widow's wail and hope to do more as opportunity offers itself. In the meantime I would appeal to every one who has a child widow under his care to consider it his duty to marry her.

The correspondent has cast a lurid light on our social customs. But when the whole body is rotten, how can we be satisfied with a few patches here and there? Postmortem dinners are barbarous. Postnuptial dinners are no less so, we might consider the latter to be less barbarous, because the religious ceremony of marriage is, all the world over, an expensive affair, more or less. But the Hindus alone have the monopoly of having postmortem dinners! These and other matters badly need attention. But a reform all over will come with the awakening of moral consciousness of our people and with the liberation of their thought. So long as our thought and action are not free, patch work will be worse than useless.

The last item in the correspondent's wail is about the resumption of burning and picketing of foreign cloth. If some one could assure me that the people will burn only



their own foreign clothing, and will not touch others,' I would again appeal to the nation to make bonfires of foreign cloth. I have never doubted the propriety of these bonfires. But I have a genuine dread of people resorting to violence. When even a thing springing from love and non-violence is abused, we must take it that time is not ripe for placing it before the public. And when I saw in Bombay with my own eyes people wearing foreign cloth wresting it from others and consigning it to flames, I recalled the weapon. Today when the ugliest of our passions have come to the surface, all peaceful experiments also must be reduced to a minimum. That is why I have hitched my wagon to only one star—spinning and weaving and propagating Khaddar—where abuse is unthinkable, and where there is no possibility of any harm being done. Those who want Swaraj or Dharmaraj for India by peaceful methods must pursue this unfailing remedy as a principal duty.



7-2-1926

Prohibition

(Note in 'Navajivan' d. 7-2-1926)

Sri Rajagopalachariar has taken up the question of prohibition since the last Congress session. Affirming that that was one question which was capable of uniting all the parties of the country, he toured all over his province. He met his political opponents, the Swarajists, discussed this question in detail and has now made them include total prohibition in their programme. All Congressmen will now take the pledge of getting total prohibition passed before they take their seats in legislative bodies. One cannot thank them sufficiently for this noble resolve.

Besides this attempt, Sri Rajagopalachariar has made it his business to go on writing on that subject. In a recent article he quoted irrefutable arguments and statements of Government officials and other Government men. He reproduces the following from a Bombay University Professor's book, the Foreword of which has been written by the Finance Secretary of the Central Government:

"Both Hindus and Muslims are strictly forbidden by their religions to take intoxicating drinks. The climate of the country, moreover, enervates the addict's constitution. But, owing to the prevailing winds from the West and the increasing facilities provided by the British administration, they have forgotten both their religious bans and climatic limitations."

(Re-translated).

He has also quoted Sir Roper Lethbridge:

"People of India will not only not resist, but heartily welcome, the imposition of total prohibition. That is to my mind a very remarkable thing in the Indian situation and that country is poles apart from England in this matter."

(Re-translated).

Let us now see how many rupees of the people are lost in drink. Rev. W.L. Ferguson, a missionary of Madras, after stating that India is poor in every way, says:

@ "India cannot afford the use of intoxicants. Financially the drain is too heavy. Just what the cost is in rupees, we are unable to say, but some idea of it can be obtained from the revenues derived by the Government in the Excise Department. In round numbers this is Rs. 200,000,000 per annum. Some estimate that the total drink



and drug bill amount to five times this sum; others place it at three. I do not believe that we shall err very far, if we take a figure half way and place the amount at Rs. 800,000,000. If we assume that three fourths of the drink and drug bill of India is paid by the poor and labouring classes, some Rs. 600,000,000 is the burden they are bearing.”

Official quarters say in reply, "How can you give up the revenue of 20 crores?"

This is Sri Rajagopalachariar's answer:

"It betrays total want of faith to say that the country's revenue will suffer owing to the stoppage of the drain of crores of rupees from the lean purses of the poor. All these crores of rupees will be their saving every year and that will enhance the prosperity of the country. Why is this glaring fact forgotten?"

Total Prohibition—The Only Way

(Note in 'Navajivan' d. 7-2-1926)

Owing to the efforts of a kind-hearted missionary, Mr. Anderson, a member of the Prohibition Association of Calcutta, a Prohibition Convention was held in Delhi under the Presidentship of Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao. The President drew a vivid and pathetic picture of the economic and moral harm that drink inflicts upon the country. He said that there was not a single party in India which was opposed to total prohibition. But that Conference has not been able to pass really meaningful resolutions. Gandhiji comments:

@ "The Convention has passed what I would call a timid resolution. After avowing the imperative need for total prohibition, it 'urges upon the Government of India and the Local Governments to accept total prohibition of alcoholic liquor as the goal of their excise policy.' This, I suppose, neither the Government of India nor the Local Governments would have any difficulty in accepting. Swaraj is the accepted goal of all parties including the Government of India, but it is the immediate thing for the Congress to attain, a distant goal for the Government to cherish, though unattainable. So will total prohibition be an unattainable goal with the Government."

About the second resolution Gandhiji says:

@ "Quite in keeping with this (first) resolution is the advice of the Convention to the Government to "afford adequate facilities for ascertaining the will of the people



with regard to this question, the introduction of the local option laws being in the opinion of the Convention the best means of ascertaining the wishes of the people in this matter."

Is it necessary now 'to ascertain the people's wishes', when Sir Roper Lethbridge saw what the people wanted thirty-five years ago?

But the question of the loss of revenue troubles everybody. The President admitted this difficulty and so does Mr. Ferguson. Gandhiji, however, observes:

@ "If we were not hypnotised, we would refuse to educate our children out of the proceeds of vice, which the drink and the drug revenue undoubtedly is.

"Mr. Ferguson suggests fresh taxation to replace this vice-begotten revenue. In my opinion no taxation is necessary, if only the Government will reduce the frightful military expenditure not required for defence against aggression, but manifestly imposed to suppress internal commotion. The demand therefore for prohibition must go hand in hand with the demand for a corresponding reduction in military expenditure. The missionary bodies, if they will range themselves alongside of public opinion and will insist on prohibition, must study the question of military expenditure, and if they are satisfied that much of the expenditure is due to a false fear of internal trouble, must demand reduction in military expenditure at least to the extent of the drink and drug revenue.

"The duty before the Swaraj and other political parties is quite clear. They owe it to the country to demand total and immediate prohibition with one voice. If the demand is not granted, the Swaraj Party has an additional count in the indictment against the Government. Prohibition, as Sri Rajagopalachari has so aptly shown, is an item of first class political education of the masses. And it is one item on which all parties, all races, and all denominations can be easily united."

Miss Madeline Slade

Miss Madeline Slade, who came to stay in the Ashram a few months ago, has deliberately refused to say anything about herself to the Press. But she has now been constrained to clarify her stand, because a newspaper in England published fantastic things about her and Indian papers have reproduced them. Besides being straight, telling and concise, that clarification disarms all criticisms and denies many renunciations.



She says:

1. I have not forsaken my relatives and friends. How could I ever give up my religion? The religion that was lying dormant within me for the last 33 years, has now revealed itself.
2. I have not come to an Ashram that is a promiscuous medely of many races. I am living in a well-organised Ashram in which 200 of the best Indians including men, women, and children are gathered together. They all call Gandhiji not their Guru but 'Bapu' (—father) and regard him as a spiritual guide and social and moral reformer.
3. I have not sold off my books, but have brought them in the Ashram for the use of the inmates. I have given up my private property.
4. I was not dissuaded by my friends from coming over here. They knew that my coming here was a perfectly reasonable step.
5. Gandhiji did not write to me, "Come", immediately he knew of my desire to do so. He asked me to deliberate over my decision for one year and when he accepted me neither did he make me take the vow "I will never swerve from my path," nor did he demand that I should renounce everything I possessed. On the contrary, he had repeatedly warned me not to give a hasty promise and even though I gave up all that I had, he accepted it only as a deposited amount for one year.
6. Neither was I given a grand reception when I came here, nor were the inmates here highly elated at my arrival. I was admitted in the simplest manner possible. I was not introduced to any radical brains. When I came here, I felt I came to my soul's real home and ever since my arrival I have been staying with everybody in peace and harmony. I do not go to listen to any speeches and am not studying any 'situations'. I am only learning carding, spinning, and Hindustani.



11-2-1926

Spinning at Sabarmati Ashram

(Original article by M. D. published on 11.2.1926 in "Young India")

@ Spinning and prayer are the two things that are more after Gandhiji's heart than anything else, and ever since he began giving more time to the Ashram, he has concentrated his energies on systematising both of them. The inmates of the Ashram have each his own work, and though there are the principles that hold them together, only common activities can bring them together in an active, communal spirit. They are spinning and prayer, which can make the inmates though

“Distinct in individualities,

But like each other ev'n as those who love.”

To make them both real unifying factors it was necessary to make them more living. A few days' talks and conferences were enough for the prayers, which are today more regular and much better attended than at any time before. Spinning was done by all, but there was nothing like regularity about it. The children of the school had a regular period and their yarn was everyday noted in the register. 'Why not have a register for the whole of the Ashram?' suggested an inmate. Vinoba who came here some time ago to infect all with his spinning enthusiasm, heartily supported the suggestion. After a regular study of it he has come to the conclusion that the average speed of a spinner must be 430 yards per hour and he exhorted everyone to reach the average. To the regularity was added this anxiety to reach the average and during the last fortnight we have had remarkable results. Almost every man, woman or child makes it a point to find his or her half hour or hour to spin, out of the daily routine of work, and after every evening prayer answers the spinning roll-call. Let each school and Ashram where spinning is part of daily duties introduce the experiment and note the results.

We shall first have the figures of daily attendance, i.e. daily spinners. It is noteworthy how it has gone on improving. The following are the first week's figures:

		Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.
Men	Total No:	47	47	47	47	54	55	55
	Spinners:	29	37	36	38	43	48	45



Women	Total No:	28	28	28	30	30	30	30
	Spinners:	16	24	25	26	20	24	24
Children	Total No:	29	29	29	29	29	32	32
	Spinners:	25	27	26	27	14	29	28

I may mention that non-spinners include absentees and ailing people as well as the defaulters. But the improvement in the number of spinners may safely be said to be due to a reduction in the number of defaulters. Thus on the first day only 61.7 per cent of the men and 57 per cent of the women on the roll spun. On the last day their number was respectively 81.8 and 80 percent. The number of spinners among children remained constant, because they have been regular spinners for some time. But even they slackened on Monday, that being their off-day. The number that day was as low as 50 percent. It is interesting to note, however, that, Monday next week the number went upto 65 per cent. Let us now compare the average attendance of both the weeks:

	1 st Week	2 nd Week
Men:	72%	81.7%
Women:	72%	76.6%
Children:	84%	88%

Let us now take the figures of production. We shall first compare the production of the same day in the two weeks, on which other conditions were also very nearly the same:

		Monday	Monday
		25.1.1926	1.2.1926
Men	Total No:	54 9569 R.	56 11,116 R.
	Spinners:	43 222 Av.	43 258 Av.
Women	Total No:	30 5509 R.	30 5377 R.
	Spinners:	20 276 Av.	20 269 Av.
Children	Total No:	29 2469 R.	32 5487 R.
	Spinners:	14 176 Av.	21 261 Av.

R., means rounds of 4 feet each



Av., means average round per spinner.

Note the remarkable improvement against men and children. The total in one case has increased by 1500 rounds and the average by 36 rounds, and amongst children the total has been more than doubled and the increase in the average is 85 rounds.

Let us now take the total production of each week :

	First Week	Second Week
Men:	72,837 rounds	81,393 rounds
Women:	36,627 "	41,472 "
Children:	44,117 "	47,005 "
Total:	153,581 "	169,870 "
	i.e. 204,776 yards.	226,492 yards.

which shows an increase of about 21,000 yards in a week.

Let us now see to what extent working at this rate the inmates can supply their own clothing needs. The population may be taken to be approximately 130 and the total needs of the Ashram at the rate of 20 sq. yards each is 2600 square yards. Now a square inch of cloth requires 2 yards of yarn of 15 counts (the average count spun now-a-days). This means that 2600 sq. yds. of cloth would require $2600 \times 144 \times 9 \times 2 = 67,39,200$ yards of yarn, i.e. 1,27,329 yards every week in a year of 48 weeks. So we have more than reached this average. I wish every spinner had also noted the time for which he spun, in which case we could have had the average time of spinning also.



14-2-1926

Natha Patel*(M. D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan' d. 14-2-1926)*

A Conference of the Baraiyas of Halol Taluka (county) was held on Tuesday, dated 9-2-1926, at the foot of the well-known hill of Pavaghad. These Baraiyas are also called by the despised name of 'Dharalas' (a scheduled 'criminal' community). But the Baraiyas of the Panch Mahals are very different from their cousins—the Baraiyas or Dharalas of the Kaira District. Compared with those of Kaira, these Baraiyas of the Panch Mahals are very peaceful—though, in that matter the mild 'Kaliparaj community' (another depressed class) of the Surat District leaves even these Baraiyas far behind.

Ramesara owes its present fame in the history of Gujarat to the strenuous exertions of Sri Laxmidas (an old inmate of Gandhi Ashram) to improve the condition of the peasants of this community. He left Ramesara after conducting for 2 or 3 years the experiment of releasing them from debt by various means such as propagation of Khaddar, prohibition, ban on caste dinners and provision of interest-free loans from the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. For about 2 years the work there went on in an excellent manner, but later on the climate of depression in the country infected that quarter also. There also the hum of the spinning wheel which used to rise from every cottage began to abate and farmers, who had vowed not to bow to social customs which necessitated inordinate expenses, broke their vows. All the same Sri Laxmidas did not leave the field before putting Sri Nanubhai Desai as his representative there. The idea of holding this Conference came to him and to one or two brave farmers who had still kept their consciousness alive. Others also had not forgotten that they had reverted to their fallen state and did have a sense of appreciation for the efforts of Sri Laxmidas for their uplift, but they had lost the strength to stick to their resolves. They also fell in with the idea of holding a Conference and that was why a very large number of this community collected that day at the foot of the Pavagadh Hill. Sri Vallabhbhai ('Sardar Vallabhbhai' who amalgamated the Indian States after freedom) was the President and Abbassaheb (a Muslim leader), Darbarsaheb (whose principality was confiscated by the Government, Dayaljibhai and Kalyanjibhai (leaders of the Surat District) and others came to the Conference from other districts.

It was a fairly successful gathering—in all respects. The organisers saw to it that the Conference had not to spend anything except after the food of the few visitors



from outside. The Baraiyas came in their own bullock carts and had brought their own provisions for their 2 days' meals. There was, therefore, no need to set up a kitchen for them. The pandal was made up of the thick cotton sheets which farmers always have for their field and cart use. The leaders of the community met Sri Vallabhbhai and Sri Laxmidas in the morning and framed resolutions not to drink or eat intoxicants like wine, ganja (from tobacco) and opium, not to sacrifice goats and poultry at the altar of Mother Kali, not to incur debts after marriage and death customs and to spin and card and wear Khaddar. Sri Vallabhbhai explained in an extremely terse speech and very simple language the significance of all these resolutions. "I have not come," he began his speech in an humble tone, "to preach you anything that is originally mine, since the preacher ought to be a man of austere and saintly life, which I am not." And immediately then he finished his speech with the words, "I have come here only to say what Gandhiji has asked me to tell you." And how can Baraiyas have any itch to deliver speeches? They are not yet infected with the craving for oratorical honours. What they feel—and feel painfully—is this: 'All these other communities are progressing! But we? We are simply rotting!' How can these poor illiterates have any idea that those whom they regard as 'educated' are, after dashing their heads against the stone-wall of 'vain wisdom and false philosophy', sunk in the well of despondency and have not even the nerve to gather in a Conference? The resolutions were passed and then leaders of different villages appointed for the purpose met Sri Vallabhbhai again to discuss the ways and means of implementation. They took detailed instructions from him. It now remains to be seen how far the resolutions are carried out in actual practice. Sri Nanubhai Desai, who has been trained for such work by Sri Laxmidas, is already there in their midst. He has made it his mission to serve these people. We may, therefore, hope that much work will have been done before they meet again next year.

And there is reason for the hope. The seeds that Sri Laxmidas sowed have not gone to waste—they have sprouted. And this statement brings me to the real subject of my article. During the period of my stay at Pavagadh, my mind was drawn neither to the history of Pavagadh and Champaner (once a flourishing capital at the foot of Pavagadh) nor to the sight of the historical ruins which would, naturally, remind one of the present plight of our country. For these ruins Sri Vallabhbhai expressed his thoughts in one very telling remark; 'On one side is the holy temple of Kali Mata and on the other there is the splendid *masjid* of the Mussalmans; and between the two a liquor booth of our Government adorns these holy surroundings'. What rivetted my attention was the scene at a corner of the Conference where some spinning wheels



were humming and near them stood a woof of threads spread out on a stand. Laxmidas introduced me to all those who were working there. The whole family had come there to show their respective arts. Sri Natha Patel that of carding, his wife of ginning, his son of weaving, and his daughter of spinning. The sight of this family's enthusiasm and the report of its past history instil the hope of good results from the Conference and provide people with much to know.

Natha Patel is a seasoned veteran. Sri. Laxmidas cannot claim the honour of awakening in him his interest in spinning and carding. He had heard the faint echo of the non-cooperation clarion somewhere and was induced to wear Khadi and card cotton. He had never seen Gandhiji, but had realized the glory and greatness of Khadi and it was this pair—Natha Patel and his colleague Bhaga Patel—who had made Sri Laxmidas choose Ramesara for his stay for village-work. On the day the latter went there, he saw Natha Patel carding away with all his might on a clumsy carding bow. Its string was that of the rough and pricking 'bhindi' (a kind of hemp) and was knotted at places. "My dear friend," Sri Laxmidas inquired with wonder, "how much can you card on this (wretched) bow?" "I have already carded 60 lbs. of cotton," he answered. But the skin of his finger was grazed. Sri Laxmidas was profoundly impressed with this reckless enthusiasm of the carder. And just as Ahmadshah founded Ahmedabad on the cite where he saw the unbelievable sight of a rabbit attacking a dog, so at the sight of the mad zeal of this man, Sri Laxmidas decided to establish himself at Ramesara for his village work. Both the members of this pair—Bhaga Patel and Natha Patel—were moreover wearing Khadi made from self-spun yarn and as Khadi was not available there, their 'Khadi' meant in reality ragged pieces with a thousand patches.

That was what happened more than three years ago. Laxmidas settled there,—with family. At first the agriculturists grumbled: "We have no time to spin after our sweating toil on the field." Laxmidas sent in reply his own son and daughters to work on a farm the whole day and induced them to spin in spare time. The doubters now gained faith and that of Natha Patel shot up 100%. The 'garba' (round-dance and song) sung by the women of Natha Patel's village still rings in my memory:

रंग लायगो, रंग लायगो

गांधीजीनो रंग लायगो रे |

"Dyed, we are deeply dyed

"In Gandhi's colour fast."



This Natha Patel thus infected every member of his family with his enthusiasm. His wise wife took up this new idea with zest and vigour; so did his daughter. Earlier, on the day when we went to Ramesara, Natha Patel's son had come to receive us with his bullock-cart. One bullock was scared at something and fled. The poor boy had to run two or three miles to catch him. When he went home the boy let off his steam by mildly beating the bullock. But every string of Natha Patel's heart vibrated in sympathy with the thrashed bullock and to show his son how deeply pained he felt, he fasted for a day. This whole incident rose up before my eyes, as I saw that same bullock-cart and those sturdy bullocks of Natha Patel. So I went to that loving family and sat among them. His wife was ginning cotton. 'How much,' I asked, 'per day?' "About 40 lbs. in the time left to me after the care of cows and bullocks. The son too—of about 14 or 15—was sitting just near and spinning. He picked up weaving very quickly from his teacher Sri Ramjibhai, whom Sri Laxmidas had posted in Ramesara. All this made Natha Patel self-reliant in the matter of clothing the family. With what enthusiasm everyone of the family had taken to spinning is best seen from the example of this boy. He would do his household work, go to the farm to look after it, and then during mid-day hours when birds would not come to eat the crop, instead of having a nap he would begin to make his field resound with the hum of his spinning wheel, which he kept for use in the watch-shed erected high in the shaded branches of a tree.

Three years passed since I saw this picture. But Natha Patel is still the same old Natha Patel. That his enthusiasm had not abated in the least, was evident from the mere fact that his whole family had come to the Conference to demonstrate to other farmers their respective arts which are the sources of their prosperity. But this time I seized the chance of having a heart-to-heart talk with Natha Patel.

"Natha Patel, were you in debt, big or small, when Sri Laxmidas came here?" "Yes", said he a little ashamed, "of about two hundred and fifty rupees. I would have paid it off by selling all the corn I possessed. But Dada (Sri. Laxmidas) said: "I'll pay off the debt." He called on the bania (businessman and money-lender of the village), fixed up the right amount due by me and paid it off."

"And then you had not to incur any fresh debt, I suppose?"

"No. Why should I have to? I had no need either to buy any clothes for the family or spend money after social customs."

"Didn't occasions arise that required you to spend?"



"They did. But I remained firm and spent nothing. There was, for instance, the occasion of the death of my aunt. Her son is the official head of the village, and hence a Government servant, but he too said, 'I will abide by Dada's (brother or cousin) advice.' Though I am younger than he, we are on the most cordial terms and he would not fail to listen to me. So he did not spend anything."

"And you have to spend nothing at all after cloth?"

"How can I have to? We preserve cotton seeds. Cotton is ginned at home, I would card the cotton, the family would spin, and Sukhdev (the son) would weave. Last year we kept for ourselves one bag (200 lbs.) of cotton and another of cotton seeds. The clothes made from them are not worn out still. Occasionally, we weave as much as thirteen or fourteen pounds of yarn in a month."

"Has everybody in the family caught your love for Khadi?"

"Yes, everybody. The daughters-in-law do bring foreign clothes from their parents' homes and have them with them. But that apart, home-made clothes and nothing else is the rule in my house. My elder son had once gone off the path. "Father", he said, "I shall manage to buy my clothes by working as a hired cart-driver. But this—this drudgery of spinning daily, I detest." I tried to reason with him, but in vain. Then I said, "I am not going to compel you to do anything you don't like. Our ways part. You may go your way." He bought two mill-made *dhotis*, but they were worn out in about 4 months. He felt ashamed, brought down his spinning wheel from the left, and said, "I am sorry, Father. I was wrong. This mill-cloth is flimsy, is wretched. I am restarting my wheel and will have nothing to do now with mill-cloth." So now he has seen wisdom.

My wife spins regularly daily. My daughter too. The daughters-in-law have little kids to look after and they cannot spin regularly, but as we all spin and weave, we are able to cope with our clothing needs. And for myself, I have made it an inflexible rule not to go out of the village. My relatives may invite me to their homes in other villages, but I would tell them, "Excuse me, I can't accept your invitation. There is neither Khadi nor spinning wheel there. I wouldn't like to go there, but you please come to mine and stay for a while."

"What was your clothing expense formerly? Have you any idea?"

"Ours is a big family. We spent annually about Rs. 250."

"Any addiction? Did anybody drink?"



"I won't tell a lie. I myself used to drink. I am saved now Rs. fifty per year on that account." That reminded him of a happy thought, but trying to control the expression of joy on his face, he said: "And today seven hundred rupees or fifty more lie on my credit account with the local *bania*."

"How much land do you have?"

"About 15 bighas (about 8 acres) and some more on tenancy rights. Twenty to twentytwo bighas in all. It yields us sufficient corn for our needs. We don't engage farm labourers or domestic servants. All of us work on the field and grow our corn. I have still in stock paddy that we had grown two years ago. It will last us one year more. Even if there is famine for a year, I need not buy corn. As for cotton seeds, we first set apart enough of the best quality for the cloth we need and only then think of selling off the rest. Good cotton produces good cloth also."

"So these three or four years have materially improved your condition?"

There were lines of embarrassment on Natha Patel's face. "What shall I say? Dada (Laxmidas) came to us and we felt as if God Himself had descended among us. We were sunk deep in numerous sins and heavy debts. Our necks were squeezed. It was Dada who brought us down from the scaffold. We are happy in every way now."

"How many happy families may there be like yours?"

"There are a few homes where the spinning wheel is working. Two or three families may be said to be regularly spinning."

But Natha Patel was loath to dwell upon the story of his own prosperity. He said: "It's time I should fold up the sheets and collect them. May I take your leave now?"



18-2-1926

Barias in Conference

[The following are extracts from an article by M. D. in English covering similar ground as his Gujarati article 'Natha Patel'. They are reproduced here for their freshness in matter or outlook. This article was published in 'Young India' on 18-2-1926.]

@ "The Barias in Panchmahals, a considerable community on the same social level as the Dharalas in Kaira—whom the Borsad Satyagraha¹ made famous—met in conference the other day under the Presidentship of Sri Vallabhbhai Patel and passed resolutions of social reform of a far-reaching character. There were workers from other districts of Gujarat also present, but none of them, nor even the President, can be said to have inspired the resolutions. At the instance of a worker who has been working in the area for some years now and a Baria who has seen the actual benefits of the reform—of whom more later-groups of these Barias had previously met in different centres and discussed the resolutions amongst themselves. When they had thus taken a sort of referendum, they decided on the Conference and the principal men among them met the President before the meeting of the Conference and with his help drafted the resolutions. These relate among other things to abstinence from drink etc. They also cover matters like extravagant postmortem and postnuptial dinners, the resolution permitting only those who can afford to go in for these dinners, and prohibiting the incurring of debts, therefore, and also declaring that any one is at liberty to refrain from giving these dinners and that the community shall, in no way, coerce such a person. Penalties of social ex-communication and small fines are also laid down, but the whole authority to carry out the resolutions vests in a thoroughly representative Panchayat (a group of leaders) who will work in consultation with the chief worker in the area. There are about 900 spinning wheels in the area and a resolution has been passed for carrying on a vigorous propaganda in teaching carding and spinning. They advisedly refrained from interdicting the use of mill cloth, as they thought it might be a hardship to some of the very poor members of the community who have no land and who subsist on daily labour.

"I have already referred to the genesis of the Conference. The desire, however, on the part of the groups that previously met in different centres was the direct result of an experiment in intensive constructive work, including redemption of old debts, conducted four years ago by Sri Laxmidas Purshottam under the auspices of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. The area selected was Ramesara and a group



of about a dozen villages in its vicinity and he went and settled there with his family to work and live exactly like the children of the soil.

For three years he stayed there and succeeded in working a radical change in their outlook, if not in their daily life. A large number of them had not the strength to abide by the vows they had taken, and not the determination to stick to the new reform. But there were three or four families who forswore the old life of sloth and evil practices for good and all and are now an example to the community. One of them who was responsible for organising this Conference was there with his wife, his son, and his daughter and the family had opened a little Khadi exhibition in a corner of the *pandal*.

* * * * *

They were all clad in home-spun clothing and presenting a picture of domestic felicity. I met this Natha Patel later and asked him how it was that he had stuck to the reform. Almost with tears of joy he told me what constructive work had done for him: (Then follows an account of Natha Patel's changed life and new prosperity as given in the preceding article.)

"Even one such happy family is enough to justify that experiment in constructive work and debt redemption, which was no doubt on a lavish scale. But I am sure that the little leaven of Natha Patel's example will leaven the whole lump in course of time."

1. A punitive poll tax was imposed upon this whole county of Borsad on the ground that it was infested with bandits whom the population supported secretly. Under the leadership of Sri Vallabhbhai Patel the people rose in peaceful revolt and withheld payment. The opposition was so complete, that the British Government had to yield and withdraw the tax.



What is Art?

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan' d. 21-2-1926)

A dialogue made up from a talk Gandhiji had with a gentleman:

Q.: Has art any place in your philosophy? Do you believe that art—say, that of music—refines our tastes, makes our senses finer and more sensitive, widens our field of pleasant experiences, makes our world more beautiful and enjoyable and thus our life happier and more tranquil?"

A.: "It is possible that my definition of art differs from yours. To me art loses its perfection or high standard to the extent that it depends upon extraneous things. There is every possibility of artificiality increasing as these outer props go on increasing. This is one angle from which I view art. To my mind, moreover, the most sublime art is not one that only individuals with special talents can enjoy, but one which is capable of enjoyment by all. This universally enjoyable art cannot be really so, unless it is the least dependent on outer aids and implements.

"That is why I often say that the man, who can lose himself in ecstasy at the thought of the marvellous creation of God at the sight of the heavenly dome lighted by the moon and countless stars, will not need to cast a glance at the pictures of such sights drawn by the most skilful painter. He will have no desire to have the ceiling of his room decorated with multi-coloured pictures. He will get everything he wants from the ever-changing colours of the heavenly dome which on that account assumes new beauty every moment.¹

"The man who gets the chance to hear the incomparable and full-throated music spontaneously coming out of spiritual joy in the wayfarer's or the beggar's song or in that of a woman grinding corn in her hand-mill in the early morning, will perhaps not want to hear a musician who charges a thousand rupees for a soiree at which he sings 'deepak', 'purvi' or 'malakos' (names of Indian 'ragas'-melodies) in a highly cultivated style. Be that as it may, this at least is certain. The portrait of the sky drawn by the best of painters or the song of the most skilful musician will not be within the reach of the poorest of the poor, whereas he can have anywhere and everywhere the sight of the natural beauty of the sky and the songs of the above untaught singers.

"That unsophisticated and universally enjoyable art has a great place in the spiritual development of man. But in the process of his evolution, there comes a time



in man's life when he yearns to go beyond the arts that his five senses can apprehend and then he does go beyond it. For him then any art that pleases his flesh or senses becomes redundant and he is charmed by the beauty of the art of the soul."

Q.: "Do you then mean to say that the man of your imagination has no need to see, hear, taste, smell or touch anything? Do the objects of the senses—those pertaining to sound, surface, form, taste, and smell have no meaning for him? And if we take that state as our ideal, should we start deadening our senses right from the beginning?"

A.: "You will come to that same inference if you are too quick in interpreting what I mean to say. But please don't be hasty. Just think. Is it possible for the painter to run to his studio to enjoy the sight of his picture of sunset every time? Of course, at places where sunrises and sun-sets do not appear in all their glory, people will certainly satisfy their urge for a beautiful sight by looking at the painter's landscapes. But that man, for whom it is always easy to have views of sunsets and sunrises in all their natural beauty, will never pine for the sight of these artificial pictures. We may, as well, say that he who catches these natural sights once in a while in the whole year, draws their pictures or constructs them in images in order that he can see those sights daily through these creations. But what of the man who has no need for the aid of an image for his contemplation and worship of God, since images are after all mere symbols, mere reminders of God? In the same way one who can ever and always perceive in his own heart the play of the Divine that is visible also in the sky outside, will not be much concerned about looking even at the beautiful natural scenery of the moon and the brilliant clusters of stars. For instance, when the wise sage Kabir sang:

"Within this earthen pot itself
Are all the seven seas
And all the rivers and brooks."

"Within this earthen pot itself
Are all the holy towns
Kashi and Dwarka and all the rest.

"And in this earthen pot itself
Shine the sun and the moon
And stars and planets and the milky way.



"Within it, my friends, this Kabir says,
Lives Truth as well as God
Creating, protecting, and at rest."

did he care to cast a glance at any scenery outside himself? For him the whole creation conjured up from the objects of the senses cognised by sound, touch, form, taste, and smell had arisen within the space of his Heart. And that was why he sang the following in an outburst of joy:

"I can't, no, I can't,
When the music of the flute is heard,
I can never rest.
This is no spring and yet a flower blooms
And a bee never stops
Humming out of joy.
And when clouds rumble in the sky
And streaks of lightning flash
The heart heaves up in waves;
Its blooming lotus looks up
And thinks of the Beloved Lord.
The mind rushes to its Beloved
A mystic sound arises.
Says Kabir, "Today my life is lost
Is dead though living still."

Kabir was only a weaver and being a man of God he must have been a very skilful weaver too—for does not the scripture say 'Yoga is skill in action (Gita)?' And, getting his doth dyed in various colours he must have admired it too. But a time came when, instead of getting enamoured of his self-woven cloth coloured in charming tints, he began to appreciate the art of his Sai (God) who too had woven a fine sheet of cloth. In the sheet coloured by the Divine Dyer he saw an incomparably superb art: **झीनी झीनी, बीनी चदरिया**

"Fine, very fine, exceedingly fine
He wove this sheet." (the body)

and



My Lord is a dyer;
He coloured my *sari*
In the vat of 'bhava' (depth of feeling),
In the water of kindness;
He dyed it with the colour of Love,
Dipped it again and again
To make the colour fast
And wash off sorrow's dirt.
Kabir says, my beloved Dyer
Showered His grace on me
And when I wore that cooling *sari*,
My heart was full of joy.

Would his joy have abated in the least, if this Kabir had been deaf or dumb or blind? Is it not possible that blindness was a help rather than a hindrance to Surdas (a blind mediaeval poet)?

But just as a man of the highest spiritual wisdom has no aversion for a man who bows down to a temple deity,—He would, on the contrary, stand before the idol and be lost in God—, so the man who can get all he needs from the sight of the sky within, will not look down upon one who feels happy at the sight of the sky without, but he too will enjoy the scenery. And in the same way the latter will not slight the picture drawn by a painter. He will enjoy the sight of that picture also, if he happens to see it. All these three states are in a gradation of greater and greater (spiritual) freedom. And all of them can and do exist in a man at one and the same time. The reason is that every individual is consciously or unconsciously going from the gross to the subtle. But can there be any doubt that, when all is said about everything else, it is the art of the soul (the art of living the most godly life) that is immortal? A piece of art which depends upon outer implements or sensuous knowledge resembles the sublime immortal art of life only to that extent to which the artist's soul is poured into it. And where that piece lacks in soulfulness, it will be not a 'creation' but only a 'construction' and become short-lived. Only that piece of art leads to *mukti*-final beatitude, in which the immortal art of life or the soul is sufficiently instilled."



Q.: "But you have called the spinning wheel a means of this final beatitude (*mukti*) and eulogised the art of spinning as a very beautiful art. So even this art which depends upon gross or material objects does become a means of *mukti*?"

A.: "I have not said that the spinning wheel is a means of *mukti* for one and all. For me personally it certainly is, because the spinning wheel is not in my eye a mere wheel of wood and string and iron etc. I have woven around it a whole big world of my own. I look upon the wheel as the saving device of a poor man's life, as one that ties me with the poor with the gossamer string of love, as one that makes me one with them, and as one which I regard as the means of my liberation. It may not be a means of salvation for all. For instance, an Englishman may see nothing in the chant of Ramnam (chant of Lord Rama's Name), but Tulsidas found that the whole world paled into nothingness before the thrilling sound of that Name.

And why is it not possible to attain liberation by a merely physical means? Just as countless devotees may be getting in tune with the Infinite with the help of their '*tanpoora*' (a stringed musical instrument) and '*manjira*' (a pair of cymbals), so I cherish the idea of becoming one with God in the continued strain of the music of the spinning wheel.

1. Cf. "One especially fine morning when the moon was at the full and softly mellow and golden, a night of mystery and enchantment, he (Swami Vivekanand) stood silently for a long time drinking in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly he turned to us and said: "Why recite poetry when there" pointing to sea and sky, "is the very essence of poetry?"—P. 44. "*Inspired Talks*" 2nd Edition.



25.2.1926

Truth vs. Brahmacharya

(Gandhiji's article translated by M. D. in 'Young India' of 25.2.1926).

"A friend writes to Mahadeo Desai:

"You will remember that in an article on *brahmacharya* published in 'Navajivan' sometime ago—translated in 'Young India' by you—Gandhiji admitted that he still had bad dreams. The moment I read it I felt that such admissions could have no wholesome effect, and I came to know later that my fear was justified.

"During our sojourn in England my friends and I kept our character unscathed in spite of temptations. We remained absolutely free from wine, woman, and meat. But on reading Gandhiji's article, one of the friends exclaimed to me in despair, 'If such is the case with Gandhiji even after his Herculean efforts, where are we? It is useless to attempt to observe *Brahmacharya*. Gandhiji's confession has entirely changed my point of view. Take me to be lost from today.' Not without some hesitation I tried to reason with him: 'If the way is so difficult for men like Gandhiji, it is much more so for us, and we should; therefore, re-double our effort'—The way Gandhiji or you would argue. But it was all in vain. A character that had been spotless so long was thus bespattered with mire. What would Gandhiji or you say, if some one were to hold Gandhiji responsible for this fall?

"As long as I had only one such instance in mind, I did not write to you. You would possibly have put me off by saying that it was an exceptional case. But there were more such instances and my fear has been more than justified.

"I know that there are certain things which are quite easy for Gandhiji to achieve and which are impossible for me. But by the grace of God, I can say that something which may be impossible even for Gandhiji may be possible for me. It is this consciousness or pride that has saved me from a fall, though the admission above mentioned has completely disturbed my sense of security.

"Will you please invite Gandhiji's attention to this fact?—especially when he is just in the midst of his autobiography. It is certainly brave to say the truth, and the naked truth, but the world and the readers of 'Navajivan' and 'Young India' will misunderstand him. I fear that one man's meat may be another man's poison."

The complaint does not come to me as a surprise. When non-cooperation was in full swing, and when during the course of the struggle I confessed to an error of



judgement, a friend innocently wrote to me: 'Even if it was an error, you ought not to have confessed it. People ought to be encouraged to believe that there is at least one man who is infallible. You used to be looked upon as such. Your confession will now dishearten them.' This made me smile and also made me sad. I smiled at the correspondent's simpleness. But the very thought of encouraging people to believe a fallible man to be infallible was more than I could bear.

A knowledge of one as he is, can always do good to the people, never any harm. I firmly believe that my prompt confessions of my errors have been all to the good for them. For me, at any rate, they have been a blessing.

And I may say the same thing about my admission of the bad dreams. It would do the world a lot of harm, if I claimed to be a perfect *brahmachari* without being one. For it would sully *brahmacharya* and dim the lustre of truth. How dare I undervalue *brahmacharya* by false pretences? I can see today that the means I suggest for the observance of *brahmacharya* are not adequate, are not found to be invariably efficacious, because I am not a perfect *brahmachari*. It would be an awful thing for the world to be allowed to believe that I was a perfect *brahmachari*, whilst I could not show the royal road to *brahmacharya*.

Why should it not be sufficient for the world to know that I am a genuine seeker, that I am wide awake, and that my striving is ceaseless and unbending? Why should not this knowledge be sufficient encouragement to others? It is wrong to deduce conclusions from false promises. It is wisest to draw them from things achieved. Why argue that because a man like me could not escape unclean thoughts, there is no hope for the rest? Why not rather argue that if a Gandhi who was once given to lust, can today live as friend and brother to his wife and can look upon the fairest damsel as his sister or daughter, there is hope for the lowliest and the lost? If God was merciful to one who was so full of lust, certainly all the rest would have His mercy too!

The friends of the correspondent who were put back because of a knowledge of my imperfections had never gone forward at all. It was a false virtue that fell at the first blast. The truth and observance of *brahmacharya* and similar eternal principles do not depend on persons imperfect as myself. They rest on the sure foundations of the penance of the many who strove for them and lived them in their fullness. When I have the fitness to stand alongside those perfect beings, there will be much more determination and force in my language than today. He whose thoughts do not wander and think evil, whose sleep knows no dreams and who can be wide awake



even whilst asleep, is truly healthy. He does not need to take quinine. His incorruptible blood will have the inherent virtue of resisting all infections. It is for such a perfectly healthy state of body, mind, and spirit that I am striving. This knows no defeat or failure. I invite the correspondent, his friends of little faith, and others to join me in that striving, and I wish that they go forward even like the correspondent quicker than I. Let my example inspire those who are behind me with more confidence. All that I have achieved has been inspite of my weakness, inspite of my liability to passion, and because of my ceaseless striving and infinite faith in God's grace.

No one need, therefore, despair. My Mahatmaship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics, which is the least part of me and is, therefore, evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence, and *brahmacharya* which is the real part of me. That permanent part of me, however small, is not to be despised. It is my all. I prize even the failures and disillusionments which are but steps towards success.¹



28-2-1926

An Ideal Marriage

(Translated from 'Navajivan' d. 7-3-1926)

The following is the substance of Gandhiji's benedictory address on the occasion of the marriage of Sri Jamnalalji Bajaj's daughter, Kamalabehn, with Sri Rameshwar Nevatia on 28-2-1926.

Marriages in Hindu society are celebrated now-a-days in extravagant pomp and splendour. There are many tempting attractions like musical bands, gorgeous processions, and luxurious caste-dinners and the religious sanctity of marriage disappears. A marriage has grown into such a costly affair that a poor man looks upon its celebration by him as a calamity. It is impossible for a present-day marriage to inspire the couple to lead a life of self-restraint, specially because parents by making up a great show and by other ways contrive to excite as much passion in the newly-weds as possible. What a contradiction it may seem that a marriage ceremony is performed under the auspices of an Ashram which looks upon *brahmacharya* as the highest ideal in life! But this occasion should rather be regarded as an inevitable concession to the needs of the situation. The *dharma* of non-violence forbids coercion altogether. A marriage becomes a duty for one who finds it difficult to practise the ideal of *brahmacharya* in its pristine purity. Should not then the party that performs this duty be blessed?

"Wedding is a religious ceremony and not a free pass for self-willed indulgence. Those who cannot sublimate their passion in any other way are allowed, through the religious tie of marriage, to indulge in sex only to the most limited extent that they find indispensable.

It was, therefore, decided that this wedding should by keeping it free of all pomp, become an example to the Marwari society and give a cold douche to the irreligion (*adharma*) that goes on at present in the name of reform and civilization. But as it was difficult to perform such an exclusively religious ceremony in Wardha or Bombay, it was thought advisable to do it here. By God's grace both the wedding parties and their relatives agreed to the proposal.

Marwaris are a rich community and also have the evils attendant on wealth. All the same they have love for religion. They spend hundreds of thousands of rupees every year after religious objects. I say so from full personal experience. Both



Jamnalalji and myself, therefore, thought that if the marriage is performed in simplicity—it would serve two ends at one stroke—self-interest and service to others. Invitations to guests who are present here were given in order that they may see for themselves a wedding ceremony performed in the simplest way, i.e. with only religious rites, so that if they like this new idea, they may adopt it and induce others to do so. India does not become a rich country because there are a handful of rich men in it. Far from it, this is but a country of the miserables. Of all countries in the world India contains perhaps the largest number of people who suffer from continued starvation and hence for want of timely meals, become victims of diseases or grow listless and inanimate. Even millionaires belonging to such a wretchedly poor country have no right to act in a way that aggravates the pain of starvation. It is from India itself that the Indian rich earn their wealth. They don't return laden with wealth from foreign parts. Exploitation of even other peoples is a sin. But here the situation is worse still. In India, those who are millionaires and multi-millionaires have grown rich by making their own poor countrymen poorer still. The seven hundred thousand villages of India are gradually being destroyed, they have fallen into distress. Under this situation no man has a right to cavalierly waste his money. He should spend after marriage the minimum necessary for the observance of religious rites and give away in charity the money saved from expensive festivities, so that both the poor and the rich may benefit thereby.

"Looked at from this point of view, this new celebration of marriage is worth adoption. This is a reform of no small importance. Its roots go deep and will bring forth great results. If a poor man adopts it, he himself does stand to gain, but he cannot set an example. But a rich man can do so, if only he leads the simple life of a poor man. Sri Jamnalalji, who can easily spend thousands of rupees after his daughter's marriage, abstained from using his power of riches and spent only what was barely necessary for religious observances. This fact cannot but have splendid results, because, as the Bhagwad Gita says, 'Everyone follows what the leader in society does.'

Adoption of this simplicity means service to both your religion and your country. Both the bride and the bridegroom are here and both are sensible persons. Both of them must understand that those who have sponsored this system of marriage after such deep and careful deliberation and invited the presence of such respectable men as witnesses, can never wish that the marriage should become the means of making the slaves of passion. This simple way is chosen in order that they may provide a worthy ideal of married life. The scripture lays down that sexual indulgence is



allowable not for its own sake but for continuing the race. We have forgotten this vital matter and nobody ever points it out to us. Let me tell Rameshwarprasad (the bridegroom) that the wife is not the slave of her husband, she is 'the other half' (*ardhangini*-half-body), his indispensable colleague in the performance of *dharma*, and his friend. Let him not, even in his dream, look upon Kamala as his servant-maid. I have said elsewhere that marriage is a new birth. After this their new birth, I wish that the newly-weds will lead a life of due self-restraint, that they will be like Shiva and Parvati (one of the Trinity and His Consort or Power), Satyavana and Savitri.² Sita and Rama. The Hindu *dharma* has given such a high place to woman that we say 'Sita-Ram' not 'Ram-Sita', 'Radha-Krishna' not 'Krishna-Radha'. Who could have known Rama, had there been no Sita ? Had there been no Savitri, Satyavan's name would have meant nothing. And can you imagine the Pandavas going down to history, if there were no Draupadi (the Mahabharata heroine)?

"Let us wish that this action (marriage) brings good results, that this couple leads a life which will give me no cause for repentance. I bless both of them. May they live long, adorn their parents' names, and serve and protect their religion and country."

1. Gandhiji's note on the above translation by M.D.: "*Brahmacharya* means not merely mechanical celibacy. but it means complete control over all the organs and senses enabling one to attain perfect freedom from all passions and hence from sin in thought, word, and deed—MKG.

2. This princess went out with her King-father's permission, on the mission of finding a husband for herself. She chose Satyavana, an exiled prince living with his parents in a forest. Sage Narada, the family Guru, approved of

the choice in all other respects but said that Satyavana would die soon after his marriage. Savitri insisted all the same, the parents agreed, and she married him. Satyavana died as predicted, but Savitri, in her subtle body, could closely follow her husband who was being carried away by Yama, the Lord of Death. Her tireless pursuit and intense love pleased Yama who gave her husband back to her. Savitri is still worshipped as the ideal of a devoted wife. The story, figuratively interpreted, has become the theme of an epic in English by Sri Aurobindo.



4-3-1926

Takli-Spinning in Labour Schools

(M.D.'s article in "Young India" dt. 4-3-1926)

@ I wrote in November last a note on 'takli'-spinning in schools, organised by the Labour Union, Ahmedabad. There was another spinning competition in January this year, and the results are as noteworthy as on the previous occasion.

There were in November about 600 children on the rolls and 183 competed. In January this number rose to 259. This does not, of course, represent the increase in the number of spinners. The increase in the number of competitors was due to about 60 more children in the primary and infant classes taking part in January. But the results all round show a steady progress. In the fifth form there were ten children none of whom spun over 125 yards per hour in November. At the last competition, however, there were two who spun over 125 yards. In the fourth form also one boy attained a speed of over 125 yards. In the third form the competitors remained the same and the number of those spinning over 125 yards also remained the same, but instead of 8 spinning over 75 yards per hour in November, there were 17 in January. In the second form there were in January 2 children spinning over 125 yards instead of none in November, 14 spinning over 75 yards instead of 9 in November and 20 spinning over 50 yards instead of 13 in November. In the primary form in January there were 7 who spun over 125 yards instead of none in November, and 25 spinning over 60 yards instead of 24 in November. The infant form also showed similar progress.

Teachers also competed and their results are also worth

First Competition							
No.	Spinners	Over 125 yds.	Over 100 yds.	Over 75 yds.	Over 50 yds.	Under 50 yds.	
33	26	3	4	11	5	3	
Second Competition							
32	32	5	3	6	8	10	

These tables show a progress among the enthusiasts and a decline among the indifferent spinners.

But eloquent as are these figures, those about monthly spinning are more eloquent still. We have detailed figures of different schools. Exigencies of space prevent us from giving the detailed tables for the six months from July to December,



but a brief analysis will be interesting and instructive. The tables give the average yarn spun daily by a boy each month. It is a small average, though there are spinners of 125 yards an hour, just as the average income of an Indian is only Rs. 30 a year, though there are a handful of millionaires in the land. But even this average is steadily improving. The average per boy was 10 yards per day and 8 yards per day in July and August. But it rose to 21 yards in September, to 45 yards in October, came down to 31 yards in November and was 28 yards in December, which means that the production per day per boy is nearly thrice the amount of six months ago. Let no one laugh at these figures which at first sight look trifling enough. But they represent the average worked out from the figures of 8 schools taken together. Thus even in the first and second months when the average was so low as 10 or 8 yards per day, one of the schools had an average of 27. The same school reached an average of 69 yards in September and 94 yards in October. The other schools are also steadily progressing. One of the schools having an average of 2 yards in July rose to an average of 47 yards; in October, another which had an average 5 yards in July rose to 30 in October, 40 in November, and 45 in December. And finally let us see what these trifles mean in the aggregate. Let us take the total production of these schools. July, 54, 145 yards; August, 58, 986 yards; September 127,039 yards; October, 170,583 yards; November, 192,526 yards; and December 147,184 yards; which means a total production of 743,463 yards.

Let every school that has 'takli' or 'charkha'-spinning on its syllabus copy the example of these schools which are carrying on a sustained and remarkable endeavour. Let them maintain tables of progress like these schools and the result will be something beyond their expectation.

Let me also mention in conclusion that the managing committee in-charge of these schools are sparing no pains in maintaining the progress in spinning. Having regard to the results of these six months they have issued circular letters to the teachers to aim at three objects to be achieved in the near future: (1) that every teacher should reach a speed of at least 100 yards an hour; (2) that the fourth and the fifth form boys should try to attain an average speed of 100 yards an hour; the third and the second forms an average of 75 yards and the primary and infant forms an average of 50; and (3) that every school should reach an average of 50 yards a boy a day.



7-3-1926

'Takli' in Schools

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan' d. 7.3.1926)

Those boys and girls who wish to join the Juvenile Section of the all India Spinners Association, have been advised by Gandhiji to prefer the *takli* over the spinning wheel. This advice was given after knowledge of the experiment in takli spinning carried out by the children in his Ashram and in the labour schools of Ahmedabad. The Managing Committee of the latter has made a good start in the spread of their successful idea to other schools. The first to catch the idea is the 'New Gujarati School'. I happened to go there on the 24th last, to see how the *takli* experiment was faring. There were two sections of spinners—on the spinning wheels and on *taklis*. The spinning wheel was introduced there 3 or 4 months ago and the *takli* only 2 months ago and yet it is the *takli* that has shown excellent results.

I saw 40 children spinning on *taklis*, some of whom appeared to be only the earliest beginners and were lacking in sufficient practice. All the same 2 out of them spun 85 yards of 13 counts and 91 yards of 13 ½ counts both of 'good' quality. Similarly four others spun 77 yards of 16 counts, 68 yards of 17 counts, 63 yards of 13 ½ counts, and 61 yards of 15 counts and all of it 'good' yarn. These 6 children can thus be regarded as fit for membership of the Juvenile Section. Two others spun more than 50 yards and those who spun over 40 yards were quite a number. There were 14 children who till then spun less than 25 yards and their yarn could not be termed satisfactory.

Spinners on the spinning wheel were 18 in number. Three of the best of them spun 97, 88, and 81 yards. But it was definitely not good. Three others spun 55, 59, and 68 yards. All the rest could spin only between 25 to 40 yards. It must be added that the spindles were not in good order and many of them were raw in the art of spinning. The fault may lie with the manager or there may be some organizational difficulty, but the fact stands that the four months' experiment with the spinning wheel cannot be termed as impressive as that of 3 months with the *takli*. That does not mean that the experiment of the spinning wheel in schools cannot be successful. Where there is space enough for wheels and where the spinning class is in charge of an efficient teacher the spinning wheel will bring excellent results. In fact, the children of the Satyagrahashrama school ply the spinning wheel and not the *takli*. But where is want of space, lack of spinning wheels, and difficulties in keeping them in good order, it will be the *takli* that will beat the wheel.



Let us hope that the 10 or 12 children who have passed the test in spinning on and *taklis* wheels will get themselves as members of the Juvenile Section. We may also suggest that Municipal schools should now take up this experiment of *takli* in schools.



7-3-1926

Spinning in the Ashrams

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

The Wardha Ashram also has accepted the system of keeping a register of spinning work. There are 46 names on the roll and 42 have been present regularly. 62,130 rounds, each of 4 feet, were spun in the first week, but during this week the total has gone up to 76,679 rounds and the average is 264 rounds per hour.

Figures of the *Sabarmati Ashram* were given a month ago. Those figures are worth comparison with those of the last week's.

In the second week there were 56 men, 30 women, and 32 children. In the sixth i.e. the last week, there were 53 men, 34 women and 34 children on the roll. The following are the figures in rounds spun

	Second Week	Sixth Week
Men	81,393 rounds	79,893 rounds
Women	41,472 "	63,279 "
Children	47,005 "	68,382 "
Total:	1,69,870 "	2,11,554 "

The average of rounds was 251 a month ago, but it is 265 now.



11-3-1926

Sacrificial Spinning

(M.D.s note in 'Young India' d. 11.3.1926)

@ *Varad* is a little village in the *Bardoli Taluka*, with a national school that has stood many a trial, and has for its headmaster Mr. Zaverbhai Patel who has achieved in spinning a record as yet achieved by none—a record not in count (though he spins upto 83 counts), a record not in the quantity spun on a competition day, but a record in spinning each day all the year round and reaching an aggregate of 11,25,000 yards (75 lbs. of 18 counts). 8,00,000 yards he has presented to the Congress and the rest he intends weaving himself. And all this work over and above the regular work of four or five hours a day at school! In a special note on this in the *Navajivan* Gandhiji says: "It is no ordinary thing to spin nearly 12 lakh yards of yarn in 12 months. It means nearly 3500 yards a day, which again means eight to nine hours a day at the wheel, assuming the speed to be 400 yards *every* hour. Devoted work at the wheel for one year and for such length of time must be regarded as a *Maha-Yajna* (great sacrifice). 'I am a seeker after self-realization,' says Mr. Zaverbhai Patel, 'and I would give any thing in the world for the sake of it.' He has my hearty congratulations on the pursuit of this selfless object, and I wish he will be able to keep up his *Yajna*. Let his *Yajna* be a beacon to us, and let it spur us to do at least a half-hourly sacrificial spinning every day."



14-3-1926

True Cow-Protection

(M.D.'s Gujarati note in 'Navajivan')

A 'Goshala and Pinjrapole Conference' (Conference of those interested in maintaining cow-sheds and institutions to shelter old and maimed animals) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa is to be held at Munger. Gandhiji's letter to its Honorary Secretary gives a novel method of 'cow-protection.' The Secretary had sent Gandhiji a scheme for it, but Gandhiji called it tame and showed in the following words how our *Goshala* and *Pinjrapoles* should be so transformed as to make them institutions of cow-protection in the right sense of the term:

'Cow-slaughter takes place only in towns and there is only one way to prevent it. That is to buy up animals for sale at higher prices than what the butchers offer. This would be a feasible plan only when we are able to earn from the cows the same amount that we spend after saving them. That income, again, is possible only when we take up dairying ourselves and start business in dead animals' hides as a religious act. Just as by our substitution of milk we saved ourselves from eating beef and on that account regarded milk as a sacred food, so shall we now have to regard the hides, bones, etc., of dead animals as sacred in order to save cows and bullocks from slaughter. That means we should now do these two things:

1. We must take help from those who know the sciences of dairying and tanning.
2. Owing to their ignorance people at present regard the business of dealing in hides, bones etc. as irreligious. They should learn to consider it not only an innocent, but a sacred profession.

If this view is correct, we should conduct *goshalas* and *pinjrapoles* in such a way as to turn them into good dairies and tanneries.

The work of cow-protection has now grown lifeless because of our failure to gain our object. Though hundreds of thousands of rupees are collected in charity, we have not been able to save even 10% of our cows, numerically considered. But that is not all. The cow has become a cheap commodity and is slaughtered in larger numbers. All this is due to our ignorance of the right way of cow-protection.



14-3-1926

Spinning in the Ashram

(M.D.'s Gujarati note in 'Navajivan')

Though figures of the spinning work in the Ashram were published only last week, a special reason has arisen for referring to it again this week. Spinners were classified so far into three divisions—men, women, and children. The average output of each class used to be noted down. But the children could not bear the idea that their average output should come less than those of men and women. They, therefore, demanded that the output of infants of 6 or 7, who spun very little, should be separately classified. That was done and still their average often came below that of women. That spurred the children and they resolved to beat their elders in spinning. Monday is an off-day for them and many of them usually spend most of the day in play. Instead of doing so they decided to spend the whole of their spare time on the off-day in spinning and all of them spun in right earnest. The result was that their average on that day was 1,192 rounds, i.e. nearly 1,600 yards; and those who made a record in spinning on that day were two children with 2,700 rounds (3,600 yards) and 2,500 rounds (3,333 yards) to their credit. Here are the last week's and this week's figures:

	Last Week	This Week
Men	79,893 rounds	80,313 rounds
Women	63,279 "	78,690 "
Children	68,382 "	74,396 "
Infants		19,575 "
Total:	2,11,554 "	2,52,974 "

This week's big jump is thus due to the strenuous exertion of the children. While praising and giving his blessings to them Gandhiji said that it would be good if they showed the same spirit every Monday. The children also must bear in mind that this their record effort is only a stray and sudden spurt, and it is really Sri Zaverbhai who has provided the country with the ideal to be aimed at. For it was he who, over and above his daily work of five hours as a teacher, spun on an average 4,000 yards per day continuously for one whole year and thus performed the great sacrifice (*mahayajna*) of spinning 12,00,000 yards.



21-3-1926

Question Box

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

[These questions have been selected from Gandhiji's mail. The substance of the questions is in my language, but the answers are in Gandhiji's—M.D.]

Q.: Are we morally justified in breaking a vow that we take in a fit of emotional excess or one in taking which we realize our mistake after a few days' observance?

A.: 'One should take a vow only for a good purpose. The vow to do something bad is really no vow. If anybody takes such a vow owing to his ignorance, it becomes his duty to break it as soon as he comes to know of his error. For instance, if a man takes a vow to commit adultery, his salvation lies only in giving it up. It is a sin to keep that vow.'

Q.: A perplexed friend asks Gandhiji's advice. His wife died a year and a half ago. 'When she was a live, I used to feel very worried at the thought that, but for the bondage of home life, I would have plunged into the service of the nation. But now, when God has freed me, I realize that I was labouring under a great delusion. The relatives are very insistent that I should re-marry. I have not yielded so far and always pray to God to save me. I have stated clearly to my elders that I do not wish to re-marry, so long as I do not earn enough to stand upon my own legs. But they are very unhappy. Will you show me the way out?'

A.: "There are some ailments which only time shows the remedy of. In the meanwhile we should remain perfectly quiet and patient. If you are inflexible in your resolve not to marry—whatever the cost, so long as you have not chosen your field of work and begun to earn sufficiently, you should speak to your elders courteously but firmly and let them know your mind. They will be pleased. If, however, your mind is not firm to that extent and there is a lurking desire, it is best to listen to their advice. There is no doubt that it is very difficult for the member of a rich family to save himself from a re-marriage. Only when the very thought of a re-marriage gives him the creeps, he should abstain. It is, therefore, my advice that you should resort to a lonely spot, think calmly and then do you what your heart says. All I can do is to show the way. Boldly follow



your own conscience, without minding my or anybody else's advice, at the time of coming to a decision."

Q.: Your advice 'marriage in a simple style' is all right and there are some friends here who are prepared to have only religious rites performed in marriages. But one of them has a daughter too young for marriage. Not even her nose and ears have been probed (for wearing ornaments). When in these days every old custom is tested for its worth, the question has arisen whether it is right to get the child's ears and nose pierced—at least the nose (The nose-ring or button is regarded as a necessary auspicious wear). Will you kindly guide us?

A.: "To me for one it appears nothing but barbarous to probe any limb of anybody."

Q.: A friend sends a printed and circulated handbill wherein Gandhiji's statements are misinterpreted and says, "If you don't answer this, one of the parties will be seriously harmed."

A.: "I have read the hand-bill. There is no doubt it is extremely filthy. But it is my advice not even to think of it. Such things get at least some importance when we care to answer them. And there are people who write such things only to catch the public eye. I shall clarify some points in it, if a relevant occasion arises and I find a clarification necessary."

Q.: A correspondent, who is a lawyer, is suffering from a physical disease and mental uneasiness. As he does not earn, those who had pinned their hopes on his income gave him all sorts of trouble and he is compelled to live separately. He feels very helpless and does not know what to do.

A.: "I have received your letter. If only you can forget that you are a lawyer, I can show you many a remedy. But can I ask you to undergo physical labour? You may spin and make others do so, card and get others do the same. Would you like that work? Will you be content to earn your bread in the sweat of your brow like a labourer? My remedies are, all as easy as they are difficult. But if you can lead a labourer's life, you may let me know."

Q.: The writer is a student, who has wasted his body from many bad habits. He is losing his vitality day by day. Some people advise him to marry, some others to take rest. He has lost the strength to give up his bad habits. What should he do?

A.: "It is difficult to advise you without meeting you personally. However, the following suggestions, many of which you can put into practice, can be given to



you: "Try to stay and sleep in the open air as long as you can. Take the lightest possible food—which can just maintain the body, but not fill up the stomach. Give up spices altogether. Take very little pulse, if you can't do without it. Never take substances that are fried, fatty, or difficult to digest. Take light physical exercises, morning and evening.

Have only '*satsang*', which means company of good men and good books. 'Good' books mean 'clean' books.

"If your body is not too wasted, take a cold bath everyday.

"Keep your mind and body always engaged in some activity during your waking hours.

"Go to bed early and get up at 4 a.m. Begin the day with readings from the Bhagwad Gita, Ramayana or any book in which you have firm faith, and ponder over them.

"Do that much and give up the idea of marriage altogether. It is entirely wrong to believe that a marriage is indispensable for living a clean life."

Q.: Two friends have requested Gandhiji to accept their contribution in yarn as subscription for 'Young India'.

A.: "Your suggestion to send your subscription in self-spun yarn is certainly a novel idea. But no rule has been made so far in this matter and there is no arrangement in 'Young India Office' for acceptance of yarn contribution. But if you send me 50,000 yards of well-twisted, excellent yarn of 20 counts, I shall request the Manager of 'Young India' to accept it by way of your subscription, i.e., the Ashram will buy up your yarn and credit the amount in the 'Young India Office.' 50,000 yards is worth more, nor less than the amount of subscription; it is not possible to fix the number of yards that would cost exactly 5 rupees (the subscription amount). Your yarn has got to be tested, its strength, durability, count etc. have to be found out, and only then can it be accepted as subscription in yarn. Please send it in hanks of 500 yards each, because if it is difficult to find out its number and quality, your yarn would be rejected. In case it is, it will be sent back to you at your cost."



28.3.1926

Question Box

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

[The following questions have been selected from Gandhiji's mail. Their substance is given in my language, but the answers are in Gandhiji's—M.D.]

Q.: After Gandhiji's recovery from illness (which began on 23.1.1926), a friend earnestly requested him to go on taking quinine, as only a long course of it destroys malaria germs.

A.: "I don't take quinine now. Are you sure that quinine saves a man from malaria for ever? Do you know of any such case? During the three or four days of fever I took quinine in small dozes. The fever has definitely gone now. The doctor gave some injections also. I don't know how far they are helpful but instead of arguing the matter, I took them."

Then there was another friend, a champion of exclusive reliance on naturopathy. He was deeply distressed at Gandhiji's use of quinine and strongly remonstrated: 'Whatever made you spoil your constitution with the use of quinine, the breeding-home of numerous ills' etc.

A.: "The evils you recount arise from large dozes and a long use of quinine. But I took it in only small dozes of 5 grains and never more than 10 grains in a day and this too mixed with lemon juice and soda-bi-carbonate dissolved in water. I did not take a single grain more than 30 in all in 5 days. For four days I took only 5 grains each day. This small quantity does not seem to have done me any harm. And I got the added advantage of being able to satisfy many friends and doctors who wanted me to take 15 grains per day.

"And you cannot make such sweeping charges against quinine. Its efficacy in curing malaria—at least temporarily— is quite evident. People do not worry over bad after—effects, if they are saved from the immediate ravages of malaria. The attack on quinine should, therefore, be made with regard to its immediate effect also and it should be proved that quinine is no remedy in any sense of the term.

"As for myself, the reason for taking quinine was the very same for which I allowed to be operated upon in Jail. I agreed to the operation owing to the pressure of my situation as a prisoner. You may then imagine how much more



irresistible must have been the pressure of the love of my friends. But it is true also that I was fully aware that my acceptance of the operation disclosed my own weakness. And the use of quinine was due to my want of complete faith in what you call 'Naturopathy'. That system of cure has certainly not reached its final stage of perfection. If behind your protest there was also something other than natural remedies in your mind, it could only be faith in God and the feeling that one should be a mere witness to the body's ailments and suffer them quietly. I have not yet attained that stage of detachment. Only persistent effort can lead one to it. The certainty that the Preserver of the world protects you always is not easy to arrive at. Intellectual conviction does not help us there. That faith comes from intuitional spiritual experience."

Dealing with the same topic Gandhiji wrote to another friend:

"Please tell my friend in Burma that though I took injections of iron and arsenic, I wish to adhere to my views expressed in my article on medicines and doctors. It is one thing to cherish an ideal, another to be able to live up to it. And this is how matters stand with me today. My friends tell me that I have no personal claim or right over my body, that it belongs to the nation and that they and others have, therefore, as much right to be interested in the welfare of my body as I have. With their glamorous argument they make me believe that I am nothing more than a trustee for the protection of my body and I have, therefore, the right to pamper it. That is why friends like the one in Burma see a contradiction in my ideal and action. You may then tell them that they must rigidly stick to their resolve not to touch medicine and not to call a doctor, so long as they have not become a *mahatma* like myself and that it will do them good if they do not deviate from that straight and difficult path. And tell them privately that though I have yielded to the insistence of friends, I have taken only 30 grains of quinine in 5 days and only 5 injections in 5 weeks."

Q.: Thus writes a lady correspondent: "The Khaddar '*choli*' (bodice) is really good, it sucks up perspiration in hot weather and cools the body. But *saris* I can't put up with. I am so fond of foreign ones."

A.: "I have received your letter. Since you like Khadi *cholis* will you not take a step further and start wearing *saris*? I wonder how a patriotic heart can have a taste for foreign clothes. If we really love our country, we ought to be fond of native



products. Can she be called a daughter of India who has an aversion for clothes spun and woven by India's poor?"

Q.: The Secretary of a District Committee writes: "We want to have a permanent building for the District Office. I send you herewith for your approval our appeal for funds. The Khadi workers of my province think that their knowledge is perfect and owing to their senseless acts Khadi makes no head way. I request you to procure for us 5,000 rupees from the All India Khadi Board for the proposed Khadi Bhavan (emporium),"

A.: "Your letter and with it the appeal. You say that very little Khadi work is done in your district, that workers consider their wisdom infallible and do foolish things. What good would it do, if you construct a *Bhavan* under these adverse circumstances? How can you expect my approval for the move? Will the building itself of the *Bhavan* end the folly of workers? Or create a love for service? A building should rather be constructed at that place where social workers are increasing in number, all rules and regulations are observed, people have faith in the workers who, moreover, are united by mutual trust and a strong organisation. My advice is clear and definite. Do not even think of erecting a *Bhavan*, so long as sincere and efficient workers do not join in the work."

Q.: A lady requested Gandhiji to go to Jagannathpuri (famous for its temple) for a change of air.

A.: "If it is a sea-shore where I should go for a change of air, why may I not prefer the small coastal village near my birth-town? How can I have the wonderful joy of perfect quiet and natural village-life in (Jagannath—) Puri, where you see on one side the lordly palaces of the rich frowning at you and on the other the scramble at the temple gate of the famine-stricken skeletons for just a handful of dirty rice? The sight of Puri, moreover, reminds you not only of the glory of its sacred history, but also of our present tenible plight—it has become today a health-centre for soldiers who are quartered at our expense in our country in order to suppress our freedom. All these thoughts agonize me. When I was there, my friends had provided a beautiful spot on the sea-shore and simply overwhelmed me with their love. All the same I felt ill at ease. What could they do to relieve me of my mental torture at the triple sight of the barracks of soldiers, the starving Udias; and the hard-hearted rich staying side by side?"



4-4-1926

(M.D.'s article in Gujarati 'Navajivan')

Question Box

(These questions have been culled from Gandhiji's mail. Their substance is in my language but the answers are in Gandhiji's—M.D.)

Q.: 'Fourteen years ago I did some business, but failed. I then took service, but could not save much. I used to feel worried, but would gain peace by singing the hymn "*Nirbala Ke Bala Rama* (God is the strength of the weak). I cannot please my boss fully, as I am asked to do things which I cannot morally approve. So neither can I earn much nor do I know how much *dharma* I am able to keep. As I have children I sometimes think of observing *brahmacharya* now, but if in doing so I fall a prey to the new trouble of wet dreams, would it not mean falling out of the frying pan into the fire? And if that is so, why not keep to the old way? Is it necessary to have the wife's consent for observing *brahmacharya*?'

A.: "There is nothing wrong whatever in feeling at peace with yourself by taking God's name. Inability to gain wealth should be no cause for pain. Whether you are able to keep your *dharma* is a question you alone can answer. Your simile of falling out of the frying pan into the fire is not correct. It is a serious mistake to think that a man grows weaker through wet dreams than through a sexual act. Both of them do cause weakness, but it is sex-contact that often causes greater debility. But owing to the force of custom and habit, we cannot see the latter's harm, while a wet dream gives a shock to the mind and that shock makes us imagine ourselves weaker than we actually become. And probably you know that sexual contact does not save the man from wet dreams. If, therefore, you realize the value of *brahmacharya* and wish to observe it, you may carry on without worrying over your failure to stop discharges inspite of your constant effort. You will gain control over your mind only after a long-time practice in *brahmacharya*. One cannot fix any definite time-limit, since the period of the practice varies with individual capacity. Some are not able to gain that control even to the end of their days. All the same they do get the great benefit accruing from even the physical observance of *brahmacharya* and become owners of a fitter body which makes it easier for them to control the mind. In my view, for the observance of *brahmacharya* the consent of the mate is necessary neither for a husband nor a wife. It is indeed desirable that each partner should help



other in the matter and an effort must be made to get the consent. But whether that approval is given or not, he or she who wants to observe *brahmacharya* is entitled to do so and both may get the benefit. Mutual consent is not necessary for abstinence from sex-contact, but indispensable for having it. The man who has it without obtaining his wife's sanction is a tyrant and breaks both the law—that of God and society."

Q.: You regard it a barbarous act to pierce any limb of a girl, but it is mentioned in the *Vedas* as one of the religious rites the Aryans should perform. The practice, moreover, has support of the argument of physical health. One gains some electric power through wearing gold, silver, or wool in this way and is saved from diseases like hydrocele .

A.: "I do not know of any Vedic rite for piercing the nose and ears. But even if it is proved that there does exist such a rite, I would say that, like those for a human sacrifice, this rite also should not be performed. I know of many men who had their nose and ears probed and were still suffering from hydrocele. And everybody knows that there are countless human beings who are free from that disease even though their nose and ears have not been probed. I also know that cases of hydrocele have been cured without the patients having to undergo that probing. The sentence of the '*Vaidya*' (physician) you have quoted says, 'It appears that the custom of probing has been introduced.' If there are three persons of different views in all of whom we have faith, we should either use our own intelligence for our action, or if we don't we should follow one on whom we have greater faith."

Q.: In your article "Religious Questions." you state, "If the Soul is universally one, its wandering in different forms of life as '*jiva*' (Soul in an individual encasement) should not be regarded as impossible." If that is so, is it possible for that one soul to take a birth in an animal or a vegetable form after coming out of a human body? Will you kindly make this point clear?

A.: It is my definite belief that a soul, even after taking birth in a human body, can fall and take an animal or a vegetable or some other body.

Q.: The correspondent is a Muslim young man. Owing to some innate propensities, he has a strong aversion for eating meat. He went on taking it, however, for a long time, without relishing it at all, but now he has given it up. But his very loving mother is dead against the idea and is deeply pained. If he displeases his



mother, he commits a grave sin and if he eats meat his own soul burns in agony. What should he do?

A.: "You alone can solve the religious riddle that faces you . If you are convinced that it is your *dharma* to renounce meat, you must be firm and refuse to submit to your mother's love. If you are giving it up only as an experiment, it is undoubtedly a sin to wound the mother's heart."

Q.: A young man and a young girl are Hindus of different castes. They have grown in each other's company since childhood and have the same tastes. They believe that pure love exists between them. Why should they not marry? But how to overcome the obstacle of the difference in caste? How to satisfy the elders? And what about their future progeny*? If the marriage is delayed very long, they are afraid that out of impatience they may succumb to the temptation of the flesh. They, therefore, want an early solution.

A.: "Where love is really pure there is no place for impatience. Pure love is not a physical but a spiritual union. Love of the body is lust. The bondage of caste deserves greater respect than the gross love of the body. No such barriers come in the way of the union of souls. But such love means austere self-suffering and such patience as can bear separation till death. The first thing you should do is to put your difficulty before your elders, to hear what they say and ponder over it. And in the end when your heart grows pure from the observance of self-restraint and other virtues, it is your *dharma* to honour the dictate—whatever it be—of your conscience."

1. Inter-caste marriages were rare at that time and social ostracism and other difficulties were stupendous.



11-4-1926

The One Political Programme

M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan'

[An account of Sri Rajagopalachari's visits to numerous institutions to celebrate the National Week¹ will be given in the next issue. But here only a summary of his speech on the holy day of the 6th April is given. He and Dr. Suresh Banerji of Comilla were invited to speak at that meeting held in the Tilak Maidan—M.D.]

"Friends,

"I know people have now an aversion for public meetings. Even had nobody, therefore, come here except my personal friends, I would not have felt dissatisfied. But here I find unexpectedly a large gathering and I am really glad. That shows that at least you are still what you were, i.e., people who have got tired of sitting idly and want to do some work.

"Have you any recollection of the mammoth gathering held here seven years ago on this very same day? But I was then in Madras. There was no maidan there big enough to accommodate a vast meeting. We, therefore, made our Beach itself, which spreads for miles and miles, the place to hold our meeting and a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand people came there on that day. And do you know why, after a 24 hours' fast and prayers, people had on that day thronged the meetings all over the land? Because it was the day of celebration of the awakening of national consciousness. This awareness of our capacity to fight the strong power ruling over us dawned in us on that day, for the first time after ages. Till then we had believed that a serious fight was possible only between armed forces. But on that day we realized that though we had no arms, we did possess the power to put up a fight against a mighty government armed to the teeth. Friends, that was a great and glorious day for India. But it was more than that. It was a day of rejoicing for the whole world, because all the oppressed nations in it found on that day that even if they had no armies and armaments, they could fight the tyrant by means of non-violence and truth. Hence, it is a great day worthy of celebration. It is possible that one nation may find an effective weapon, but be incapable of using it, while another more fortunate nation may put it to use. On that auspicious day, the 6th of April, we found out quite a novel weapon which any nation could use when necessary. If Western Powers came to know of the date of the invention of gun-powder, they would celebrate it as a great day. Similarly, we came into the possession of *our* ammunition on the 6th. But that day is not for us



merely the day of the acquisition of our ammunition, but also a holy day, since we could then find out the power of our soul. That is why Gandhiji asks us to meet together on the 6th of April.

"Till then, we were in the plight of a people that had completely lost the consciousness of our innate condition. We had no idea of the great power that still lay within us. On that day we realized that we were not insects but men, that we possessed inexhaustible power, that nobody dared to rule over us against our will. If the maxim, '*knowledge is power*' is true, we became essentially free for all times on that 6th of April. Only, we have not yet seen that freedom in concrete shape, because we cannot or will not put that knowledge to use right today.

But how strange it is that, for the celebration of that sacred day on which the foundation of Swaraj and Khadi was laid, we have gathered together clad in foreign cloth—like champions of vegetarianism celebrating their principle by meat-eating or like teetotallers in a conference distributing liquor among themselves! We have gathered here on the day, the idea of celebrating which had sprung from Gandhiji's powerful imagination. The very meaning of that day's celebration lies in our being clad in our national dress—for that is the first step for our salvation. And if that first step is fully taken, it could prove even to be the last. But it is a matter of deep regret that even after seven long years of the fight, we have not yet been able to realize that Khadi is the one and only political programme for us. Petitions to the Government, speeches in legislatures, public meetings, college education or articles in the press—none of these is really a programme worth the name. Khadi alone is the one perfect political programme before the country and those who do not wear Khadi not only do not support that one political programme, but resist it.

"You people live in a big city. You cannot imagine how deep this big country has sunk in poverty. There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of villages in India where people earn hardly 2 ½ rupees per month. There is no sense in shedding tears of sympathy for them—if we refuse to buy a few yards of Khadi they have produced. They make that Khadi in the hope that we may buy it and they may earn a few bits daily. Khadi means both the remedy for the starvation and unemployment of the poor and the key to win Swaraj. Britain retains its hold on India today, because India is a big market for the sale of Lancashire goods. What else is there to keep them here? We are by no means eager to welcome with open arms the Collectors and Commissioners, or Governors and Viceroy who come here. And the intense heat here is certainly no



inducement. What is it then that makes them come here in a long unbroken line? Is it the temptation of big salaries that brings them here? No. The reason for their coming is only one—the consolidation and extension of the big market for their goods which exists here. In their country they have raised giants—their gigantic machines—, which have to be kept alive by feeding them every day. And by buying foreign cloth we only excite the already voracious hunger of these giants—their machines—and thus we ourselves tighten their strangle-hold on us. But we need not envy these people who have established these all-devouring ogres in their country. If we too were equally foolish and had raised similar monsters in all our cities to provide employment for our 300 million people, then, I assure you, our monsters would have grown so big that the whole world would have become only a little morsel for their inexhaustible hunger. For keeping these giants alive, we would have been compelled to conquer a new country every day by creating huge stocks of naval armaments, aeroplanes, poisonous gases.² Would you like that awful situation? No, we must be content with our Khadi and nothing else, as with that Khadi we can allay the hunger of our 300 millions and have no need to conquer other countries. It is enough if we can lead a quiet self-respecting life and look after our own country. But so long as we have not provided an honourable occupation to those 300 million countrymen of ours, we cannot lead that quiet life of self-content. And so long as we do not resuscitate the occupation of the spinning wheel, it is impossible for us to save these millions from starvation and unemployment. Agriculture alone is insufficient. Gandhiji has repeatedly told us that agriculture and the spinning wheel are the two lungs of our country. We are living today on only one of them. Never think that there is no harm if you don't spin. It is you who have taught our villagers to take to foreign clothes. It is now you who have to make them unlearn that lesson and start spinning and wearing Khadi.

"If you find spinning difficult, very well, there is this *takli* for you. If every young man and woman (of Ahmedabad) learns up the use of this weapon, what a tremendous effect would it produce! I assure you that the effect of this peaceful and innocent weapon would be greater than the combined effect of every citizen of Ahmedabad coming out, a pistol in hand, to shoot and kill. A pistol-shot may miss its mark, but not this *takli*. You see here, Sri. Mahadevbhai Desai spinning. As each yard is spun, one yard less of Lancashire cloth enters our land that very moment. If all our young men and women take up this occupation in right earnest, the British Government's eyes are certain to open to their situation here. You are likely to dismiss this talk as jugglery, but, I say, it was by means of this same jugglery that the British



came into India and it will be due to that very same jugglery, that they will leave the country.

"Now about Hindu-Muslim unity. But for the terrible news of Calcutta, I would have said something. But now it is useless. As we have deliberately resolved to go mad, how can we listen to wise talk? The Hindu believes that he will establish a Hindu Rajya (rule) and the Muslim a Muslim rule. Let us not live in this fool's paradise. Even American Whites have not been able to drive out the Negroes. Is it then possible for Hindus to drive out all Muslims or *vice versa*? There is no salvation for us except from unity and peaceful co-operation. But how can we learn this wisdom earlier than at the time fixed by God for it? There is no doubt, however, that a day is going to come when at the end of this night of continuous fighting, we shall see the light of wisdom. Gandhiji had indeed tried to teach us wisdom the easy way, but we are bent on learning it the hard way—of heavy sacrifices—and so we refuse to listen to him. But even if that learning of wisdom and implementing it is impossible today, Khadi is not. That is why I have called Khadi the one practicable programme at present before the country."

1. To keep up the national tempo and the memory of the Punjab atrocities, the 'National Week' was observed from the 6th April (the day of the Jallianwala massacre in Amritsar) to the 13th April, the week of the greatest atrocities on the Punjab.

2. The reader need not be reminded here that this was the talk of 1926 and the world has 'advanced' considerably since then—Translator.



11.4.1926

(M. D.'s article in 'Navajivan')

Question Box

[All the questions published under this caption are given in brief by M. D. in 'Navajivan', but their answers are in Gandhiji's own language. No prefatory note, therefore, will be given under the above title henceforth.—Translator.]

Q.: What is your view on *shraddha* (a post-mortem rite performed with a view to the comfort or elevation of a departed soul)? Will *shraddha* elevate the soul? What is the sense in our custom of taking the bones of a cremated relative to some holy river for immersion? How do you interpret the redemption by Bhagiratha of his ancestors—King Sagar's sons—by bringing down the holy river *ganga* to them?¹ Then again just because Ajamil died uttering *Narayana* was he redeemed, though in his crazy love he had at the time called only his son, whom he had casually named *Narayana*? (*Narayana* is one of the names of Lord Vishnu).

A.: 'I have no definite view on *shraddha*. I do not know whether there is any spiritual significance in its performance or not. Nor can I understand the idea that the departed soul is elevated thereby. It is possible that a kind of spiritual feeling may be intensified by the immersion of the bones of a cremated body in a river. I do not know if any other advantage accrues from the custom.

'I think that the story of Bhagiratha has no historical basis, but is a parable. The story of Ajamil's redemption through the mere casual utterance of *Narayana* is meant for increasing faith in God. I am not inclined to accept the idea that a man would gain salvation if at his dying moment he happens to utter the word 'Narayana', merely because that was his son's name. But the man, in whose heart Lord Narayan makes his abode owing to his constant practice of remembrance and who, therefore, remembers Him even at his last moment, is certain to gain final beatitude.

Q.: A friend refers to the practice of uncontrolled sex-relationship of married couples and requests Gandhiji to remove some people's misconception about it as a right and privilege and of some others as a duty. Is there a religious injunction that a man must have such contact with his wife on the 4th day of her menses?



A.: 'The couple you refer to as making it a point to indulge in lust, do not observe the proper *dharma* of man and wife. I have no hesitation in affirming that *they* are worse *than beasts*. A girl of 12 or 13 is incapable of performing a wife's function. The man who has physical intercourse with her commits a heinous sin.

'I did not know what you wrote about a woman in her menses. I cannot accept the idea that it is a must for the husband to sleep with his wife on the 4th day. It is indispensable, I think, that the husband should have no contact, whatever, so long at least as menstruation continues. At the same time I would not regard it wrong for the couple to have an intercourse, if they both wish it, after the discharge stops.'

Q.: What does "Observance of the *dharma* of the menses' period" mean? What is the harm if it is not observed? Why should a lying-in-woman also remain free from contact? And how long?

A.: 'Menses is a female disease recurring monthly. Perfect undisturbed rest, mental and physical is necessary for the patient and any contact with a lustful man is dangerous. 'The same reason applies to a woman in childbirth. I think our custom of providing her complete rest for at least 20 (30?) days is a very good one. That even women-relations are not allowed to touch her is taking this idea to an excess.'

Q.: 1. How to give the best education? 2. What should one read for his highest (spiritual) welfare? 3. Which is the best food? 4. A patient got a headache from tea; so he gave it up and took only one meal in a day. He feels hungry in the evening and yet in the morning the stomach seems to be full. He can't understand this. 5. What are the ways of attaining concentration of the mind? 6. If even you could not hear (in a particular case) the still small voice within you, is it ever possible for a man like myself to do so? 7. What are the methods to gain a glimpse of the Lord? 8. Can activities bring mental peace?

A.: '1. The best education can be imparted by being himself, and making the students, absorbed in the subject. For that, the teacher should make complete pre-preparation of the subject he wants to teach. 2. If the Gitaji (ji-a suffix of respect, here Bhagwad Gita) and Ramayana are read intelligently and pondered over, you can get everything from them. 3. Wheat, milk, and green vegetables chiefly should suffice. It is necessary to give up spices and oil. 4. Since you feel very hungry in the evening, you may take some milk; and if you find even milk



really heavy, take some green fruit like orange, grapes, etc. It is advisable for you to have a moderate walk morning and evening, enthusiastically. 5. For purifying the heart and gaining concentration, reading and reflection over the books mentioned above and chanting *Ramnam* (—any name of God), when not engaged in any activity, are very helpful. 6. We have but to go on making the effort and have the faith that it is bound to bring results. 7. The way to Self-realization is no other than giving up of attachments, aversions etc. till not a trace remains. 8. A good activity is certain to give deep peace.

1. King Bhagiratha prayed to Ganga, which was then in the Heavens only, to come down to the earth, go to the sea and save the souls of his ancestors who had remained unredeemed in the sea owing to their sin. After terrible austerities, that have made his effort a proverb, he succeeded.



15-4-1926

Music in Life

'The following translation of a speech by Gandhiji at the Second Annual Function of The National Music Association, Ahmedabad, will be read with interest.—M. D. in 'Young India' d. 15-4-1926)

There is a famous classical saying which has now become a proverb that the man 'that hath no music in himself' is either an ascetic or a beast. We are far from being ascetics, and to the extent that we are devoid of music, we are near allied to beasts. To know music is to transfer it to life. The prevalent discord of today is an indication of our sad plight. There can be no Swaraj, where there is no harmony, no music.

'Where there is discord, and every one striking his own tune, there is bad government or anarchy. Work for Swaraj fails to appeal to us because we have no music in us. When we have millions of people singing together in harmony or taking God's name in unison, making one music, we shall have taken the first step to Swaraj. If we cannot achieve this simple thing, how can we win Swaraj?

We have free music classes in Ahmedabad for the last three years conducted by one who is an expert. And yet we have to be satisfied today with a roll attendance of 10 and a regular attendance of 4. It is poor consolation indeed; but we live in hope and Dr. Hariprasad (a civic father as well as sponsor of the music class) who sees a ray of hope when he finds even one *pol* (an old narrow street with an entrance gate) out of hundreds in Ahmedabad clean and tidy, might well feel satisfied that we have at least four regular music-lovers.

Where there is filth and squalor and misery, there can be no music. It implies an atmosphere quite the contrary. If we put a broad interpretation on music, i. e., if we mean by it union, concord, mutual help, it may be said that in no department of life can we dispense with it.

Music today has been degraded to mean the vocal effort of a singing girl. We fight shy of sending our sisters and daughters to music schools. There seems to be a superstition that their voice is best, when it is devoid of sweetness. That explains why Dr. Hariprasad has had to express satisfaction with an attendance of 10 students. Music, truly speaking, is an ancient and sacred art. The hymns of *Samaveda* are a mine of music, and no *ayat* of the Quran can be recited un-musically. David's Psalms



transport you to raptures and remind you of the hymns from *Samaveda*. Let us revive this art and patronize the school of music.

We see Hindu and Mussalman musicians sitting cheek by jowl and partaking in musical concerts. When shall we see the same fraternal union in other affairs of our life? We shall then have the name of Rama and Rahman simultaneously on our lips.

I am glad some of you are patronising music. If any more send their children to the music class, it will be part of their contribution to national uplift.

But to go a step further. If we would see music in millions of our poor homes, we should all wear Khadi and spin. The music we have had today was sweet indeed, but it is a privilege of the favoured few. The music of the spinning wheel can be a free gift to all and is therefore sweeter. It is the hope and solace and mainstay of the millions, and for me, therefore, the truly good music.



15-4-1926

Congress Work Through Labour Organisation

(M.D.'s article in 'Young India')

@ Any work, social or political, which helps the nation to come to its own is Congress work. But the work done by Sri Shankarlal and Srimati Anasuyaben through the organization of mill-labour in Ahmedabad is especially so, in as much as it is definitely work that the Congress has made its own, viz. Khadi, Temperance, and Removal of untouchability. And as in ethical conduct the observance of one main principle necessarily means that of others, e. g. the observance of truth means that of non-violence and *vice versa* even so in the constructive programme the solution of one of the items necessarily means that of others. We had an ocular demonstration of this fact during the National Week when, with C. Rajagopalachariar, I had the pleasure and the privilege to be shown round most of the activities of the Labour Union of Ahmedabad.

I have more than once referred in these columns to the successful introduction of 'takli' in all the schools of the Union. We had another demonstration this week on a much bigger scale than the previous ones. To see nearly five hundred little ones—mostly untouchables—sitting side by side with their teachers, some of whom were Brahmins, plying their *taklis* with all their heart, was a feast for the eyes as well as the soul. Sitting in front of these children were those of a Jain Boarding House who had obviously caught the whole-some infection from their less favoured companions. But of them more later. No wonder Sri. Rajagopalachariar told the boys assembled that they helped Gandhiji and his movement more than many big folk did and that they were making a political demonstration more effective than any he could name. I shall not trouble the reader with figures this time. Suffice it to say that there were many more this time who reached a speed of over a hundred yards per hour and one of the teachers achieved 150 yards of even well-spun yarn of fairly high count. It is not possible to expect all these children to be wearing Khadi, and Sri Shankarlal does not want to rush matters by insisting on all of them to wear it. He hopes to see all of them wearing Khaddar made out of their own yarn and to this end he is accumulating the yarn until it is enough for the needs of all.

But the joy of his work with the children had not been unmixed, for he has had to fight the evil of drink which was as rampant among the boys as the grown-up ones, no doubt due to the influence of the letter. Sri Rajagopalachariar asked the *takli*



children how many of them had tasted liquor. Up rose a forest of hands, over two hundred, for truth is the first lesson they have learnt in these schools Can this be? These tender children' exclaimed Sri Vallabhbhai Patel, with a shock of horror. The question was repeated in the clearest Gujarati. Not one hand went down. Two more questions were put to them, as to when they tasted liquor last and whether they would taste it again. The results showed the work that had already been done and the possibility of its future extension.

We saw the night schools of which the number is 13, established right in the centres of the slum areas, in order that even after a busy day of hard toil people may be tempted to go to the schools lest they would while away an hour sitting in their verandahs. It was choking sitting in those little rooms with the young and grown-up millhands learning three R's and yet the houses selected for the schools were the best in the locality. Questions here also revealed the same story about the extent to which drink had affected them. The grown-ups spoke about it with disgust and loathing and were grateful that they were now free from it.

In addition to 8 day-schools and 13 night-schools there are two model little institutions, one a boarding house which takes in picked boys of good character to be trained for work amongst their own kith and kin; and the other a sort of Montessori class for children between the age of 3 and 6. We saw these little ones at their afternoon meal heartily enjoying it and proudly calling themselves children of Maniben, a kindly Brahmin lady who is in charge—a real mother to them. This is meant to create a nucleus of children trained from their childhood up to good habits, cleanliness, and godly life. The boarding school is situated amidst the cleanest possible surroundings and under an untouchable teacher who is a member of the legislative Council in Baroda State. We saw their kitchen, their dormitory, and their weaving shed, all models of cleanliness and order, and they were clad in clothes of spotless white Khaddar.

Along with educative temperance among the little ones, Sri Banker and Anasuyaben are carrying on great temperance campaign among the grown-ups who are addicted to the habit. This is uphill work, but they are facing all difficulties bravely, thanks to the missionary zeal of the Union Secretary, Sri Gulzarilal Nanda, a Punjab M. A., LL. B, who has given up the legal profession for the life work he has chosen. He is initiating an elaborate inquiry among the workmen to be followed by 'Total Abstinence Pledges'. Thousands flocked to a special meeting held in Jamalpur, one of the



workmen's principal *mohallas* (localities); and men and women all seemed eager to help in the good work.

But this is not all. Sri Shankarlal is nothing, if not thorough. The Union has a staff of 28 men, and the schools have about 40 teachers, all drawing bare maintenance wages. Scarcely one of these does not wear Khadi and the whole staff of 28 men meet every day at a club where they do their regular spinning. It may be said without fear of contradiction that possibly no Congress Committee has a staff so scrupulously carrying out the Congress programme, as these good people working for welfare of mill-hands.

Before I conclude I shall mention another thing which is a bye-product of Sri Shankarlal's activities. I call it a bye-product, as it is no part of his labour activities. We might credit it to his work as the Secretary of the All India Spinners' Association. I mentioned Jain children sitting in front of the Labour Union school children, plying their *taklis*. They belong to a charitable boarding house which owes its existence to the charity of Anasuyaben's uncle. They are housed in the palatial mansion of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai adjoining to the house where Sri Shankarlal stays. Being near neighbours, they could not help coming under his influence and all the boys including some College boys spin and wear Khaddar. The Superintendent seemed to take pride in their manners and in their spinning, the result of which he showed us in the shape of a heap of neatly-packed yarn.

'They used to wear mill-cloth' he said, 'but thanks to Shankarlal, I have got Khadi clothes for all of them. Pray ask them to stick to Khadi even when after finishing their studies, they go back to their homes and wear their own clothes.'



15-4-1926

(M.D's article in 'Young India')

The National Week at Satyagraha Ashram

@ The way in which the National Week was celebrated at Satyagraha Ashram deserves special notice for the unique zeal with which one and all put their best effort to render the week one of the greatest amount of work and prayer in the whole year, Measures were concerted in the previous week as to how best to celebrate it. It was decided not to disturb the Ashram routine in any way, the morning and evening common prayers and the special morning prayer for the school children continuing as usual, all fasting on the 6th and the 13th, all doing their allotted task (excepting the children for whom the school was closed) and yet putting forth an extra effort to make the week of a distinctively national character. With this end in view, five groups decided in their respective quarters to work the spinning wheels day and night, from 4 a.m. on the 6th to 7 p.m. on the 13th, the rest working their own wheels and also working a loom day and night from the morning of the 6th to the evening of the 13th.

An analysis of the result shows the unprecedented success with which God has blessed our effort. The wheels and the loom worked away day and night without for a moment going wrong, or stopping, and without any one who attended them at nights ever falling ill. Especial enthusiasm was evoked on the day when a youngster of 16 one day worked at his wheel for 14 hours and registered his yarn score in the evening. It was 4444 rounds or 5925 yards. That spurred others to emulating his exploit with the result that there were five more champions who entered the lists, the most successful of them scoring as many as 9119 rounds (over 12,160 yards) of 17 counts, having been at his wheel for 22 hours and 30 minutes at a stretch, spinning at a sustained Speed of 540 yards an hour!

But the pioneer was not to be baulked of the fruits of his first unique achievement. He did on the last day 7000 rounds topping the list in the whole week's total individual outturn, his score being 17,244 rounds of 22,992 yards, that is nearly 3000 yards per day.

Though I have said above that the boys had a holiday so far as the school was concerned, it was no holiday from the point of view of work, for all the time that they did not spin they gave to cleaning, ginning, carding, and slivering the cotton that they and their elders turned into yarn during the day.



But to return to the analysis. For the purpose of comparison I give this week's figures with the figures of spinning in an ordinary week:

	<i>An Ordinary Week</i>		<i>The Extraordinary Week</i>	
	In rounds	Daily average	In rounds	Daily average
Men	1,02,042	281	1,87,457	480
Women	54,288	295	1,51,114	638
School-Children	50,602	264	2,37,010	1087
Infants	11,102	160	35,274	349
	_____		_____	
Total:	2,18,034		6,10,845	
	_____		_____	
General Average				
outturn per head:-		271		644

I also give below the result of the last day's spurt:

	<i>Rounds</i>	<i>Average</i>
Men	44,493	840
Women	27,488	887
School-Children	65,485	2,339
Infants	6,432	585

Day's Total:	1,43,898;	Average per head 1,170.

The result of the day and night working of one loom, 5 men and women sitting at it in turns, was as below:

Total hours of work:	180
Total persons:	40



Total outturn: 190 yards of 21" width

I now proceed to give interesting items from the figures already analysed:

Highest Weekly Score

	Rounds
From men: Keshu:	17,135
From Women: Krishnamaiya:	10,200
From School children:	
Kanti:-	17,244
Infants: Anandi	7,281

The oldest members of the Ashram, viz. Gandhiji and Kasturba Gandhi (Mrs. Gandhi) scored a total of 3,829 and 4,226 rounds respectively, and the youngest a grand-daughter of the oldest scored 4,323 rounds.

Out of 57 men 3 scored a total of over 10,000 rounds and 3 of over 5000 rounds; out of 32 women 1 scored a total of over 10,000 and 11 of over 5,000 and out of 29 school children 8 scored over 10,000 and 14 over 5,000.

The Highest Individual Effort of a Day:

Name	Rounds	Hours
Keshu:	9,119	22 ½
Krishna:	7,285	20 ½
Somabhai	7,225	21
Kanti	7,000	20
Keshavlal	5,100	18
Navin:	4,400	16

From the total number of 133 inmates, 18 (exclusive of the six mentioned above) scored a daily outturn of from 2 to 3 thousand rounds.



18-4-1926

Takli in Municipal Girls' Schools

(Note in Gujarati by M.D. in 'Navajivan')

At the instance of its Chairman, Sri Ballubhai, the Schools Committee of the Ahmedabad Municipality advised the lady teachers under them to learn up *takli* for its introduction later on in the girls' schools of the Municipality and even made arrangements for teaching the *takli* to the lady teachers. When I went to see their work about a month ago, I found that they did not know the art well enough. But when, on the occasion of Sri Rajagopalachariar's visit to the town, Sri Ballubhai arranged their gathering in the Municipal Hall (on 8-4-1926), we found them all spinning and many of them quite efficiently. Within only a few days, therefore, *takli* will be provided to the 3000 girls who are in their charge and all the girls will be spinning soon.

This is a very significant advance. Through these little girls it will perhaps be possible to spread the *takli* all over the city and to introduce it in Municipal boys' schools also. The members of the Schools Committee deserve congratulation on this step.

But there was one thing that grated upon Sri Rajagopalachariar's and all the visitors' minds. Only a few among the lady teachers plying the *takli* were clad in Khadi and all the rest were wearing foreign clothes! What an unbecoming scene it was—*takli-spinners* without Khadi on them! How little would be the value of their advice to the girls under them to spin on the *takli*, when they themselves did not wear Khadi! Sri Rajagopalachariar, therefore, coaxed them. Finally, by way of a pleasantry he said: "Willy-milly, this *takli* has already come upon you. And now, when you have learnt it up, it is possible that you will begin to like it. How nice if you willingly start wearing Khadi on your own, before it is made compulsory!" He gave some other arguments in jest and earnest: "You get your pay for the holidays without having to do any work. Can you not spare for Khadi 5 rupees from your salary? If you can't go further, you should at least go to your schools in Khadi *saris*." At last Sri Vallabhbai (President of the Municipality) went a step further. He said, "If you take a pledge to wear Khadi, I am prepared to provide everyone of you with a *sari* free of cost." Those sisters were wearing Khadi once, but owing to the succeeding depression, they had given it up. And now they do not wish to be tempted to take any hasty step. They were heard to whisper among themselves: "Vallabhbai will give us one *sari*. That means that afterwards we shall have to wear *khadi* at our own cost!" It is definitely very good if



they wear Khadi under the clear understanding that they will have to continue wearing it, but why this scare for having to wear Khadi afterwards? Can they not, for the country's cause, save enough to meet the extra expense they may have to undergo for wearing Khadi? And even if they can't, if they spin only for one hour in their off-duty period, they can wear not only self-spun *saris* but have other Khadi cloths also.



18-4-1926

Question Box

(M.D.'s article in Gujarati 'Navajivan')

Q.: Sri Sarat Bose is puzzled. He is a leading bar-at-law and brother of the innocent Sri Subhash Bose¹ now in jail at Mandalay in Burma. How to get these prisoners released? Should one be a mere passive witness to their sufferings? Can no fight be put up against the Government? And what is the meaning even of bringing resolutions for their release in legislative councils (when the Government ignores them)? Is there a solution to this tangled problem?

A.: Gandhiji has sent the following message to Sri Sarat Bose: "Sri Manilal Kothari has given me your message. How fine if I could give you something dynamic, something resolute, something electrical? But in the present situation I have no such programme to give. We have had enough, and more than enough, of meetings, resolutions, protests in the legislatures. What we now need specially is to do something that will make us tangibly experience the power we have in us. Hence, I for one can think of nothing else but the boycott of foreign cloth, and that boycott is impossible without Khadi.

"So, for all our troubles like imprisonments etc., I cannot think of any other effective measure than the spinning wheel. But how to convince the people that it is a sovereign remedy? My own faith in it is unshakable. I may even say that it increases day by day. So what we did was to spin for all the seven days of the National Week, non-stop round the clock, with the faith that through that spinning wheel we shall acquire power sufficient to attain our cherished goal.

"Yes; there is another way besides that of the spinning-Wheel—that of violence. But that is beyond me and, what is more, I have no faith in it. Moreover, being a practical man, I know that our rioting would collapse before the frightful violence of the Government. Hence I have burned all my other implements and have put out to sea on only the small boat of the spinning wheel. I invite all those who are bewildered like you to sit with me in that boat. And, take my word for it, it is a boat that will not fail to carry us to the other shore. But in order to row it we require the exercise of all our power, organizing ability, and discipline."



Q.: "A big fund was collected for the Jallianwala Memorial and seven long years have gone by since. In 1921 a Sikh friend had told me that a part of the Maidan would be given for the construction of a school building. Will you, Sir, tell us what has happened to all that big amount? Has the land of the Jallianwala Bagh been bought up?

When will that glorious temple of freedom be built?"

A.: "The land has been purchased from the fund collected for the Memorial. The ground has been cleared and a garden has been made. The proposed temple has not been built since the stars of India are unfavourable. How can a grand 'Temple of Freedom' be raised when, by our action, we are engaged in uprooting its foundations? It is my opinion that the Trustees hesitate to erect any structure from such thinking.

"A regular account of the money left in hand after the purchase of the ground is being kept and the Secretary sends the balance sheet to the Trustees every year which is then published."

Q.: "We see small creatures preying upon smaller ones every day. For instance, everyday I see a lizard devouring some insects and a cat some birds. Should I passively look on? Or in stopping that violence commit violence upon the preying creatures? Such violence goes on incessantly. What should we do then?"

A.: "Haven't I myself seen such violence being committed? Quite often I have seen a lizard eating up a cockroach and the latter devouring creatures smaller still. But I have never thought it my duty to stop the working of that biological law of जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् (life living upon life). I do not claim to unravel that riddle of God. But the sight of such killings only convinces me that law of the beast and other lower creatures is not the law of the human species. What man must do is to make a persistent effort to conquer the beast within him, kill it and keep the soul awake and alive. He is expected to learn the great principle of non-violence from the conflagration of violence he sees around him. If, therefore, man understands his position among other creatures and so finds his work in life, he would desist from taking part in violence and inflicting pain upon creatures below his species or upon men in his power. Man can cherish this only for himself and can thus stop harassing at least his weaker fellow-men, if he



can't do anything more. And this after all is an ideal; because to follow it in practice fully he will have to persevere in his effort day and night. Only then he will be able to reach it one day. Complete success in this can be gained only when, by the attainment of (mukti) final beatitude, he becomes free from all the shackles of the flesh."

Q.: "In your 'Hind Swaraj' you have proclaimed some principles such as abstention from the use of the railway train, milk, medicine etc. What is the meaning in your adhering to those statements, though you yourself are unable to put them into practice? To defend your stand you put forth the plea of your weakness, but I wonder if you know the saying, 'An excuse accuses itself.'"

A.: "I do not think there is anything wrong in affirming the thoughts expressed in 'Hind Swaraj' are true, just because I may not be able to implement them completely, The proverb which you quote is entirely inapplicable to me, since not only do I never excuse myself, but fully admit my short-comings."

Q.: "Is it not enough if one makes a firm resolve instead of taking a solemn oath?"

A.: "Where you make a distinction between a resolve and a vow, the latter alone has a value. The resolve which you can rescind is no resolve at all and means nothing."

Q.: "Will you kindly show some method of gaining concentration of the mind? What are the means you adopt to fix your mind completely on any particular matter?"

A.: "Concentration of the mind comes from practice. That practice can be made by taking deep interest in anything which is good and for which you have an aptitude. For instance, somebody is concentrated in nursing a patient, some other in the untouchables, some in the spinning wheel and some in Khadi propaganda. Chanting Ramnam also with faith in it, gives concentration."

Q.: A Muslim correspondent writes "You write that a man's soul may also take an animal's body. Where will yours go? He could only be a sinful man who would take in future a cow's body. Should a sinful soul, therefore, be worshipped through the worship of a cow? Do answer this question, since you have taken upon yourself the monopoly of reforming every body in the world."

A.: "You have floored me completely. I have taken the monopoly of reforming only one person and that is myself. And I alone know how difficult it is to reform him. Is it then necessary for me to answer your questions?"



1. One of the many who were interned without trial by the British Government for an indefinite period. Later, he organised with Japan's support during the 2nd World War 'The National Indian Army' which was pledged to win complete independence, and which was recruited from the disbanded Indian soldiers of the British Government. His bravery and sufferings have earned for him a very high place in the history of the Indian struggle for freedom.



27-4-1926

(M. D's Gujarati notes in his manuscript diary of Gandhiji's discourses during 27-4-1926 and 2-5-1926. They include elucidations of hymns and references to Ashram incidents.)

Why do we sing hymns? Why do we learn Sanskrit? We learn Sanskrit in order to be learned men. That means Sanskrit is a means. In the same way hymns are a means, but a means for Self-realization. What do we mean by 'Self-realization?' For practical purposes it means that by any methods we can adopt, we should become good or truthful, i. e. remain constantly attuned with truth. We need not refer to big volumes to understand what truth is. Only by going deep within our own selves, can we have a perception of truth and hymn-singing is one way to it. It is a method we can employ easily—without needing any other person's help. When we sing a hymn and commit an error in pronunciation, God will not take a stick and beat us. It makes no difference to Him if, instead of saying 'karavat' (French pronunciation of 't'), we mispronounce it as 'karavat' (English pronunciation). It is enough if we know the meaning. Hence, it does not matter whether the singer's pronunciations are correct or even whether he knows the right style of singing. What matters is only the fact that we sing a hymn to God. Correct printing and pronouncing are necessary only for the good of society. Our object in singing a hymn is to become godly, good, truthful in any way we can. A big collection of hymns is really not necessary for attaining our aim. There is no need to collect as many as 500 hymns for the purpose. We should be content with the pronunciation of 'Om' (=The Word) only, but that alone does not satisfy us. That is why in various ways that please the mind, different hymns speak of only one thing—the vision of God—in order to make our centrifugal mind pin-pointed in Him.

"If even a hymn is too difficult for our understanding or if our memory has not been able to remember it, there is for us *dhun* (repeated chanting of a potent formula or God's name). All these are the ways with which we have created a net around us so that it becomes impossible for us—even if we wish and try—to get out of it during the whole succeeding day-time. This line in the hymn: **ज्यम त्यम करीने हरिने लहे** says in a nutshell the same thing, namely, all we have to do is to get at God by any method or methods we prefer. These hymns are like an army that stops the mind from going out to eat grass (food of an animal), and makes it drink only nectar (the drink of Gods). What makes Vinoba, when he comes here, sing hymns all day long? He knows for certain that there



are many defects in him; so he goes on singing hymns in order to remove them. His immediate goal is not a *Yogarudha* (—a man perfected in Yoga—Gita VI-3). It is that of an *abhyasi*. a practisant i.e. one who, being unstable and imperfect is practising for perfection in Yoga.



28-4-1926

We have chosen hymns from all languages. Marathi and Bengali hymns go above me altogether. I can appreciate Hindi hymns a little, and I can go so deep into Gujarati hymns, that I am lost (absorbed) in them.

This is the meaning of the hymn (—All days do not pass uniformly in a man's life). Look at nature. It is cold one day, hot another and raining on a third. In the same way there is one day of weeping for us, another of rejoicing. Even for king Harishchandra there came a day when he had to take away the cloth that covered a corpse¹. But to that same Harishchandra at last came a day of rejoicing, when he was still staying in that forest. We all lie down with legs stretched (after death for cremation) one day and we head the procession as the bridegroom on an earlier day. We thus see both a marriage and a hearse procession in life. Knowing that everything happens as destiny ordains, Surdas (a Hindi poet) says: 'O ignorant mind! give up sorrow. How often shall I impress upon you the great power of destiny? What the finger of destiny writes can never be scratched.'

1. Harishchandra is an ideal truth-speaker. In order to keep his word, he and his queen and his only child-son sold themselves to give in charity, the promised sum, to sage Vishwamitra who was testing him. Harishchandra had then to work as a slave and was compelled to do the most menial service under one of the lowest born and take away as a tax the cloth wrapped round the corpse of even his own son. Lord Vishnu then saves him. It was this story that had left an indelible impression on Gandhiji in his childhood.



29.4.1926

"In a dialogue between Narad and Parvat, they make a condition under which each of them is required to reveal all his thoughts to the other. But they find it impossible to do so. Neither of the two was able to give out all his thoughts to the other. The result was a situation where the pot was calling the kettle black. The same is the case with my ideas. Before I could finish the expression of one, others rush in. We daily sing, 'Lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality', but how to assimilate the idea? I could not help shedding tears at the experience of my own littleness.

"I have staked my all on that girl (Laxmi, the untouchable daughter whom Gandhiji had adopted). The fight for Swaraj is merely like a game of foot-ball. It is now this side that wins and now that. There is no reason for joy or sorrow there. But if any of my children does something dirty, it kills me. To add to this, it was Laxmi, my first born, who did it. I have adopted her for the expiation of the sin against untouchables. That is why I have been pouring my love and attention on her, but the girl has been a complete disappointment throughout to me. I had never imagined that she would sink to this depth.

Mrs. Pattani's letter contains expressions like 'He (Gandhiji) will go on dropping tears in profusion'.¹ That, however, is not possible, because I have had so many painful experiences that I have grown too thick-skinned for weeping. But when it is my own children that betray me, I feel deeply hurt; because children are innocent by nature. I had that same hope from Laxmi. At this tender age of 11, there should not be so much sin.

"The bubble of sin was pricked in 4 days. I had an impulse to take a stick and beat her. But the thought विगतज्वरः (fight your life's battle with an unagitated mind and only as a duty—Ref. to Gita—III—30) rose up in my mind. Then it struck me that I should go on a fast. But then again I felt that if I took that step, there would be a cataclysm in the Ashram. The present rage against the girl and the aversion for untouchables would then grow more intense. That thought made my heart as hard as a basalt. 'No, I am not going to fast,' I said to myself. So I sat silent and merely looked on. Devdas (Gandhiji's youngest, i. e. the fourth, son) who has the power to influence others went to fetch her. She came to him only by force. Then I got up. "Don't beat me," she started to say. "I will do nothing now. Only, I warn you, I will send you back to Dudhabhai (Laxmi's father)" I said. She did not need anybody to wake her up this



morning and I was glad. It is for you (Ashramites) that I open my eyes after the prayers end, otherwise I would never open them and be always immersed in the Self. But at present I am not in a position to be thus absorbed in the Self. I asked her (Laxmi) to stand up, but not at all by way of punishment. She did not obey me. I asked her to run away from me. She went away and sat down pretending to read a book.

"With what face can I now say, "Lead me from darkness to light?" I couldn't have a wink of sleep this morning. She begged, for an eight days' reprieve. It is possible that the request was due to her fear that I would send her away to her father at Botad. I have relieved her of that fear also. She said she would now spin all the rounds which she had 'stolen' (Gandhiji's word, which means she would now make up for the defect between the numbers she had stated to have spun and those she had actually done) and that she would spin 2500 yards per day for it. There is hope for improving her, so long as she obeys me and refrains from telling a lie. I am perfectly certain that I could make, at least like myself, the duncest of the dunce, but there are 2 conditions: no telling of lies and no obstinate resistance to me. If that girl is not reformed, I would feel my honour stained and then I should lose hope about her nature as that of a human being. If there is nothing innate in her that can make her good, how can I hope to be good myself? I want to make her feel affinity for me. Her (spiritual) capacity is my capacity. Were it not so, the hymn that we sang this morning, अखिल ब्रह्मांडमां (There is only One—i.e. Thou O Lord, who pervades the whole universe), becomes a mere verbiage. If she remains wicked for ever, then I too remain so—with only a difference in position, but both *antyajas* (the lowliest born) of the same hue, because of wickedness.

"In the hymn 'Rama Kaho. Rahman Kaho' (a hymn unifying all creeds, meaning whether 'you call him Rama or Rahman (Muslim name) or for that matter give Him any other name, He is the same). 'Kan' means 'kahan' (Krishna). There is only 'bhaajanbheda' (a difference in the receptacles that hold the One) or difference due to names and forms of the same pervading entity (like gold uniformly present in ornaments of various names). It is our imagination that has created the distinctions (of individual things, creatures etc.) but in essence all of them are indivisible and one. Mud at its proper place (in mud-pack) gives us relief, but where it is in the wrong place, it emits foul stench or becomes dirt. 'If we remain in our original position we are Rama (God). He who does us 'rahem' (grace or mercy) is Rahman (—the Merciful). He who does karma (action) is a Karma Yogi, is Krishna (the usual meaning given to the word



Krishna is 'He who draws or attracts'). That means that that man is Krishna who through his mind, speech, and action does truthful acts. Mahadev is the embodiment of peace—is the ocean (wherein all the rivers i.e., desires, enter but the ocean serenely absorbs them). 'Parse rupa' means one who can recognise or know what he really is. That 'Paras' (One who transmutes a being like an alchemist) or 'parakh' (the One who detects the right man) is formless but appears with form. He should be attained in this way. The word 'sadho' may be a verb (you should attain). If you do so you are Divine Consciousness and go beyond work."

The song sung in the evening was 'akala kalaa khelet nara gyani' (the ways of the man of spiritual wisdom are not understandable). The melody of the hymn is such that it should be sung in the morning. (Different periods of the day are prescribed for songs of different Indian melodies). Explaining this hymn Gandhiji said: "In the Bhagwad Gita (II-69) there is one instance to show how the acts of a man of true spiritual wisdom are sublime and contrary to those of the world, (That verse says, 'what is day for the man of self-restraint, is night for all the world and *vice versa* i. e., he loves what the world dislikes and *vice versa*). That man dances in unison with the Divine Dancer. The man of wisdom always watches the Pole Star (God) in order to ply his boat in the right direction. 'Tatwa samas' means that what is within, namely the soul, is free and independent, the puppets made by the flesh are dependent. When 'the name and the form' of the body disappears, the soul becomes free. 'Chhuti adi' etc. means that nobody knows the beginning or the end of the Soul. The Gita also states: "The state of all beings before birth is unmanifest; their middle state manifest; their state after death is again unmanifest. What occasion is there for lament then?" (Gita II—29).

"The man who has '*purani pehchan*' (acquaintance with the eternal) knows that this play (of creation) is mysterious and wonderful and without a parallel. For 'It' the Vedas could find no other word (or name) than Neti, Neti' (not this, not this). The man who has been lost in the Infinite, that is the man who has been in perfect tune with God, is 'nara' (Man). Only the *gyani* (the man of spiritual wisdom) knows all this."

"*Man chahatam*" means death alone is the reality. All *jivas* (creatures) cry out 'I', 'I' so long as their bodies are alive (and thus falsely imagine themselves to be separate from the Real)."



1. In a letter to Gandhiji d. 27-4-1926 Mrs. Ramabai Pattani (wife of the then Diwan of Bhavnagar State) says : "Pattani very often tells me, "I am afraid, the last days of Gandhiji are going to pass in deep distress (literally, in loud lamentations) and I shudder at the thought'."

30-4-1926

In the hymn "*Namako adhara* " (=I have only one support: Thy Name), the phrase "*dhundaka pasara*" means the pervasion of fog (=ignorance). The demon of fog lies full length in such a way that he can devour every thing in one breath.

In the evening the hymn '*Je game* .' (Don't bewail over what pleases God) was elucidated. In that song the words 'eni per' were interpreted as '*eni upar*' (=on them) i. e. the whole world has God for its support.



1-5-1926

In the hymn "*Mere to Girdhar*" (=I love Krishna only) '*Mero pati soi*' (literally—He alone is my husband) means He alone is my Preserver. (Lord Vishnu has a conch, a mace, a disc and a lotus in His four hands). By repeatedly blowing His conch, He tells us 'Don't go towards sin, turn to Me' or He loudly proclaims "Death has caught you by the hair; so walk vigilantly in life and during the remaining few breathes you draw before your life ends, do my work." The disc indicates that for the man who does not obey God's command, there is ready in His hand the disc to punish him. The symbol of the lotus suggests how soft the Lord is towards His devotees. But there is the mace for those who are not His devotees and have their faces turned away from Him. It seems as if the Government has partly imitated this in Lahore. In Lord Lawrence's statue there is a pen in one hand and a sword in the other. The Lord also is thus, threatening us with punishment in this line of the hymn. "Love-tears" means though I am unhappy in this way, you have not given me the power to remove all that grief."

The evening hymn was "*Hari no marag*" (The path of the Lord is only for the brave).



2-5-1926

For '*Mari Naad*' (My pulse is in Thy hands, O Lord) Gandhiji said: 'It means, 'I am not going to trust any other physician for my treatment; You must bring down my fever'. The devotee says so because the Lord creates heat in constitutions having insufficient heat for digestion and cools those that have too much heat."

Explaining the word '*pathyapathya*' (the right and the harmful diet), Gandhiji said: "If the Vedas are too heavy for your digestion, read Bhaagwat (a book on devotion); if that too is indigestible, sing hymns; if you find hymns too difficult, take Ramnam which is like milk mixed with water (for weaklings); and if you can't digest even Ramnam, well then, take it that the game is lost for you.

"Who is the true physician? He who cures the body or the one who cures the soul? He is the true doctor who removes not the cataract of the eye, but the one of the soul."

Referring to the theft committed in Shanti's room he said:

"It is a matter of shame for us that there should be a theft in the Ashram just as it is shameful for the Ashram if any inmate tells a lie. We must, therefore, keep, with us as few things as we can and discard pleasures and luxuries. Otherwise, we should have to build a castle round the Ashram. And if we do so, we had better lived in the city.

"Let us be more alert whenever such events happen and purify ourselves. A theft can never be committed in the house of the man who observes the vow of 'non-stealing'. Temples are free from thefts. Are there cases of thefts of temple property? True, thefts are committed in a few of them, but it can be said that, in general, they are left untouched. But we have not yet reached that height. We want, moreover, to serve even thieves and hypocrites. We should be able to make everybody free from fear. Don't say 'I myself am good, but the other fellow is bad'. The other's sin is our sin. Hence, I say, 'Scrap what you have, give up, go on going up, as much as you can', because the creation of a fence of barbed wires and iron-pillars round the Ashram is entirely out of the question for me. We must certainly protect that property in the Ashram which belongs to India, but to make every house here a prison—what an idea! Ambalal (a rich friend of the Ashram) says it means no expense. But his light mood was in reality a laugh against us. He would say then, "So you too have to erect an iron fence." There was some truth behind his joke, because he can erect a high fence and a higher tower. And then? Then we will keep watchmen to sit on it. But that is a thing we can never do."



6-5-1926

Khadi Work in Kathiawar

(M. D's article in 'Young India')

@ Sri Laxmidas Purushottam who was on a tour in Kathiawar during the National Week visited three Khadi centres and has submitted to Gandhiji a report of absorbing interest which is published in the last issue of 'Navajivan' with a long note by Gandhiji. Intended as, it is, chiefly for workers in Kathiawar, there are certain things in it which are of interest to all concerned in the progress of Khadi.

Sri Laxmidas not only made inquiries about the number and the daily outturn of yarn and Khadi at each centre, but made minute inquiries of numerous spinners, examined and tested their yarns himself and showed them what could be done to improve the defects in them, and made a number of very useful suggestions to the workers in charge of each centre.

The first point that he made is that the yarn that is brought to these centres is very inferior to mill yarn of the same count, and necessarily; therefore, Khadi woven out of the same yarn is inferior to corresponding mill cloth. Not that there has been no improvement during the last four years; whereas four years ago the yarn that was brought to be woven used to be no higher than of 4 counts, it is from 6 to 10 counts today and the texture is also very much better. But Khadi cannot compare favourably today with mill cloth woven out of the yarn of the same count. He collected together a number of hanks, and as he had no testing instrument with him, improvised one by making a strand in each case of 16 threads of 4 feet each of handspun yarn and mill yarn, and hanging a particular weight by them, he found that whereas a strand of handspun yarn of 4 ½ counts could not support a weight of 10 lbs., a corresponding strand of mill yarn supported a weight of 24 lbs. The defect lay not in spinning alone; the initial one was in bad cotton and then in bad carding by professional carders. He carried with him his own carding-bow, his own slivers and providing the spinners with them got them to compare the results with the yarn drawn out of the new sliver. He could easily bring home the wastefulness of paying a rupee per maund (40 lbs.) to the carder who did his work but indifferently, and successfully persuaded the spinners to possess handbows of their own and make their own slivers. The revelations about the test of different yarns of some of the best spinners published in 'Young India' last week combined with these,



point urgently to the necessity' of every Khadi centre in India having a testing instrument, making itself sure, from time to time, that yarn under a particular test is not received, and thus insure a 'standard' quality of Khadi. But more urgent than this is the necessity,—emphasised by Sri Laxmidas and reinforced by Gandhiji—of every Khadi worker:

- (1) cleaning and carding his own cotton and making his own slivers;
- (2) spinning yarn of highest test;
- (3) being able to direct every spinner in cleaning, carding and slivering his or her cotton; and
- (4) hawking khadi.

The second point of equally great importance made by Sri Laxmidas is that Khadi work has been a real boon to the people in famine-affected areas in Kathiawar, that, inspite of the present quality of Khadi not being of a high order, it has taken root in the soil, for the simple reason that it was a god-send in areas where there was no other work, and that all those who have the interest of the hungering famine-stricken at heart should buy their Khadi, although it may not compare favourably with millspun cloth, He went to the villages which keep these centres going, made friendly inquiries of many families and discovered that in some villages the women earned not more than three pice (nearly, 1/21 of a rupee), a day and in some 12 annas (- 3/4 of a rupee) a week, and that even the best agriculturist was in such straits that he allowed his womenfolk to turn the wheel for 18 hours a day getting the women's? other duties done by the men! Little children walked miles carrying bundles of yarn spun by their mothers, worked away at the wheel expecting the children to return home in the evening with a fresh stock of slivers for the morrow! Any one who has been at these centres, or has seen these spinners, cannot honestly or conscientiously wear anything but cloth woven out of yarn that fills these hungry mouths. Sri Laxmidas' picture is as telling as it is dispassionately drawn and if any proof of the efficacy of Khadi as a means of famine relief was still needed, the inquirer might be told, 'go and look around.'

It is in the fitness of things that just at the present juncture Sri. Abbas Tyabji (retired High Court Judge of Baroda State) and Ramdas Gandhi (Gandhiji's third son) are touring Kathiawar hawking Khadi. They get a splendid response wherever they go and the aged (?) Sri. Abbas—he feels insulted if any one describes him as old, because his energy and vigour are the envy of a youth of twenty—feels that he has found his



work. In his own unassuming way he gives a telling picture of what is happening today in the famine-affected areas of Kathiawar.

"You were quite right in relying on my 'white beard'. When that was referred to by my companions the would-be purchasers ceased to finger the cloth to examine its texture."

Sri. Abbas adds that the people were told that the Khadi was not the best that could be made nor was the price comparable to that of mill cloth of similar count, but that it was the duty of the people to buy what their poor neighbours could give and not to neglect them in search of something better or cheaper.



9-5-1926

Two Pictures of Heroic Effort

(M.D's Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

Of the two pictures of Herculean effort which I am giving here the first is that of a Western country and the other of this. Both, of them are beautiful and instructive and yet there is a world of difference between them. Both are presentations of plain facts without a tinge of imagination to embellish them. The first picture has been drawn by a Professor of Law in a University in Paris and is translated here from his own words.

"Excuse me, Sir, I must not take a tip. I used to attend your lectures last year and on the first of the coming year, I am going to appear before you for my constitutional law examination."

These were the words of a chauffeur who had driven me home. When I was giving him a tip, this was the answer I got! When I looked at him a little more closely, I found him my pupil in a chauffeur's cap. That Sprightly young man had a charming face and he seemed to enjoy his introducing himself as my pupil. In return for his gentlemanly conduct I invited him to lunch the next day. "But I won't be able to stay long with you. I shall have to go away to my duty" he said politely.

"On the next day he came for lunch and we had an interesting chat. I am reproducing it verbatim:

"I want to be a lawyer. I am interested in law, but I am the son of a petty officer and as I am the eldest of his five sons, there was no provision for my education. Stay in Paris for my education was unthinkable. It's difficult to imagine my mother's superb thrift and resourcefulness and yet she could manage to carry on only with great difficulty. In this situation any help from my parent's for my study was out of the question. After passing my matriculation examination, I learnt motor-driving from a relative and got a licence. One day as I was driving my car, a brain-wave solved my life's problem. "Yes" I said to myself, I shall go the Law College in Paris. I am sure to get an employment as a chauffeur. I can find my college expenses from it. I was glad my problem was solved at last."

"But how do you find the time for both your studies and attendance in college, in the midst of this exacting occupation?"



"Let me give you my time table. I drive my taxi from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. Don't you imagine that it tires me out. All that's necessary is regular food and sleep. Right at 7 a . m. when my duty is over, I rush to my room change my clothes and have a substantial repast at a small hotel nearby. At 8.30 sharp I go to the Law School. I am ready for my study there with perfect freshness and *clan*. I get a decent seat, as I always go into the classroom before many others, and I take down copious notes. After attending the professors' lectures in 3 classes, I go home at 12 noon, take a hearty lunch and then off to bed, to get up at 8 p. m."

"But how do you read for the examination then?"

"I must admit I had to rush up things a little this year. But I have a very retentive memory because I can lose myself in whatever I do, and my notes are perfect. They are ready for use upto the last minute of every lecture and not one day is missed. That helps me a lot. Moreover, I have often to wait long at Monte Matre and some other places. I snatch such intervals, go near an electric light and read my notes and other books. I stop plying my taxi one month before the end of a term and plunge myself into my books. But the law Examination is very difficult. I failed in July, but reappeared the other day and got through. So I am now preparing for the Second year Examination and propose to continue my profession."

"That means you hit the mark in both your activities."

"Yes, indeed. I have been able to save lots of money. Between November 1st 1924 and November 1st 1925, I earned 17,000 franks."

"O, more than even a professor's earnings."

"Of course. And I could have scooped even more, had I not closed my business for 2 ½ months to read for my examination and not enjoyed a short vacation. I am very fond of plays. I was tempted to see last year the latest plays of Francois and those of Mollier and Mussette. And have you seen, Professor, that superb play-Fantassio? Wonderful. Frene and Bartin are real hits!"

"Yes, I have seen the play. It's excellent. With your saving of 17000 franks you must be living like a prince."

"Not like a prince. I have learnt thrift from infancy. Besides. I don't want to flaunt myself before poorer students. Quite like them I manage with 700 franks a month."

"So you can save 8500 franks."



"No. I send 500 franks to my parents every month. I earn more than my father and he has three children to bring up and educate, so I must send home that amount. I had a saving of 2000 franks in October last. I bought Government Bonds from them and have thus given a loan of that amount to the country. I am not in need of it, so as long as the Government wants it. And do you know, I have to pay nothing by way of a tax? The Income Tax people, it, seems, have let me go."

"And you will carry on just this way ?"

"Undoubtedly. But I don't want to fail in my examination So I must shut down my business for 2 months, beginning from May 15th. Till then I must look after my work as well as the classes regularly. But after the 15th I am buried in my books. I have a little plan in mind—a trip to Italy for 2 weeks—if I pass. I want to see Florence."

"I am surprised! How ever can you manage to do all those things !"

"Where's the trouble? Here is my budget for 1926. Income, 16,150 franks at 1,700 franks a month for 9 ½ months. Expense for the year, 8,400 franks. 6,000 franks I will send home. My Italian trip will cost me, 1,750 franks. That amount is quite enough for me as I have no need to travel by the upper class or have a compartment with sleeping accommodation. Nor do I need a posh hotel to put up in. But I think I shall not be able to buy the coming bonds."

"It was 8-30 and our talk had to be winded up, as my chauffeur friend had to change his clothes and then go to his post of duty.

"I sat stunned. Just a chauffeur and refusing to take a tip, studying law, buying Government Bonds, taking interest in classic plays, going on a trip to Florence, and sending father a tidy sum every month!"



13-5-1926

(Gandhiji's articles in 'Navajivan' abridged and translated by M.D. in 'Young India').

'Sacrifice' Old and New

@ 'Yagna' is a word full of beauty and power. Hence with the growth of knowledge and experience and with the change of time, its meaning is likely to grow and change. *Yagna* literally means worship, hence sacrifice: hence any sacrificial act or any act of service. And in this sense every age may and should have its own particular *yagna*. For mankind lives by *yagna*; sacrifice. But all the *yagnas* that go under that name cannot be defended and should not be revived. Some of the rites that go under that name cannot be defended. I even doubt whether the meaning that is put upon some of those rites today was ever put upon them in Vedic times. And even if there be no room for doubt, some of them cannot stand the test of reason or morality. Those versed in the scriptures say that in ancient times our ancestors performed human sacrifices. Are they possible today? And a horse sacrifice would be ridiculous. Again it is needless to canvass whether *yagnas* purify the air or not; for the value of religious rite cannot be measured by considering whether it produces a comparatively trifling result like purifying the air. Modern science is likely to be more helpful in devising means for purifying the air. The principles of religion are one thing and practices based on them are another. The principles are absolute and irrespective of space and time. Practices change with place and time.

Place of Sanskrit

I am of opinion that Sanskrit cannot be dispensed with in matters religious. The translation, no matter however accurate, cannot replace the original *mantras* which have an import of their own. Besides, it would be detracting from the solemnity of the *mantras*, which have been repeated in Sanskrit for centuries, to repeat them today in the vernaculars. But I am clear that each *mantra* and every rite should be accurately interpreted and explained to the person repeating the *mantra* or participating in the rite. A Hindu's education must be regarded as inadequate without a knowledge of the rudiments of Sanskrit. Hinduism would be extinct without Sanskrit learning and Sanskrit scholarship being cultivated on an adequate scale. We have made the language difficult by the present system of education, it is not really so. But even if it is difficult, practice of religion is still more so. He, therefore, who would practise



religion, must regard as comparatively easy all the steps to it, however difficult they may appear to be.

Self-Help and Mutual Help

Self-help is the capacity to stand on one's legs without anybody's help. This does not mean indifference to or rejection of outside help, but it means the capacity to be at peace with oneself, to preserve one's self-respect, when outside help is not forthcoming or is refused, A farmer who, rejecting friends' help, insists on tilling his own soil, making his own implements, gathedng his own harvest, spinning and weaving his own cloth and building his own house, all by himself, must be either foolish or self-conceited or barbarous. Self-help includes bread labour and means that every man shall earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. Hence, a man who works in his field for eight hours daily is entitled to help from the weaver, the carpenter, the blacksmith or the mason. It is not only his right, it is his duty to seek the help of these, and they in their turn benefit by the agriculturist's labour in the field. The eye that would dispense with the help of the hands does not practice self-help, but is conceited and self-deceived. And as the different members of the body are self-reliant so far as their own functions are concerned and yet are mutually helpful and mutually dependent, so are we, three hundred million members of the Indian body politic, each following the rule of self-help in performing his own function and yet co-operating with one another in all matters of common interest. Only then can we be said to be servants of the country and only then do we deserve to be called nationalists.



16-5-1926

(M. D's article II in the 'Navajivan' of the above date—the sequel of article I (p. 160) is in essentials the same as his following original article in 'Young India' d. 20.5.1926. The latter is, therefore, reproduced here instead of a translation of the former.)

II

A True Sacrifice

@ I think it is Ruskin who tells the story of two great painters vying with each other in drawing a perfect straight line and a perfect circle, and declaring him who succeeded better as the greater painter. I wonder if at the present day we can find two very great men prepared to stake their greatness on their capacity to draw the thread from the spinning wheel. But I have not the slightest doubt that he who has mastered the art of spinning in all its details, and has achieved the capacity to pursue it in a religious spirit day in and day out, is not only a great spinner but a master craftsman, and a craftsman who lives not only for himself but for his fellows. And Mr. Zaverbhai Patel who performed the "spinning sacrifice" of 12 lacs (- hundred thousands) of yards of yarn in a year seemed to me to have reached some such achievement. I was more interested in his feat than in that of, say, a swimmer of the English Channel in the briefest possible time. We know of numerous instances of ordinary man toiling in the sweat of their brow to great heights. We may point to them as successful examples of 'bread-labour', a word coined by Tolstoy, to express a doctrine enunciated before him by Rousseau: 'He who eats in idleness what he himself has not worked for is a robber'. But the instances of those who toil in the sweat of their brow not for themselves only, but for others, that is who live not only up to the modern doctrine of bread labour but the Gita doctrine of sacrifice, 'He who toils only for himself eats sin', are rarer. I interviewed Mr. Zaverbhai Patel, therefore, not out of the curiosity of a newspaper man, but from the desire of placing before the public a record which may instruct, ennoble, and purify them. 'What led you to perform the 'sacrifice' in the particular way you did?' I began.

"Of course, I was convinced of religiously spinning as the indispensable duty of social man. During the Congress Week in 1924 I tried to do as much spinning as I could do for a continuous length of time every day, and I succeeded in drawing 3000 yards for a number of days. "Why not continue the experiment for a month?" said I to myself, and when I succeeded in doing so, I thought, "Why not for a year?"



'But to have done this for the whole year day in and day out, not for an hour, but hours, and over and above your daily duties of a school teacher, can be no joke. You must have made a special effort to regulate your life to this end.'

"Indeed. But not, I am afraid, for an unbroken period of 365 days. There was a total break of about 44 days in the Sacrifice—the days on which I had to go out of my village. Of course, I did manage to spin even in those days, but not to the extent I succeeded during the rest of the year. I spent eleven days at Bhavnagar attending a Montessori Conference, spinning during the interval only 4,500 yards on my *takli*. Five days I had to give to agricultural operations—planting paddy, harvesting, etc.,—during which I could do little spinning, and I was ill for three days when I could spin only three hours a day."

'And you still say 'it has not been an unbroken Yagna.' Nothing could be more unbroken. Even when you could not do the maximum you did do a certain minimum, not giving up the wheel even in illness. And then your average outturn comes to about 3000 yards a day throughout the year; and over and above this you attended to the school routine. How did you pack all this toil for a period of one year, I wonder!'

"Yes, I did all that and more. For, I not only did the spinning, I picked all the necessary cotton and cleaned, ginned and carded it myself. But there is nothing extraordinary in that, I assure you. The school hours, practically all the year round, were six, three in the morning and three in the afternoon. There was no vacation, but we had 35 school-holidays, excluding Mondays and Fridays, corresponding to Sundays and Saturdays of Government schools. Now I did more spinning on these off-days and holidays than on the week days and the morning and evening school was a convenience, for I could get three to four hours during the interval. Cotton-picking I did on holidays. I would go out at 5 O'clock and work in the field until noon, picking on an average five lbs. an hour. Thus in Magha and Jalguna I picked 280 lbs., just enough for my operations. There was, of course, less spinning on the days I picked and carded cotton. Thus in Magha whilst I have done 5,500 yards on some days, I had to content myself with two thousand and less for ten or twelve days. In Falguna carding took up a great deal of time and some days I did only 500 yards. That month the total was probably the lowest in the year, i.e., 50,000 yards. I carded 13 lbs. in Magha, 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. in Falguna, 58 lbs. in Chaitra, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. in Vaishakha, 79 $\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. in all. My sister-in-law was good enough to roll all the slivers for me. When, however, I was free from these



preliminary operations, I spun much more. Thus in Vaishakha I did 1,11,000; in Jyeshtha, Shraavan and Pausha 1,05,000 yards. I shall present you with a little table:

<i>Month</i>	<i>Yards</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Ginning</i>	<i>Carding</i>
Pausha ¹	87,000	....	....	....
Magha	84,500	21	135 lbs.	13 lbs.
Falguna	50,500	21 ½	151 ¼ lbs.	21 ½ lbs.
Chaitra	48,125	15	....	....
Vaishakha	1,11,500	16	....	....
Jyeshtha	1,05,500	16	....	....
Ashadha	80,000	16	....	....
Shravana	1,05,500	16	....	....
Bhadrapada	81,000	16	(plus 4500 finer yarn)	
Ashvina	90,000	21	(plus 3500 finer yarn)	
Kartika	75,000	20	....	....
Margashirsha	78,700	20	....	....
Pausha	1,05,500	20	....	....

1. The month of experiment

Total 11,10,825 yards. 8,00,000 yards donation to the Congress: 3,10,825 kept for use at home. 12,000 utilized in making wheel strings."

'This is all very wonderful indeed. You tempt me to ask one more question. I see no time left in your time table for the satisfaction of the 'inner man'.

"No fear. I ate and slept enough. For three or four months in the year my wife was not at home. In those days I lived on bread and milk only, but that too thrice during the day. I ground my own flour too (5 lbs. an hour). During the rest of the year I ate what every one of us eats, making a point of eating a halfmeal in the evening in the interests of health. This ensured sound dreamless sleep. I also took regular exercise, —5 or 6 exercises with the clubs, 100 'dands' and 200 "baithaks"—dropping it when I



worked in the field. In the monsoon I had fever for three days. So I kept fasts and could spin three hours a day."

'Please then let me have in a nutshell your daily routine.'

"Getting up at 4 or 4-30 and getting to bed at 9. Spinning a thousand yards before going to school; carding in the afternoon before school-hours and when there was no carding doing 1,500 yards, after school-hours 1000 yards. That makes 6 hours at school, 7 hours for sleep, 3/4 hour for exercise, 8 hours for spinning (including other processes), 2 ¼ hours for food, bath, etc. On holidays when there was no cleaning, ginning or carding to be done, I spun 12 hours and read something. I had 12 spindles straight and true ready for use and made my own wheel strings. I spun 400 yards an hour on an average, sometimes reaching 500 to 550; spun at a stretch on Gandhiji's birthday for 20 hours and did 8,000 yards."

'And you found time for reading too!'

"Not much beyond a few weeklies. There was an assistant teacher living with me who used to read to me the Gita and Principles of Pedagogy?"

'That's enough for me. I have no doubt you look back with pride and satisfaction on this achievement.'

"I do. I am thankful I succeeded in doing so. And the peace and powers of concentration and determination I developed were a unique gain. Mine had been a wild life before non-cooperation which brought me from darkness into light, from storm into peace. And this year's effort has been an education. What heaps of time we waste every day, and how

best we could turn them to account if we but meant it! And in a life so filled with dutiful toil how can there be any room for the devil?"

'I thank you.'



16-5-1926

(M.D.'s Gujarati note in 'Navajivan')

A Correction

An exaggeration had inadvertently crept into an article in "Navajivan" on the work of the Labour Association in Ahmedabad (p. 137) the article entitled Congress Work through Service of Labour. I gladly publish the following correction sent by the Association. A constant effort is made to see that the 'Navajivan' is free from exaggeration even unconsciously made—about Khadi or anything else.

"In the article on the Labour Association published in Navajivan d. 18-4-1926 it has been stated that nearly all the workers and teachers of Association wear Khadi and spin regularly. The following, however, are the facts:

"25 men work in the Office. 15 of them wear Khadi head to foot and the rest have expressed a desire but are not yet able to do so. 12 out of them have sent their yarn contributions to the All India Spinners Association. There are 36 teachers in the schools of the Association, 7 of whom are clad completely in Khadi and the rest wear Khadi caps and shirts, but not Khadi dhotis till now. As regards spinning, nearly all of them know spinning and 23 of them send their yarn to the A.I.S.A."



20-5-1926

My Kamadhenu

(Gandhiji's article in 'Navajivan' translated by M. D. in 'Young India')

I know that I have been ridiculed by some people for calling the spinning wheel a gateway to my salvation. But even so may, a person who makes himself a little ball of clay, gives to it the imposing name of Parthiweshwar Chintamani (Lord of material objects and wish-fulfilling gem), and concentrates on it all the faculties of his being in the hope of 'seeing God face to face' by that means, be sneered at by those, who do not share his faith in the life-giving power of the image. But would he, madly bent as he is on attaining self-realization, give up his worship on that account? No. On the contrary, he will strive on without flagging till success crowns his efforts, as in the end it must, while his detractors will only be the worse off for their gibes. Similarly, if my conception of the spinning wheel comes from a pure heart, it will become to me the means of my salvation. A faithful Hindu's ears will automatically turn to the direction where 'Ramnama' is being repeated, and for the time being all the evil passions will subside in him. What does it matter if the repetition of that divine name fail to produce any impression on others? A Hindu may not be in the least affected by the cry of Allaho Akbar, but a Mussalman is roused by it. Similarly, a pious Englishman, the moment he is reminded of the presence within him of God, will be able to restrain his passions and compose himself for the time being. As is the spirit behind worship, so is the fruit thereof.

It follows then that even if the spinning wheel be in itself nothing, and the virtue that I have attributed to it exist only in my imagination, it will still prove at least to me my 'Kamadhenu' i. e. Cow of Plenty. I think of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel. The poor of India today have lost faith in God, more so in the middle classes or the rich. For a person suffering from the pangs of hunger, and desiring nothing but to fill his belly is his God. To him any one who gives him bread is his Master. Through him he may even see God. To give alms to such persons, who are sound in all their limbs, is to debase oneself and them. What they need is some kind of occupation, and the occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand-spinning. But I can instil my faith in the potency of hand-spinning in the minds of the toilers of India, not by making speeches but only by spinning myself. Therefore, I have described my spinning as a penance or a sacrament. And since I believe that



where there is pure and active love for the poor there is God also, I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel.

Why should You Spin

So much for *my* conception of the spinning wheel. If you accept my viewpoint, then nothing more remains to be desired. But it is likely that it may not be acceptable to you. Even then there is a host of reasons why you should spin. I give below only a few of them.

1. You can make others spin, only if you spin yourself.
2. You can, by yourself spinning and giving your yarn to the All India Spinners' Association, in the end help to make possible a reduction in the prices of Khadi.
3. By learning to spin, you can now or at any future time, whenever you may wish, help the propaganda of spinning. Experience has shown that those who are ignorant even of the alpha and omega of the art of spinning, are of no use for such work.
4. If you will yourself spin, the quality of spinning will improve. Those who spin for wages must, naturally, be impatient. They will continue to spin the count that they are accustomed to. The task of improving the count of yarn essentially belongs to the research worker, the lover of spinning. This has been proved by experience. If there had not arisen a class of spinners—including both men and women—who spin purely out of spirit of service, the amazing progress that has been achieved in the quality of yarn would not have been possible.
5. If you spin, your talents can be utilised in effecting improvements in the mechanism of the spinning wheel. All the improvements that have been made in the mechanism of the spinning wheel and the speed of spinning up till now are solely due to the efforts of those devoted workers who spin for sacrifice.
6. The ancient art of India is today gradually suffering extinction. Its revival to a very large extent depends on the revival of hand-spinning. That there is art in spinning, those who have practised it as a sacrament know well enough. During the Satyagraha Week the spinners would not tire of spinning at all. Of course, one of the reasons why they did not feel any weariness was certainly the spirit in which they had undertaken it. But, if there were no art in spinning, if there were no music in it, it would have become impossible for those youngmen who spun for twentytwo and a half hours out of twenty four. It should be borne in



mind in this connection that these spinners were not induced to effort by hope of gaining any prize. The spinning was its own reward.

7. In our country manual labour is regarded as a low occupation. Our poets have gone so far as to describe the happy rich as never having to touch mother earth at all, so much so that hair begins to grow on the soles of their feet. Thus the highest function (body-labour) to which a man is born and with which, the sages tell us, Brahman created him, we have in fact looked down upon as something mean and degrading. We should spin, therefore, if only to guard against the pernicious tendency of regarding the toilers as being low in the social scale. Spinning is, therefore, as obligatory on the prince as on the peasant.

To the Juveniles

All the foregoing reasons apply to you irrespective of the sex to which you belong. But there are some additional reasons why you in particular should spin. It is to those that I now want to draw your attention:

1. How nice it would be to labour for the poor from your childhood! Spinning will nourish your sense of philanthropy in the right way.
2. If you do your spinning at a fixed time every day, you will develop in you the sense of regularity. For, if you are regular in spinning you will try to be regular in other things also, and it is the universal experience that a boy with regular habits does twice the amount of work that a boy does who works irregularly.
3. It will develop your sense of tidiness; for, without tidiness good yarn cannot be spun at all. You have to keep your slivers clean, your hands likewise clean and free from perspiration. You will have to see also that the place around you is free from dust etc. After spinning you will have to wind your yarn tidily on the winding frame then carefully spray it and finally make it into a neat hank.
4. It will enable you to learn how to effect repairs in a simple machine. Ordinarily, boys and girls of India are not given this training. If you are lazy and get your servant or some older relative to clean your wheel for you, you will miss this training, but I have taken it for granted that every child who sends or will send his yarn to the All India Spinners Association is fond of his wheel. Besides, a boy who does his spinning with interest will master all the details about the various parts of his spinning wheel. A carpenter always cleans his own tools. And, just as a carpenter who does not know how to clean his own tools, can hardly be



ranked as a carpenter, similarly, a boy who cannot prepare his own 'mal' (winding-string) make his own *sari* (composition applied to the spindle where the *mal* touches it) or prepare his spindle-holders, can hardly be called a spinner: he is only the travesty of a spinner.

3-6-1926

Abolish Marriage!

(Condensed translation by M. D. of Gandhiji's article in 'Navajivan')

A correspondant whom I know well raises an issue, I take it, for purely academic interest, because, I know, the views he has set out are not his. 'Is not our present day morality unnatural ?' he asks. If it were natural it should have been the same every where in all ages, but every race and community seems to have its own peculiar marriage laws and in enforcing them men have made themselves worse than beasts. For, diseases which are unknown amongst animals are quite common amongst men: infanticide, abortions, child-marriages, which are impossible in brute creation, are the curse of the society that holds up marriage as a sacrament, and no end of evil results have sprung from what we uphold as laws of morality. And the miserable condition of Hindu widows—what is it due to but to the existing marriage laws? Why not go back to nature, and take a leaf out of the book of the brute creation?

I do not know whether the advocates of free love in the West resort to the argument summarised above or have any stronger reasons to put forth, but I am sure that the tendency to regard the marriage bond as barbarous is distinctly Western. If the argument is also borrowed from the West, there is no difficulty about meeting it.

It is a mistake to institute a comparison between man and the brute and it is this comparison that vitiates the whole argument. For man is higher than the brute in his moral instincts and moral institutions. The law of nature as applied to the one is different from the law of nature as applied to the other. Man has reason, discrimination and free will such as it is. The brute has no such thing. It is not a free agent and knows no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil. Man, being a free agent; knows these distinctions and when he follows his higher nature shows himself far superior to the brute, but when he follows his baser nature he can show himself lower than the brute. Even the races regarded as the most uncivilized on earth accept some restrictions on sexual relations. If it be said that the restriction is itself barbarous, then freedom from all restraints should be the law of man. If all man were



to act according to this lawless law, there would be perfect chaos within twentyfour hours. Man being by nature more passionate than the brute, the moment all restraint is withdrawn, the lava of unbridled passion would overspread the whole earth and destroy mankind. Man is superior to the brute inasmuch as he is capable of self-restraint and sacrifice of which the brute is incapable.

Some of the diseases that are so common at the present day are the result of infringement of marriage laws. I should like to know of a single instance of a man strictly observing the restraint of the marriage bond having suffered from the diseases the correspondent has in mind. Infanticide, child-marriage and the like, are the result of the breach of marriage laws. For the law lays down that a man or woman shall choose a mate only when he or she has come of age, is healthy, and capable of restraint, and desires to have progeny. Those who strictly obey this law and regard the marriage bond as a sacrament, have never an occasion to be unhappy or miserable. Where marriage is a sacrament, the union is not a union of bodies, but the union of souls indissoluble even by the death of either party. Where there is a true marriage of souls, the remarriage of widow or widower is unthinkable, improper, and wrong. Marriages, where the true law of marriage is ignored, do not deserve the name. If we have very few true marriages now-a-days, it is not the institution of marriage that is to blame, but the prevailing form of it, which should be reformed.

The correspondent contends that marriage is no moral or religious bond but a custom, and a custom that is opposed to religion and morality, and hence deserves to be abolished. I submit that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint has no hope of self-realization. I confess, it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or materialist. But he who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit, instinctively knows that self-realization is impossible without self-discipline and self-restraint. The body may either be a playground of passion or a temple of self-realization. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism. The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment.

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the law of restraint. If men were as unrestrained as the brutes, they would straightway take the road to destruction. I am firmly of opinion that



all the evils that the correspondent complains of can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage, but by a systematic understanding and observance of the law of marriage.

I agree that whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities, that whereas some communities forbid polygamy, some permit it. Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform moral law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint. As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain in uniformity. Even today the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal and no religion makes polygamy obligatory. The ideal remains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place.

I need not re-iterate my views regarding re-marriage of widows, as I consider re-marriage of virgin widows not only desirable, but the bounden duty of all parents who happen to have such widowed daughters.

Tukaram's Autobiography

(Article in 'Navajivan')

People in Gujarat may not be familiar with the writings of Tulsidas (author of Ramayana) as those in North India, but personally he is as well-known in Gujarat and other provinces as in North India. Tukaram, however, is not as well known outside his province (Maharashtra) as Tulsidas is, but the fact stands that the permanent impact of Tukaram upon Maharashtra,—the part that his 'abhangas' (hymns in his favourite metre) have played in the composition of 'Maharashtra-dharma' (the genius of Maharashtra)—, is by no means less profound than that of Tulsidas on the mind of North India. Down to this day the common people of Maharashtra chant the *dhun* (repeated melodious utterance of the same mantra or line etc.) of the seven architects of Maharashtra—Nivriti, Jnandev, Sopan, Muktabai, Eknath, Namdev, and Tukaram; recite the *shlokas* ('Verses to the Mind) of Ramdas (another mediaeval saint who was Shivaji's Guru and Tukaram's contemporary) and celebrate the death anniversary of Tukaram. It is difficult to say to what degree this reverence for the sages is still left in the minds of the educated classes but a recent incident is a good pointer. Thousands of Tukaram's devotees gather on the third of the dark half of Falgun at Dehu, his hometown, to celebrate his death anniversary. This year also just when crowds and crowds of the common folk were going from Nagpur to Dehu for that purpose, educated



young men were on their way to the celebration of Shivaji's birth date (Scholars have fixed the date Shivaji's birthday as the second of the dark half of Falgun). As both the parties were going in the same direction, the educated young men thought that the large crowds also were going for Shivaji's birthday celebration. But when they inquired, they learnt that those masses of men were going to Dehu, Tukaram's native town. These educated young men did not even know that Tukaram's death anniversary was an annual event with the people of Maharashtra!

Whenever Vinoba visits our Ashram, he brings with him some '*prasadi*' (God's gift) for the Ashramites. This time he brought the *prasadi* of Tukaram, i.e., he delivered discourses on the autobiography of Tukaram. 'Autobiography' is a modern word for India and it may be said that the idea of writing an autobiography comes also from the west. While the west sages like St. Augustine have published detailed accounts of their lives, there has never been any such attempt made here. Soordas narrated his life-story in only one line: "*Mo sama kauna kutil khala kami*" (who so crooked, villainous, lustful, as I?) and gave it to the world through its inclusion in his book 'Soorsagar'. Tulsidas also wrote his autobiography in his hymn "*Haun prasiddha pataki*" (I am a far-gone, well-known, sinner) and his creation 'Ramayana' itself may be termed the story of his life. And he shows through his 'Vinayapatrika' how he chanted Ramanama with every breath. Similarly, Tukaram also uses such expressions for himself as 'fallen, I am deeply sunk' and 'This mound of sins, this thief who sneaks away from Thy service, has fallen at Thy feet'. Tukaram's life is known also through his sweet and very touching *abhangas* like:

जेथे जातों तेथे तूं

माझा सांगाती

चलविसी हाती

धरुनियां ।'

No matter where I go

Thou art with me;

Nay, holding me by the hand

Leadeth me back to Thee.

* * *



पापाची वासना नको
दाउँ डोळा |
त्याहुनि आंढळा बराच मी ॥

Let not lust besmearch my eyes,
Better I were blind
Than have such eyes.

But unlike others who referred to their lives in this indirect way, Tukaram has sung some of the actual events of his life in a few '*abhangas*'. Sri Vinoba recounted them to us and I pass them on to the readers of '*Navajivan*'.

Fellow-pilgrims of the Soul would often request Tukaram to let them know the anecdotes of his life. In one of the '*kathas*' (stories) he recited before the public he has told the story of his life in 21 '*abhangas*'.

The story begins with following *abhangas*:

‘याती शूद्र वैश्य केला वेवसाव
आधीं तो हां देव कुळ, पूज्य ।’

To that Lord I bow,
Who fixed the duties
Of Shudras and Vaishyas.

Tukaram says: "Though born a Shudra (servant class) I took up a Vaishya's (businessman's) profession. That was a departure. That apart, devotion to Vithoba (Lord Vishnu) has been my heritage from ancient times, and I have done nothing extraordinary in it." The worship of Lord Pandurang, —Who, to remove the fear of mankind, stands with both His

hands on His waist to assure it that the waters of the world's ocean are only waist deep,—had been going on since eight generations of Tukaram's forefathers. Vishwambharbua, Tukaram's ancestor of the eighth pedigree, was a spiritual giant who used to go twice a month on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur—125 miles from Dehu—on every *ekadashi* (11 th day of the bright and the dark half of a lunar month). The story goes that one year when, after finishing his 16th pilgrimage in 8 months, he was starting on the 17th, Lord Vithoba appeared to him at the outskirts of the village, and at that exact spot Vishwambharbua built a temple.



In order to show that he was nothing in particular, Tukaram inadvertently revealed that the devotion of Lord Vithoba was not his innovation, but a common practice handed down to him. But in order to avoid the fault of self-praise or family-praise even in that bare statement of facts, Tukaram adds:

"That is nothing to boast of. But what could I do? You, saints, put the question and I had to agree. So I had to keep my word."

After stating that he belongs to the Shudra caste (the lowest), he hails the fact as a piece of good fortune. In Tukaram's eyes the Lord had literally drenched him with His grace, when He made him a low-born. One of his '*abhangas*' expresses this outburst of joy:

वरें देवा कुणबी केलों
नाहीं तरि दंभें असता मेला |

Thank you, my Lord
For making me so low.
So kind of you to have done it!
Tukaram dances, falls at Your feet.
Had I learnt something (like a Brahmana)
I would have come to harm.
This service of the saints
I would then have failed to do.
I would have swelled with pride,
Taken the road to death,
Tuka says with the beat of drums
'Pride leads you to Hell.'

In this way, he says further on, though his humble birth was helpful, he committed the error of giving up his natural *dharma* and adopting that of a Vaishya and had to suffer the consequences. Instead of giving details of all his sorrows and sufferings, he cuts the story short and says: 'There was no end to my afflictions, Parents also died leaving me destitute.'

There was once a terrible famine. He speaks of its effect on him: "The famine sucked up all my wealth, made me miserable and took away my social prestige. One wife, moreover, died of starvation crying out, 'food, food' at the last moment." (Nobody need be astonished at the fact that Tukaram, being a Shudra, had two wives).



Could there be any greater affliction than the death of his wife from starvation? Hence, he says: 'The soul was sunk deep in sorrow.' And he began to lose even in his profession. He was reminded of the old temple built by his ancestors, Vishwambharbua, which was in ruins. There was a strong urge in him to shake himself free from the corroding worries of business, get the old temple repaired and rebegin the ancestral profession of devotion to the Lord. Thus began his detachment from and aversion to the world. Then he began to sing hymns and *kirtans*:

'I began with *kirtans* and fasts on the eleventh day, but at that time my mind could not be concentrated in the spiritual practices'. But instead of giving up the effort, he changed the method and increased '*satsang*' (contact with 'good'). He used to have the *satsang* of living saints, but now he added to it that of the immortal sayings of the saints of the past. He read with avid devotion and faith the works of Jnandev, Namdev, Eknath and Kabir. Jnandev lived far back in the 12th century A.D. He may be truly said to have laid the foundation of the religious revival of Maharashtra. Breaking the hoary customs of the Brahmins to study and expound religious treatises in Sanskrit only, Jnandev wrote his commentary on the Bhagwad Gita in the Marathi of his times. That book became widely popular. While Jnandev thus took the Gita to the people, Eknath wrote Bhagawat in Marathi and thus cut through the prevailing mode. Then came Namdev, author of the first stream of '*abhangas*'. We may say that Tukaram made all these three his Gurus, One can imagine the result of the profound impact of Jnaneshwar's Gita, Eknath's Bhagwat and such other holy books upon Tukaram's bent for devotion which he had inherited from the long line of his ancestors. It was from Namdev that Tukaram adopted his '*abhangas*' style of hymns. And the last, but by no means the least, of Tukaram's mentors was Kabir. There was no province in India that had remained untouched by Kabir. In a sense not even 'Tulsi' (Tulsidas, the author of the Ramayana), has enchanted the saints of non-Hindi provinces, so much as Kabir. Kabir's '*dohas*' (special form in Hindi) have been adopted by many poets outside his province. Tukaram also has written some '*dohas*' in Hindi.

Tukaram took up the '*dhrupads*' (music) of the songs sung by other saints and repeatedly sang them in order that his mind may be saturated with their messages and be thus purified. In various ways Tukaram repeatedly affirms that hymns purify the mind. He says there is no Godward path as easy as this (hymn-singing), if you have the faith. In a famous *abhangas* he preaches that all other means must be discarded and '*bhava*' (heart's love) alone must be resorted to.



जळो ते जाणीव, जळो ते शाहाणीव,
राहो माझा भाव विट्टल पार्यीं |
जळो तो आचार, जळो तो विचार,
राहो मन स्थिर विट्टल पार्यीं ||

Let knowledge go to hell
Fling wisdom to the winds.
But let my heart's love
Be ever fixed in Thee.
Let 'work' be burned,
Philosophy too;
But let my heart's love
Be ever fixed in Thee.

'I only want', he says, 'to remember the Lord ever and always'.

There is a story of this period of his life, Tukaram had grown poor and was compelled to take up the service of guarding the crop of a field. He was totally unfit for the post. He would go to the farm and spend his time in chanting the Lord Vithoba's name. His farmer-boss often rebuked him sharply, as he had frequently seen that birds were picking the grains and Tukaram, instead of shooing them away, was absorbed in his chant. He was therefore dismissed and the farmer lodged a complaint before the punch. (Before the British rule, villages were semi-independent republics, each with its own punch (council of elders) for dealing with civic affairs). The punch conducted the inquiry. It was found that the outturn of the farm under Tukaram's supervision exceeded that of all others. The *punch*, it is said, ruled that Tukaram should be given all that excess in the crop. But he refused. In the end the amount recovered from the sale of that excess was spent in the repairs of the old temple built by Vishwambharbua.

Tukaram describes what other *sadhanas* (spiritual pursuits) he performed, He 'served the dust of the holy feet of saints', was not ashamed to render them service of any kind whatsoever. As countless saints have repeatedly affirmed, the door to the vision of God never opens, so long as one does not give up the fear of public disgrace.

Premaldas (a Gujarati saint) sings:



संतांचे सेविलें तीर्थ पायवणी
लाज नाहीं मनीयेऊ दिली ॥

Never has it yet been known
That a God-lover's honour¹
Has not been saved
By grace divine.

And Mirabai (a Rajput princess of the highest family, whose devotional songs are still popular in Gujarat and North India), who says in an autobiographical out-burst:

मेरे तो गिरधर गोपाल दूसरा न कोई |

"Krishna alone and no one else
Is the darling of my heart".

She loudly proclaims:

साधु-संग बैठि बैठि लोक लाज खोई ॥

"I lost all sense of public shame

In the constant company of the saints."

And in the hymn 'Ghunghat ka pat khol' (remove the barrier of the veil) the veil to be removed for having the vision of God is not only the delusion of the eye through ignorance, but also the fear of public disgrace.

1. M. D. quotes these lines as they contain the same word 'laj' (=disgrace as well as 'honour') but the first quotation does not seem to be apt here.



10.6.1926

Two Schemes of Social Salvation

(M.D.'s article in 'Young India')

@ Thirtyfive years ago Commissioner Booth-Tucker of the Salvation Army published a book, 'In darkest India', portraying the destitution of India and offering the same way out as was done by General Booth in respect to 'Darkest England'. The picture of poverty drawn by him is as true today as it was then, and the percentage of destitution as given by him is rather underestimated than overestimated. At least one tenth of the entire population he describes as scarcely knowing 'from year's end to year's end' what it is to have a satisfying meal, and that it is the rule and not the exception for them to retire to rest night after night hungry and faint for want of sufficient and suitable food." "It is impossible," he adds, "for any one who has lived in such close and constant contact with the poor, as we have been doing for the last eight or nine years, to blink the fact that destitution of a most painful character exists, to a very great extent, even when harvests are favourable and the country is not desolated by the scourge of famine." Another tenth of the population, according to him, consists of the poverty-stricken labouring classes, 'earning less than five rupees a month for the support of their families.' This estimate and of those earning more is purely arbitrary, but the statement is substantially true that, "if India's submerged tenth are to be granted, even nothing better than a "bullock charter," the lowest fraction which could be named for the minimum claimable by all would be one anna a day, or two rupees a month. As a matter of fact, I have no hesitation in saying, that there are many millions in India who do not get even half this pittance from years end to year's end, and yet toil on with scarcely a murmur, sharing their scanty morsel with those even poorer than themselves, until disease finds their weakened bodies an easy prey, and death gives them their release from a poverty-stricken existence which scarcely deserves the name of 'life'. " Those who toil on thus 'with scarcely a murmur' are described by the author as those living in the border-land of starvation. "The land itself is deteriorating through the unendurable pressure put upon it. As the forests grow more distant through being used up for timber and fuel, wood becomes dearer. The manure which ought to go upon the land is, therefore, by necessity consumed for fuel. The ground in consequence becomes impoverished. As the struggle for existence becomes fiercer, the people are unable to let their land periodically lie fallow, so the crops grow lighter. Again, the *ryot* is not only unable to feed himself, but his bullocks



share a similar fate. The feeble animals can only draw a plough which merely scratches the surface of the ground. Furthermore as the population increases, the land is divided into smaller and smaller holdings. The struggle against the advancing tide of adversity cannot be maintained. Inch by inch the tide rolls up, pushing the black rocks of border landers closer and closer upon the famine, to escape which they at length plunge into the sea amongst the submerged millions, who, weary and bitter and despairing, or with blind submission to the iron hand of fate have grown hopelessly and miserably indifferent."

The disease thus detected, the author proceeds to give the remedy, which, in one sentence, is not an indiscriminate system of largely extended charity, but finding work for the workless millions, such work as shall more than pay for the very humble pittance the Indian destitute requires. General Booth's scheme, which is then described in detail, consists of the formation of a labour bureau where "all will be sorted out, sifted and regimented, or organised into distinct corps," and by arrangement with millowners and Government and Railway Companies, be given employment according to their qualifications and aptitudes; it consists also of the labour yard which should provide 'work for all' by the formation of various brigades, e.g. the potters' brigade, weavers' brigade, the basket makers' brigade, the ropemakers' brigade, the tanners' brigade, the dhobees' brigade, the papermakers' brigade, and so on and so forth.

Now we have no figures before us of the results of the Salvation Army's activities during the past thirty five years, but it cannot be gainsaid that the scheme has not touched even the fringe of the problem. And for obvious reasons. For one thing, whilst the disease is discovered in all its hideousness, the Army has not troubled to go to the root of the disease, the causes which have made it possible, and without the eradication of which any amount of schemes cannot touch the disease. General Booth's Army could not, by the very nature of the case, lay their finger on the root-spot, viz. the system of foreign domination, and the ruthless destruction during the last century of India's prime industry. Secondly, there is the fact that with the boon of work for the unemployed that the Army offered, there was also the promise of 'everlasting life', if one gave his heart to Lord Jesus. There was indeed no compulsion, but it was difficult not to feel that swelling the ranks of the Christian army was the ultimate objective of an apparently philanthropic venture. Above all the scheme lost count of the fact that over seventyfive percent of the population is agricultural and ninety percent lives in villages. The remedy therefore, should have been one that they



had been used to, one which came naturally to them, which was easy and which could really be described as 'work for all'. The agricultural and the village population wanted something to eke their income with, something of which the product would find a ready market everywhere and at all times and would be thus of a universal character. You can organize ex-convicts or drunkards or such infinitesimal fractions of the population into weavers' or basketmakers' or tanners' brigades, but you cannot do so with the bulk of the community without interfering with their normal professions. They want the least interference, they would, at best, undertake to do some work, but would be then left entirely alone.

With the national awakening in the country six years ago, was evolved a scheme of everyone spinning for sacrifice, and the poorest spinning for wage—which took account not only of the poverty of the land, but which went to the root of the matter, which found out what the agriculturist had a hundred years ago and what he was deprived of, and which thus offered a remedy that was suited to the soil and the genius of the people, that was simple and thus universal. General Booth laid down several essentials which alone, he said, could make the remedy effective. There were:

- (1) The remedy must *change the man*, quicken his conscience and enlighten his mind and soften his heart.
- (2) The remedy must *change the circumstances*, which are the cause of his wretched condition.
- (3) The remedy must be no philanthropic tinkering, but must be on a scale commensurate with the evil.
- (4) Not only should the scheme be large enough, but *permanent*.
- (5) It must not only be permanent, but be *immediately practicable*.
- (6) It must be *universal*.

We shall leave it to the readers to judge if anything can be found to satisfy these conditions more effectively than the spinning wheel, which is offered to the community as a part of their religious duty, which once used to be the daily supplementary occupation of millions of Indian villagers, and which is immediately practicable in as much as it is eminently simple, and which ensures, as the results achieved already show, more than the pittance that General Booth laid down as the minimum standard of existence.



19-6-1926

*(Notes in M.D.'s manuscript diary in Gujarati)***Mujib and three others.**

Professors of the (National) Muslim University came to see Babu (=father=Gandhiji), Gandhiji's talk with them on the Hindu Muslim question:

At the very outset Gandhiji said: "Though at first I had no inclination whatsoever to talk on that subject, I changed my view afterwards, as I thought 'however small our 'Madressa' (Muslim educational institution) be, it is possible that someone from its present students may turn out a hero in future.' So I thought it best to express my thoughts.

"The first and most important thing is that I had many talks with Shaukat-Mohammad (the Ali Brothers) on the message which Hakim Saheb (a well-known Muslim physician) had sent me. All of them are under the impression that it is the Hindus who oppress Muslims very much, that Muslims do retaliate, but the Hindus are the aggressors. I receive many letters also making the same complaint. But I told them that Hindus have not been aggressive till now at least. They (Hindus) have indeed transgressed one limit, i.e., they too have begun to attack Masjids. At the Belgaum Congress (December 1924), a complaint had been sent by Zafar Ali (a Punjabi Muslim). An inquiry was instituted. Shuaib (a Muslim) was appointed. He reported that there was no proof of Hindu aggression. As regards Hinduism, I am sure that it never says that other religions are false. Hence, if I come to feel that Hinduism considers it its *dharma* to pull down a Masjid, I would renounce Hinduism forthwith.

"Earlier also, a complaint was made at Delhi. I got Jamnalalji and others to inquire into that complaint also and it was found to be baseless. But recently I heard that in Calcutta also a Masjid was attacked. I was grieved at the report, but I don't think that Hindus had adopted an aggressive attitude even there. Shuaib knows Krishnadas. He wrote that what the Hindus did was in self-defence. He is free from prejudice, for or against. He asked me "What should we do about this?" I am referring to Calcutta, because Hakim and Shaukat Ali are deeply grieved at the riots there. Shaukat Ali for one, was furious, but he was suppressing his anger. He was really hurt, because I kept silent. I understood his grief, but did not give him any answer, because I could not say anything (that would satisfy him).



"The lesson that I have drawn from all this is that the views of even the best Hindus and Muslims may undergo a change, if there is mutual distrust in their hearts. This has been the effect in Hakim's mind also. Hakim, Shaukat, Mohammed—I regard all of them as believers in God. Mohammed does say things that were better not said but he is not anti-Hindu on that account. He may blurt out at times, but afterwards he apologizes and even weeps. Shaukat keeps patience, but he too has begun to believe that Hindus are very hard upon Muslims. I used to believe—for all of them, Hakim, Ansari, Abdur Rehman, Khwaja, Mohammed, Shuaib, (all Nationalist Muslim colleagues) I used to imagine—that I could persuade them to see eye to eye with me but that has not been the case. How strange that now I look at things from one angle and they from another:

"Take the example of what happened here (Ahmedabad). There is no aversion to Muslims in the heart of Vallabhbhai. As for Shankarlal, he was not prepossessed either. And Anasuyabehn (labour leader) had gone to the length of starting her work among only the Muslims. But they all feel that it is the Muslims who are the oppressors in what is going on today in the town. Take the instance of the expansion by the *fakir* of the limits of the Masjid near Anasuyabehn's house. Ambalal (Anasuyabehn's brother) complained against the encroachment to Vallabhbhai (President of the Ahmedabad Municipality) and the latter took the necessary steps. So now there is commotion and collection of weapons. It is good that there has not been an actual fighting so far, but I wish to say that things are taking this turn here. It does not seem that even Hakim Saheb if he comes here, can do anything. Imamsaheb (the Muslim divine and inmate of Gandhiji's Ashram who came to India with him) also must now have heard something about all this. But he has not talked to me anything. Now what should be done here?

"I have now grown insensitive to these things. I would be equally distressed, if a Hindu temple, a Muslim Masjid, a Christian church, a Jewish synagogue, or a Parsi *agiari* (fire-temple) is demolished; but no I would feel greater pain for the Parsis because theirs is the smallest community. They never induce any body to join their faith. And they are a really very God-fearing people. Look at their munificent donations in proof thereof. Their path of devotion is different. But we must see their faith in their philanthropy. They have helped all religious communities. Now think of the attack on them, when the Prince (the Prince of Wales was brought to India in 1920 to offset the popularity of non-co-operation, Parsis did not join in the boycott of the Prince) came to India. And yet they have helped us more than any other community. But they have



no doubt, that Hindus and Muslims are out to exterminate them. Their debt over us is large and I have always felt that any harm done to their religion would give me intense pain.

"But I don't want to influence your thinking. Besides, it is not true that Hindus do nothing. Moonje (Dr. Moonje, President of the Hindu Mahasabha) wants to pay Muslims in the same coin, a Masjid for a temple, killing of two Muslims for one Hindu. He says that Hindu *dharma* gives moral sanction to that policy. He sent me a copy of his speech. I gave my comment: "I congratulate you on your outspokenness. But our views are poles apart."

Those Hindus or Muslims are rare who can compete with Jairamdas (A Sindhi Hindu non-co-operator) in transparent sincerity. But that Jairamdas I have lost, because he had to shed tears in profusion. We used to have long talks in jail. He liked what I told him there, but what he saw after he came out, estranged his heart. Jairamdas may be erring, but he is not the man to tell a lie deliberately. He gave me a long narrative of Sindh affairs. There is absolutely no basis for a quarrel there. How could a Hindu (being in small minority) dare to quarrel there? How could he encroach upon Muslims' lands there? True, an Aryasamajist (a militant Hindu sect) may prattle something, but to say, on that basis, that Sindhi Hindus have grown belligerent is not correct. And yet he talked of the instances of molestation of Hindu women there. Other reliable and honest men have the same thing to say. Jethmal used to stand by the Mussalmans formerly. But he too made the same complaint of Muslim oppression. What I mean is that this is the impression invariably formed in the minds of honest and respectable persons. I know, Hakim Saheb's nature is such that if he found Muslims at fault, he would severely rebuke them. But he does not do so now. What then may I say to the public, if I want to? May I write that Hakim Saheb is not speaking out though he should? There is a letter from Ajmer. The writer says that he can prove with facsimile photographs that the women shown in them have been harassed by Muslims and none else.

"My religion forbids condemnation of any other faith as false, while Muslims believe that their religion alone is true. But sensible Muslims believe that Hindus also regard their own religion as true. Something can be done by only appealing to the reason of such sober persons. In the present situation I want to say to such Muslims, i.e. to those who are distressed at the demolition of even a Hindu temple as much as at that of a Masjid, "Control yourself. Suspend your judgment.' If even only a few such



liberal-minded men are left, then I have the faith that we are certain to unite one day. Yes, in course of time, we too can, as the Germans and the British may, unite after furious fighting. But that means little. It confers no honour on anybody. But I certainly want to gain that honour. I definitely wish that there may turn out at least some persons, from both Hindus and Muslims, who can proudly say, "We have kept aloof and taken no sides."

"Azad (Maulana Azad, Education Minister after Swaraj) told me; 'Issue a public statement and get signatures.' I replied, 'But even those whom we do not trust will sign it.' Hence, there is no meaning in getting signatures. For example, Dr. Moonje. He says, "I do want Hindu Muslim Unity but you cannot answer violence except by counter-violence. What is the sense in getting signatures of such people? But we want such men as may see a Masjid being attacked and yet refuse to send men to bring down a temple. Yes, you can say that such assailants must be beaten back, though my religion does not sanction beating at all—, but beat, if you must, only the assailants, not all those who belong to the other religion. But please never think of demolishing a temple. The thought that because a Masjid has been destroyed, the temple of Kashi Vishwanath has got to be, must never enter our minds. Hindus also must never think of that sort of reprisal. Otherwise, with what face shall we live on the earth? That is why I wish that at least some among us must turn out who will say, "We shall die when Khuda kills us, but we are not going to kill anybody."

"I talked at this length to you simply because the thought struck me: 'What will you teach the many children who come to you? Is it right to teach our children, 'Mussalmans are rascals, they are our enemies and must be killed.'?"

"Let me repeat my assertion that I am not going to let my mind be perverted. I for one have the faith that we are certain to be united. It is impossible that the work of '21 (non-co-operation movement of 1921 wherein both the communities had joined) may all go waste. Shaukat's body and mind were different, but our hearts were one. He often blinked at portents. There was an incident at Nagpur. One man was allowed to be buried at a particular spot. Shaukat applauded the action. At Bangalore also the same thing happened. He felt elated at such events. But I had told him "Today it is Mussalmans who ride roughshod over Muslims, tomorrow they will do the same over Hindus.' At Lucknow volunteers armed with naked swords had met us. Mohammad Ali castigated them. At Bezwada boys had come armed with long *lathis* (thick wooden sticks) . If ours is the policy of non-violence, why should we have with



us symbols of violence? At Bombay the *pandal* of the Prince of Wales was set fire to. I know who did it. "Please tell Hakim what I told you and add that this is the impression formed in my mind and that that impression is getting deeper every day. Do you know what Satish Babu writes? He says that the Maulvis (Muslim divines) have advised Muslim women to give up Khadi. His Khadi work is specially among the Muslims and even his star-spinner is Usman. Idols of zamindars are lifted away, but what can they, poor men, do?"

1

One of the Muslim friends said: "The time to decide who is the first offender has passed."

Bapu: "No, a particular party (- Muslims) fires the first shot and then there is nothing to choose between both the parties."

The Muslim friend: "But it is no longer a question of only *lathis* now. Boycott of the other community has begun."

Bapu: "I think that that boycott cannot last long."

Muslim friend: "Don't you think that bad elements of the society receive encouragement from this (silence of Gandhiji)? Is it not true that they get time to organise themselves? What is the good of that forbearance which is forced upon you?"

Bapu: "No, we must forbear willingly and deliberately, not under pressure. Such forbearance is not inaction but action. When a surgeon desists from immediate operation, it is only for the good of the patient. Should I answer "Kesari" (a Maharashtrian paper) by counter-abuses, because it heaps abuses upon me? The present situation is so complicated that if I start writing about Hindu-Muslim quarrels, my energy will be dissipated without bringing any good result and I would have to side with one party. This my silence and forbearance is going to help me a lot one day. There was a time when I defended Mohammad (Ali). But today I cannot defend his statements. Why did Hakimji attend the Khilafat Conference? He should have kept silent. "The central thing I have to say is this. It will create an excellent effect, if we keep our thoughts pure and do not let them be soiled. Because thoughts produce a greater effect than deeds."

Muslim friend: "What will you call the right time (for Gandhiji's action)?"



Bapu: "How can I say that? But I may say that the right time for (communal solidarity) must come soon, not after years. If I can predict even the right time, it would mean that I have attained some divine powers. But man cannot predict the future. Only when a man finds his intelligence unavailing, God comes to his help.

"I was forgetting to tell you one thing. As long as we go into the Councils, the right time cannot arrive. And if it does, it can only come through the Government's efforts, through horse-trading for seats etc. If the Government convenes a Conference to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims, I think I would not attend it, because I do not believe in bargaining for loaves and fishes. To me at least it seems that this quarrel would never have arisen, if the question of council entry had not come up.

"I shall talk with others also, as I do with you today—in spite of my silence and forbearance."



13.2.1926

Tukaram's Autobiography

II

(M.D's Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

After giving the details of his devotional pursuits, Tukaram deals with his service to God through action.

'I did the best I could in doing good to others—in serving them even by great physical exertion.' We have already seen how he got the money needed for the repairs, which he had undertaken, of the Vithoba Temple. It is said that the necessary manual labour was all put in by Tukaram himself.

'I did not accept the advice of friends and relatives and felt totally averse to this fleeting world.'

Looking at the strange behaviour of Tukaram, people had begun to advise him: "These are not the ways of a wise man of the world." The thing that incurred the special displeasure and condemnation of the public was the fact that not only did Tukaram give up his business entirely, but also threw his account-books into the river. There were many of them in his house as he used to deal in many things. He may be doing a money-lender's business also. But disgusted with the sahuakar's (money-lender) common practice of cheating the illiterate and hard-pressed borrower by muttering false accountancy before him like 16 into 5 makes 85, Tukaram said to his brother, "I am sick of all this. I have decided. I am going to hurl all this lumber into the river Indrayani." The brother was a man of the world—shrewd and practical. He said he had a share in the property and Tukaram had no right to thus destroy the account books. Tukaram took it that he possessed a half share and consigned to the river as many of the account books as he called his own. In this way Tukaram laid his axe at the very root of the numerous obstacles that beset the path of renunciation.' With reference to this action he goes further and says in one *abhang*.'

सत्य असत्यासी मन केलें गवाही,

मानियेलें नाहीं बहुमातां |

This couplet can be interpreted in two ways. It means, in one sense he disregarded the popular voice against his action and made his mind—his conscience—the arbiter of the truth or otherwise of it. It may also mean that instead of taking or



listening to the counsel of many people about what the truth or untruth was, he did what his own mind—his conscience asked him to do. Whatever the meaning you take, it comes to the same one thing in connection with which this wise saying of the poet Kalidas is worth remembering:

(In matters where doubts arise as to the right course of action, conscience is, for men of virtue, the true guide and authority).

Besides,

मानीयेला स्वप्नीं गुरुचा उपदेश

धरिला विश्वास दृढ नामीं |

(I accepted the instruction of the Guru who came to me in a dream and put firm faith in the efficacy of chanting the Name).

Not only does God never forsake the virtuous man who regards the prompting of his conscience as his true guide, but even helps and supports him. Hence, God strengthened Tukaram's self-made resolve by sending him this message of the Guru. 'No knowledge (—self realization), they say 'without a Guru' and we see that it is an almost unexceptional rule with saints to have a Guru to guide them. Perhaps Tukaram's is the one instance where a devotee of the Lord attained 'knowledge' without having a Guru in concrete form. Even before the dream, his hymn-singing was in full swing, he was at it with the full resolve to pile up self-earned heaps of spiritual wealth upon what he had inherited from his ancestors, and so he did not wait for the advent of a Guru in order to accept from him initiation for starting to chant the Name. As he was thus completely absorbed in his pursuit, some Guru came to him in his dream and patting him on the back said, "What you are doing is perfectly right. Carry on." Owing to this holy sight of the Guru in his dream, Tukaram's faith in the efficacy of chanting the Name was firmly established.

After that consummation, poetic talent spontaneously surged up in his heart by God's grace and, full of gratitude, he became his Master's lifelong servant.

'But I was ordered not to compose hymns and sing them in public. This shocked me and I felt deeply distressed'.

In the elucidation of one of his '*abhangas*' we have already seen that Tukaram began reading the poems of saints. His favourites were Jnandev, Namdev, Eknath, and Kabir. The first three of them had done away with the prevailing custom of preaching



the knowledge of Brahman in Sanskrit only and begun to write their hymns in their vernacular (Marathi) and in a style which the masses could understand and appreciate, (orthodox) Brahmins had, therefore, taken them to task, even persecuted them. Not a single Brahmin would agree to perform the "Shraddha"¹ ceremony of Jnaneshwar's father and he had to perform it himself. But after all Jnaneshwar was a Brahmin, where as Namdev was a tailor. It was a still more bitter pill for orthodox Brahmins to swallow when they saw an attack on their exclusive field of work made by a tailor, who began to spread the knowledge of Brahman through his plebian Marathi '*abhangas*'. And when Tukaram, following in the footsteps of Namdev, started composing '*abhangas*,' he also met with resistance. The opponent in his case was Rameshwar Bhatt. But instead of getting enraged at this opposition, Tukaram behaved in a way becoming a truly non-violent God-seeker. He dived deep into his heart and asked himself, 'How is it that an opposition has sprung up against me?' He felt pained indeed, but wondered 'Could the opposition be due to my lack in '*Jnana*' (knowledge) to my imperfect preaching? (It is an established belief in Hinduism that he alone who has realized the Self should preach to other).

Otherwise, nobody would or could dare to raise a finger against *Jnana*² (—knowledge). Thinking thus:

बूडविल्या वहा बैसलों धरणों
केलें नारायणों समाधान |

He threw all his books of poems into the river Indrayani, approached Vithoba (temple), gave up his food and sat down with the firm resolve not to budge till his prayer was heard: "My life is dedicated to Thee. Take it but give me *Jnana*." So Lord Narayan was pleased, removed his doubts and satisfied him. Tukaram had already sunk his account-books because they would keep him attached to the word. But now under the fear that even then some trace of egotism or imperfection might still have stuck to him, he let even his books of '*abhangas*' be swept away in the same river and took the refuge that dissolves all doubts and fears, viz. that of Vithoba. Here Tukaram says simply, "Narayana consoled him and removed his fear" but elsewhere he describes with great delight the Vision the Lord granted him at the end of his austerity:

"There He is. Standing before my very eyes! That conch, that wheel, that mace— how much they adorn His hands! I can hear even the fluttering of His *garuda's*³ wings! And he is so eager to give me his assurance of safety and tell me (माभैः माभैः), "Don't,



don't, be afraid!" It seems as if even the sun has paled before the dazzling splendour of his crown and earrings! Those charming eyes of the dark-cloud-coloured Hari, those four arms of His and His beautiful Vaijayanti necklace captivate the heart! And how brilliant shines his *pitamber* (yellow-coloured silken *dhoti*)! It sets ablaze with light all the ten directions as it were! Boundless is Tuka's joy and satisfaction! The Lord of Viakunth (heaven) Himself has come to him!

Tukaram has followed up the song of this Vision with numerous others of the same period which reveal his superb joy at the visit of Lord Vithoba.

"Today I have an august guest—The Lord Shri Krishna Himself! But how to treat Him? My hut cries out for repairs. I have got only porridge of *jowar* (a cheap cereal)-and cooked in water (not milk)! My cot threatens to crack any moment! The mattress on it is all rags patched together! What can I give him except leaflets of '*tulsi*' for a digestive after food? But could His plight be any better, when he has chosen to come to a miserably poor man like myself!"

All these expressions came out in ecstasies of joy on other occasions but when he is narrating his biography, he is simply choked with emotion and he cannot enter into all such details. He winds up his own story by saying, "If I start giving details, I have many many things to say. But it would mean stretching the story unnecessarily to a late hour. So I close here. And you see what my condition is today. God alone knows what tomorrow brings."

But he does not speak of the unknown nature of tomorrow, out of fear or disappointment. With the fullest faith in God and the most hopeful outlook, he pronounces his conclusion:

भक्ता नारायण नुपेक्षी सर्वथा
कृपावंत ऐसा कळों आलें |

Narayan never forgets, never neglects those who love Him. He is full of grace and kindness—that has been the invariable experience. In these words Tukaram has given the unflinching experience of '*bhaktas*' (devotees) of all climes and times. How could a *bhakta* sing of his gratefulness to God in any other terms? In his '*manache shloka*' (Verses to the Mind), Ramdas Swami also has sung with profuse gratitude and elation: 'Rama never ignores His *bhaktas*. No, He is proud of them.'



तुका म्हणे माझे सर्व भांडवल
बोलविले बोल पांडुरंगें |

Tuka then says: 'what Pandurang (Vithoba—Lord Vishnu) has made me say is all my wealth. I have no other.' So very like the Sanskrit line:

विपद् विस्मरणं विष्णोः संपन्नारायण स्मृतिः |

'There is only one (real) adversity—forgetfulness of Lord 'Vishnu—and one (real) prosperity—remembrance of Him.'

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1. A ceremony to honour and help in the elevation of a departed soul.
 2. 'Jnana' means in Sanskrit Self-realization, not mere philosophical thinking. Gita gives a long list of moral qualities—freedom from pride and hypocrisy, non-violence, etc.—as essential requisites of 'Jnana'—XIII—7 to 11.
 3. Lord Vishnu rides on Garuda (a particular eagle) probably to hint at response to prayers, as the eagle flies very swiftly.



24.6.1926

What is Natural

(Gandhi's Gujarati article translated by M.D. in 'Young India')

No word seems to be more abused today than the word 'natural'. For instance, a correspondent writes, 'as eating and drinking are natural to man, even so is anger.' Another seems to argue: 'The sexual function is as natural as the other functions of the body. Were it not so, God would not have endowed it to man. If it was not our duty to curse the wicked and to bless the good, why should we have been endowed with the faculty of cursing and blessing? May it not be our duty to develop all our faculties to perfection? And thus *Himsa* (violence) would appear to be as much one's *dharma* as *Ahimsa* (non-violence). In short, virtue and vice are figments of our imagination. Your *Ahimsa* is a sign of weakness, inasmuch as it expresses only one side of our nature. Rather than regard it as the highest religion, why should we not regard it as the highest irreligion? *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah* (Non-violence is the highest *dharma*) was originally *Ahimsa Paramo Adharma*, the negative prefix 'a' (not) having somehow dropped out or been rubbed out by some enemy of mankind. For on many occasions, *Ahimsa* can be demonstrated to be the highest irreligion.'

This is not one man's argument. I have boiled down and put together the arguments of many. The theory about the negative 'a' in *Ahimsa* being dropped was propounded by an old barrister friend and he did so in all seriousness. Indeed, if we were to put man in the same category as the brute, many things could be proved to come under the description 'natural'. But if they belong to two different species, not every thing that is natural to the brute is natural to man. 'Progress is man's distinction, man's alone, not beast's. Man has discrimination and reason. Man does not live by bread alone, as the brute, does. He uses his reason to worship God and to know Him, and regards the attainment of that knowledge as the *summum bonum* of life. The brute, if he can be said to worship God, does so involuntarily. The desire to worship God is inconceivable in the brute, while man can voluntarily worship even Satan. It must therefore be, and is man's nature to know and find God. When he worships Satan, he acts contrary to his nature. Of course, I will not carry conviction to one who makes no distinction between man and brute. To him virtue and vice are convertible terms. While to the man, whose end and aim is realization of God, even the functions of eating and drinking can be natural only within certain limits. For having knowledge of God as his end, he will not eat or drink for the sake of enjoyment but solely for



sustaining the body. Restraint and renunciation will, therefore, always be his watch-words even in respect of these functions.

And if it is man's nature to know and find God, sexual indulgence should be contrary to his nature and complete renunciation of it will accord best with his mission. For realization of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire. It is not man's duty to develop all his faculties to perfection; his duty is to develop all his God-ward faculties to perfection and suppress completely those of a contrary tendency.

Any one blessed with choice or free-will to accept or reject, cannot but distinguish between good and evil, virtue and vice. For these mean, in other words, nothing but things to be accepted and things to be rejected, hence bad or sinful. We have within us both good and bad desires. It is our duty to cultivate the former and to suppress or eradicate the latter, and if we fail therein we should remain brutes though born men. Birth as a human being is, therefore, declared by all religions as a rare privilege—a state of probation. And Hinduism says that if we are weighed and found wanting, we should have to be reborn as beasts.

The world is full of *Himsa* and Nature does appear to be 'red in tooth and claw'. But if we bear in mind that man is higher than the brute, then is man superior to that Nature. If man has a divine mission to fulfil, a mission that becomes him, it is that of Ahimsa. Standing as he does in the midst of Himsa, he can retire into the innermost depths of his heart and declare to the world around him that his mission in this world of Himsa is Ahimsa, and only to the extent that he practises it, does he adorn his kind. Man's nature then is not Himsa but Ahimsa, for he can speak from experience his innermost conviction that he is not the body but Atman (the unchanging Self, or Soul), only with a view to self-realization. And from that experience he evolves the ethics of subduing desire, anger, ignorance, malice, and other passions, puts forth his best effort to achieve the end and finally attains complete success. Only when his efforts reach that consummation can he be said to have fulfilled himself, to have acted according to his nature. Conquest of one's passions, therefore, is not superhuman; but human, and observance of Ahimsa is heroism of the highest type, with no room for cowardice or weakness.



4-7-1926

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

Jamnalalji—a Pilgrim

A writer has said that mankind can be classified into two Divisions—the diseased and the healthy. For the diseased there is no development, there is only decay—both of the body and the soul. The healthy go on progressing day by day—in body upto a particular limit, in soul till he gains salvation. The story of a healthy and evolving life confers for all times a blessing on mankind. Gandhiji has given the name *atmarthi*¹ or *mumukshu*² to those whom the writer calls 'healthy and progressing'.

When Gandhiji was asked whether it was right to write a biography of Sri Jamnalalji, he said, "It is generally not advisable to write the life-story of a man who is still living. But an exception may be made in the case of a *mumukshu* or *atmarthi*, because society gains some from such a book and I think Jamnalalji is a *mumukshu* or *atmarthi*."

The gentle man who asked for this permission was Sri Ramesh Tripathi. He thought it quite in the fitness of things to let the Marwari community know what kind of a man Jamnalalji, this year's President of the Agrawal Mahasabha (Conference of the Agrawal or Marwari community), was. That attempt made at the right time and for the right occasion, is commendable. Sri Tripathi knows Sri Jamnalalji since a long time, and he has taken pains to gather and verify the facts of Jamnalalji's life and present an authentic story. All the same the book cannot be given the imposing name of a biography. In the first place Sri. Jamnalalji is only 37 and expected to render public service for at least 40-50 years more. In the second, the result of his public service done so far, or better still, of his spiritual pursuit for Self-realization through that public service, has so many ramifications that they can only be hinted at-not described-in the short life-sketch that has been published. If the history of his services were to be given, the present size of the book—100 pages—would have to be enlarged to 500. For instance, if we take only his service to the Marwari community; it would be necessary to devote one whole chapter to a comparison between the state of the community 10 years ago and now. Moreover, the history of how his Congress-service began and how his small field of service went on expanding would provide a very interesting reading. But even this short account of a man like Jamnalalji deserves publication for one very good reason. From the quiet, steady, flow of his life, you get a glimpse of his future career. We gather from the book that there are more chances in future for the



application of the principles to which he is wedded, but hardly any for making him change those principles. Hence, even this hurried glance at his life does not do him injustice. Not will it prove incomplete from the point of view of Jamnalalji's inner development in future, as that development itself will have its roots in his present life. Unlike the lives of many other heroes, Jamnalalji's life is neither full of ups and downs, nor of complexities. Nobody will say of him that he was once out for a merry time or bouts of drinks etc. but was transformed into a man of self-restraint in a moment. There has never arisen a crisis in his life which has made him take an altogether new direction. God had endowed him with a religious bent right from his infancy. That this ingrained tendency has been developed day by day is all that can be said of him. Many of the characteristics of 'divine wealth' (Gita-XVI 1-2-3) which lead to Self-realization were evident in him in some degree even during his childhood. As occasions arose, they became more manifest and he was more and more firmly established in them.

I devoted some length to this point in order that nobody might imagine that Jamnalalji came into the public eye only after he joined the non-co-operation movement in 1921 or that his association with it was the turning point of his life. This moot point has been very effectively brought out even in this brief sketch of his life. His life's history previous to the year 1921. i.e. till he was 30 or 32, is also very interesting and instructive. He was born and bred up in infancy in a very poor family living in a small water-famished village—there was not a single public well in it!—in a small Native State called Sikar. It was with great difficulty that Sri Bachhraj 'Seth' (a rich man's epithet) succeeded in securing the child from his parents in order to adopt him as his son. Before giving up their son, the parents insisted on a bargain that tended for public good. In return for taking the child into his custody, Bachhraj Seth built a big brick-built well for the village. The child then became the son of Bachhraj Seth and went to Wardha. He used to get one rupee per day from the Seth's firm. At the tender age of 15 or 16, he gave away from his savings accrued in this way Rs. 100 in charity for the installation of a printing press. "I was more delighted in giving away those one hundred rupees, than I have ever been even on those occasions when I gave away one hundred thousand", he has said. Even at that blooming age, he did not know what it was to be a gay pleasure-loving young man. At the age of 17, he took a step which reveal all the chief characteristics of 'divine wealth' to such a high degree as show in embryo the celebrated Jamnalalji of today. This new father was a man of short temper and so of frequent outbursts, with or without cause. He would then insult any body indiscriminately. Once Jamnalalji became the victim of this man's wrath. The father



threatened to disinherit him and said some other bitter words. The letter that Jamnalalji wrote on that occasion deserves verbatim reproduction, as it discloses incidentally all the divine qualities referred to above. It is in the Marwari language and is quoted here verbatim. (Gujaratis can understand Marwari).

"To revered Sri. Bachhrajji Ramdhandasji at Wardha.

"Please accept the child Jamna's obeisance at your feet. Lord Lakshminarayan looks favourably upon this place. (Everything is O. K. here). And now there is another thing to say. Today you were displeased with me, but that does not matter. You said so, because the Lord willed it so and because you adopted me. But you are not to blame on that account. The fault lies with those who gave me to you. That apart, it is best you undo what you did. In fact, I have no claim over you. You have earned your wealth and it is entirely yours. You can do whatever you like with it. I have no right over you (and your property). Whatever money you have spent after me till today or at my suggestion has already been spent. So what is done is done, it can't be helped. But from today I am not going to take from you, and will never request you to send me, a single pie (-1 / 192 of a rupee). Please now be at ease and have no worry about your wealth. Henceforth I have no right or claim over you or your money. And it is my prayer to Lord Laxminarayanji that he may keep you in good health and grant you 20-25 years more of life. And wherever I may go and settle I will pray to the Lord for your health and happiness. And please forgive me for all the faults I may have committed till now. And if you think that everybody is a lover of money, that everybody serves you because of your money, let me state that I at least am entirely indifferent about your money and if God grant my wish, not even a wish to get anything from you will cross my mind. Because my fate always accompanies me. And what shall I do by having money? For I have no desire whatsoever to stay near wealth. With your blessings I will sing hymns and remember the Lord as much as I can. For that will give me happiness not only in this life, but also in the life to come. So let your mind be happy and have no worry of any kind. All relationships are false—illusive. Nobody is any body's son, nor is anyone someone's father. Everyone in the world is the friend and seeker of his own happiness. Everything—the whole creation is a mirage, a seeming spread-out from one invisible eternity. You are still caught in the meshes of that *maya*, but I am released from it from today as the result of your discourse (in the form of wrath). In future God will save me from the snare of this *sansara* (fleeting world). And please do not entertain the slightest fear that I shall file a complaint against you in court. Out of my own free will I have signed and affixed the stamp to make it a legal document to assure



you that from today onward I have no right over you or your immovable or movable property or your ornaments and the like or your goods, furniture etc. And please know that I owe nothing to anybody and that you have not to spend a single pie in payment of any debt incurred by me. There is no other news, or rather there is much more news, but it cannot be written by me.

This day, Samvat 1964 (—1908 A.D.), Vaishakh Vad 2 (approximately May), Tuesday.

(One anna stamp)

"To Respected Sri Bachhrajji. Please read (accept) the obeisances of Jamna P. S. With deep respect I beg to say that all transactions between you and me end from now. Please look after the work of Thakurji's temple very well. May you go on doing the *dharma* of giving in charity as much as you can. And please never abuse a Brahmin or an ascetic, and please answer with your hands, not with your tongue. (Give in charity and don't abuse anybody). What more may I write? You may dot the 'i's and cross the 't's. And I have not taken a single thing belonging to you, have left everything right here—except for the clothes on my person."

Is it difficult to say what effect this letter produced? Seth Bachhrajji's peace of mind was shattered, he sped to Bombay, appeased Jamnalalji with the expression of his deepest love and put again on his lap that gem among men which he had lost.

"I am entirely indifferent about your money"—this sentence is the expression of a man who has digested the precept अर्थमनर्थ भावय नित्यम् | (Always regard 'artha' i. e. money, as 'anartha' i. e. a harmful thing); It is difficult to imagine today what effect that conviction will produce in future on the man who had imbibed it at the very early age of 17.

Bachhrajji left him 4¼ lakhs (hundred thousands), but by his business acumen and intelligence, which no school or college education but only practical-mindedness develops, he enormously increased his wealth; and in increasing it hardly anybody must have kept himself away from untruth as much as he. Nobody would fail to be reminded of the following *chhappa* (a particular metrical form) of the poet, Shamaldas:

That man is a bania,
Who does not tell a lie,
Who does not give a short weight,
Who keeps his father's word



And returns the debt with interest.
Discrimination is the bania's forte.
The Bania has twenty virtues.
He never takes offence.
He has nothing to do with theft, slander, untruth,
and pride,
He never does injustice, or an irreligious act.
He is free from egotism.
He is not affected by paltry pleasures of song and
merriment.
He does not slight others, is not mean, minded and
does not speak ill of anybody.
If somebody pours abuses on him, he is not the
man to pay him back in the same coin.
He does not speak ill of anybody behind his back.
He is a bania who observes all these rules in his
dealings with the world.

Jamnalalji spent his wealth in charity with the same discernment of propriety with which he earned it. He could have made the Government confer Knighthood on him. He could have endowed University Scholarships or got some Government-sponsored institution established and thus become a 'leader of society' by giving hundreds of thousands in donations along the old lines. But even before he became a non-co-operator, he had the ingrained habit of taking every step in a discreet manner. Though it is true that non-cooperation provided him a much wider field of service. Out of his total charity of about 11 lakhs, he has spent probably 6 lakhs after national activities associated with non-co-operation. But every one of his donations given even before the non-co-operation movement marks him out as a man of wise judgement. His contribution of 30,000 rupees to the Science Institute of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose and of 50,000 rupees to the Hindu University Library at Banaras give one an idea of his culture and wisdom. Only about 2 out of his total donation of 11 lakhs have been given for the use of his community. The remaining 8 or 9 lakhs are all for the good of the whole society irrespective of caste or creed. There is one contribution of 21,000 rupees for the service of Mussalmans exclusively.

The innate resolution and fearlessness, which he had exhibited on appropriate occasions even before he became a non-co-operator, got only a filip after he became



one. He was invited to attend a *darbar* held by a Governor with instructions to appear in a particular dress. He refused to wear it and in the end it was the Government that had to yield and allow him to attend the *darbar* in the dress he liked. He said to the Collector in no uncertain terms that even in a party given to a Governor, eggs, meat, or liquor must not be served. H.H. the Maharaja of Darbhanga was going to lead a Deputation of Sanatani Hindus to Mr. Montague, (Secretary of State for India) when he came to India. For his inclusion as a member in that Deputation, Jamnalalji imposed a condition that the Deputation must demand complete stoppage of the supply of beef to the army, so that cows might be saved from slaughter. And as the Maharaja did not accept the suggestion, he did not join the Deputation. Then the Maharaja of Burdwan invited him to join the Zamindars' Deputation, but he regarded that Deputation as one of sycophants and refused to have anything to do with it. Then again, during a railway journey, instead of feeling afraid of British soldiers he brandished a thick stick and threatened to kick an insolent European. All these are examples of his valiant courage even before he joined non-co-operation.

The view, moreover, that Self-realization can be attained through service was not new to him. His spiritual bent of mind can be seen also from the fact that for many years before the non-co-operation era, he had the *satsang* (holy contact) of a *sannyasi* traversing the path of Brahman. He has continued that contact even now and often receives the *sannyasin's* blessings for many of his beneficent activities. At the same time it is clear that after his contact with Gandhiji, his original fearlessness, spirit of adventure, and urge for public service took a more extended and subtle form, he became more circumspect in his dealings with society and family and began to weigh every single step, before taking it, in the balance of *dharma*. On his being a non-co-operator, he saw that he must observe in practice several more principles than he did formerly. And his complete sincerity posed before him new questions. Tata & Co., are oppressing the peasants of Mulshi Peta. How can I hold the shares of that Company? Why may I not stop altogether my business in Calcutta, since I have often to resort to law courts there? What are the ways by which I can prove to the world that I don't believe in retaining untouchability? When I consider many of our marriage customs faulty, why must I not give them up at my daughter's marriage? As I want to identify myself with the poorest of the poor, what are the items in which I can introduce simplicity in my day-to-day living?' All these and many such other questions would arise in his mind and he would solve them in only that way which would entail discomfort and sacrifice on his part.



Some examples that reveal such solutions of knotty problems appear in this sketch of his life. But any one who comes in his contact can show hundreds of other instances of that kind and thus serve the public by providing inspiring literature. I cannot resist the temptation to note down one such incident, though it is a small matter. The Khadi vow is restricted to only the wearing of Khadi, but how can a person buy anything but Khadi for other domestic use, when he is a member of the All India Spinners' Association and propagates the use of Khadi day in and day out? How can he use mosquito-nets or door curtains not made from Khadi? That, however, is not much; but quite a new situation arose when we went to Wardha. There were 50—100 four posters with '*Patis*' (long thick strips made from thick interwoven cotton-strings on which mattresses are put) of millmade yarn. His wife, Janakibai and all the children not only wear Khadi from head to foot, but are spinners also. But the incongruity of these *patis* did not strike them. Jamnalalji protested: "How can we use these *patis* of mill made yarn?" The practical housewife, Janakibai, suggested: "You may have a *pati* from handspun yarn for your bedstead, but why throw away all these scores of *patis*?" But Jamnalalji would not hear of it. He would not put up with a millmade *pati* for any four-poster in his house.

But I do not wish to extend further my remarks on this book. I can myself give many instances—like the one given above—which have not found a place in the book. But exigencies of space forbid it. His non-co-operation activity is now a matter of everybody's knowledge. Newspaper readers know very well that he renounced his title of Rao Bahdur and is respectable position as an Honorary Magistrate, that he had (and has) a remarkable career as a member of the Working Committee of the Congress and as Treasurer of the country's funds, that he shrunk his business activity in order to enable him to tour all over the country for 3 years, that he not only encouraged the Nagpur Satyagraha³ but took part in it and went to jail, that he was wounded in an attempt to protect Muslims in a Hindu-Muslim riot, that he enthusiastically adopted the nation-wide activities of Khadi and cow-protection as befits a Vaishya (a business man) and appealed to his Marwari community also to take up these two (Khadi and cow protection) as their specific social *dharma*. All these things get only a passing mention in the life sketch, as has already been stated. But only an exhaustive biography can give in future a true picture of Jamnalalji's inner struggles before launching upon these activities and of his success in persuading his wife to join him heart and soul in all of them. But anyone who is curious to know what Jamnalalji is likely to be in future can gain much from the perusal of this small sketch. Let us all pray



that Jamnalalji's life may progress ever more towards the goal to which his life has been dedicated.

(1) Those who want the Soul or God and (2) those who want liberation from the bondage of life and death. There is no essential difference between the two words.

3. An entirely peaceful procession carrying the National Flag was prevented from passing through the European quarters in Nagpur. A Satyagraha was offered and hundreds went to jail in 1923. At last the Government allowed a big procession to go through the forbidden locality and the Satyagraha also was ended therewith.



11-7-1926

Brave Woman Passes Away

(M.D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

Miss Emily Hobhouse, whose sad demise is announced in the papers of Great Britain, adorned by her life and work not only her own country but the whole world. Any nation that remembers her can elevate itself. When Gandhiji was informed of her death he remarked: "She was the spirit of bravery incarnate. Her stately mien indicated her nature of leonine courage. Hardly anybody else may have exhibited as much courage, worked as hard and suffered as much, as she did during the Boer War. Miss Nightingale's was not a difficult work as she had the support of the public. But this lady was hampered in her work by the bitterest public opposition. Had there been any ordinary woman in her place, she would have been murdered.'

Now let us turn to the story of her life. With its sacred recollection detestable memories of the Boer War also rise up in the mind, but that cannot be helped. We shall see that it was this woman who spread the hallowed rays of humanness, civilized behaviour and the light of wisdom in the midst of the darkness of cruelty and beastliness that had spread in South Africa during the war.

Her father was a clergyman and younger brother of Lord Hobhouse. She had all her education at home, had never joined any school or college and made the service of the people—of the poor, the labourers, the distressed, her life's mission. In 1899, when England unnecessarily provoked a war with Transvaal, she had just returned from her travels abroad. Right from its beginning Miss Hobhouse became an unpopular figure as she always took a leading part in all the public meetings that were held in protest against the injustice of the war. But the war could not be stopped, as its opponents were only a handful and the British Cabinet as well as the British public were both seized with war fever. Both the people and the Government were caught in the wicked greed of enslaving a free people and attaching that country to the British Empire under an insignificant excuse. Those who spoke or wrote against the impending war were regarded as friends of the Boers and foes of the country. As the war went on and on, Britain grew more and more exhausted. There was no end to the useless loss of human lives, but owing to arrogant obstinacy of a few leaders, the war dragged on and with it an increasing loss of lives. The number of Boers was only 20% of that of British soldiers, but that made little difference in their stubborn opposition. Despite the fact that the British took possession of both the capitals of the Transvaal



and Orange Free State, i.e. Pretoria and Blomfontein, Boers were not subdued in the least. At last a very inhuman method suggested itself to Lord Kitchner. Even in a war there is an accepted code which sets a limit to the atrocities of armies, but that limit was crossed. The houses and farms of the Boers who had left them to join the war began to be burnt, gardens were desolated, standing crops destroyed, and plants and factories demolished. The result was that Boer women and children became homeless vagrants. What to do with them was the question. 'Without the provision of sufficient food and clothing to them, they were huddled up in concentration camps under strict military surveillance. The terrible oppression and other black deeds that happened in these camps and slaughter of the innocents penned up in them have for ever left an indelible stain on the British Empire. True figures rarely came out, as editors of newspapers who tried to publish real facts were imprisoned. But even the figures given by the Government itself are such as make one's flesh creep. The toll of children's death was 100 per thousand in June 1901. It rose to 250 in August and jumped to 629 in October. The number of those who died in the period between January 1901 and February 1902 was 20,177. 26000 women and children met with slow and torturous death before the War ended.

Even against the strict black-out by the Government, some news did trickle of and on into Britain. When she had some inkling of it Miss Hobhouse started a Relief Fund—which was vehemently opposed. It was argued that any humanity shown to these women and children would only prolong the war and the greater the atrocities inflicted on them, the earlier the war would end. In spite of such strenuous opposition Miss Hobhouse left for South Africa in order to learn at first hand the situation as it stood and to suggest the ways and means of its relief. Lord Kitchner did not allow her to go beyond Blomfontein, but what she saw in the territory she could visit, was horrible enough: Bad food and clothing and covering; no cleanliness at all; spread of disease like wild fire everywhere; nursing next to nil; the only Dutch nurse who knew the needs of Boer women and could talk with them was given the chuck; food clothing etc. sent by philanthropic associations of Britain never reached the destitutes; rations were halved in the cases of those women and children whose bread-winners had gone to the War. These Boer women, however, preferred to die of starvation, rather than send word to their husbands to lay down their arms.

Miss Hobhouse came back to England in June, published all these facts and began to collect more funds. Lord Millner was her fellow-passenger on board the steamer and he had promised to help her, but the promise was not kept. The House



of Commons discussed this matter, but with an indifference that impelled Miss Hobhouse to comment, "This callousness outstrips even the horror going on in South Africa."

2 or 3 Members of the House of Commons, a handful of men like Lord Ripon outside it, and a negligible few periodicals like that of W.T. Stead supported her. She was not allowed to ventilate the cries of Boer women and children in churches, which are said to be temples of mercy. Nobody would provide her a public hall for her speeches. Wherever, even in face of these difficulties, she delivered speeches, she was condemned, abused and reviled sometimes even in obscene language. She wanted to go again to South Africa, but the Government refused her a passport. She was not appointed a member of a 'Women's Commission of Enquiry' appointed by the Government; And when at the end of 1901, she did start after all for South Africa, she was not allowed to land at Capetown, kept in jail for five days and forcibly transported back to England. But how long can you go on suppressing truth? The civilized world had been deeply shocked at the writings that emanated from the holy wrath of Miss Hobhouse. And the Women's Commission that had gone to South Africa corroborated the facts which she had published. At last, in May 1902 the War came to an end.

After the end of the War, Miss Hobhouse went again to South Africa, toured all over the Transvaal and by house-to-house visits started many home-industries among the Boer women, which are still flourishing.

When 10 years afterwards, the Boers raised a Memorial to honour those destroyed in this holocaust, they invited Miss Hobhouse to open it. Could there be any better appreciation of her services than this?

Miss Hobhouse met Gandhiji quite often in South Africa. In a beautiful letter to him, when he went to jail, she said: 'I think you will die a martyr's death fighting against injustice.'

May it not be that the British Empire is still standing owing to the existence of holy souls in it like Miss Hobhouse?



24-7-1926

(The following is taken from M.D.'s Gujarati manuscript diary. Though he gives it the title 'Bible teaching by Bapu at the Gujarat National College' there are references in it to other topics also. The Diary does not note down the date, but there is reason to believe that the discourses began on Saturday, 24-7-1926, as Gandhiji visited the College on Saturdays—Editor).

In the beginning the Professor of Persian (Maulvi Abuzafar Nadvi) protested: "Had you (Bapu) told the students you would read the Gita, nobody would have brought that book with him. But the Bible is in all hands. That is why your teaching of the Bible will not be helpful to the students."

Bapu: "But did you not ask them to change their choice?" (It was at the students' suggestion that Gandhiji began to explain the Bible to them).

The Professor: "I was not present then. But you should have corrected their wrong thinking."

A student: "You have stated that no national school will have to be closed for want of money. But I have seen many schools closed for that reason."

Bapu: "In the Gita class the day before yesterday, a question had been raised about the art of putting questions, for there certainly is such an art. There was no harm if this question had been asked later on. I had packed my experience of 30 years in my assertion that no good institution need be closed for want of funds. I do not know of a single institution or a single public servant that cannot procure sufficient maintenance, of course, according to its or his fitness. The questioner may have cases in his mind, but we should like to examine the fitness. On my part I have come across hundreds of instances (to support my statement)—both in South Africa and here. Beggars also come, but when I talk of their fitness they agree with me. It is a universal experience that a man who is wedded to public service gets as much as he deserves to.

"A student has pointed out: "You have some (magnetic) power by which you make our intelligence accept your arguments immediately, but afterwards it rebels and persists in its own views. That happens indeed, but not owing to any fault of mine. It is not my way to cheat anybody deliberately. Nor would I wish to indulge in experiments to test my intellectual power. What I personally love is experiments of the heart and I would certainly wish that everybody joined me in making those



experiments. But whatever I may say will only be the outcome of my actual experience."

Q. "What programme will you give for a man who has an unsteady mind but wishes to observe *brahmacharya*?"

A: "An excellent question, but as old as the hills. We should wish to observe *brahmacharya*, in mind, speech and action. *Brahmacharya* means control over all the ten senses.¹ It means, in short, control over the whole body, mind and heart with all their possible parts. Though *Brahmacharya* usually means abstinence from only physical intercourse; we can solve many of our problems from it as a starting point. But I have extended the meaning to cover every kind of self-control.

"It is not *brahmacharya* that we are observing when we allow the mind to wander wherever it likes to. If the reins are rotten, and there is no curb, the horse would bolt. We must, therefore, make our tongue obey our will, must stop it from speaking unbecoming things. We should not talk with a man, conversation with whom taints our tongue. As with the tongue, so with the body.

"It is mostly sluggards who want a solution of this problem (of lust), for the man who sits idle cannot gain a control over his passionate urge. The remedy, therefore, is to keep the body engaged in work. But physical work does not mean playing foot-ball or having exercises with clubs. It means useful work and that too, not useful to the man alone. It is misuse of the heart, when you do any work that helps you only. The work I suggest is, therefore, one that would be useful to all and in some such work the body as well as the mind must be engaged. Nature abhors vacuum—that is the law. If you keep your vessel (mind and body) empty, Satan will come in and sit there. If we fill up our vessel with God, there would be no room left for Satan's intrusion. This duality—this conflict between good and evil—goes on endlessly. Mind means thought. That man whose body and speech are employed in activities of the kind stated above, will also think thoughts which pertain to them. Thoughts will always follow speech and body. Thus the striving soul that keeps the body and speech under control will be able to control or suppress thought also.



Experience—in India, Arabia, Europe, everywhere—says that many (God-lovers) leave their beds after 2 a.m. Because that is the time when a man's body (and mind) gets into tune with God. We must continue to cultivate that same thing (love of God) even after getting up early in the morning. 'But that would shatter the body', someone may protest. I say 'Let it. But in reality it will not. And if it does, do not those who go to the North Pole shatter their bodies? Begin your day with good books. You should arrange your time-table also in such a way that the body is kept engaged throughout the day. All that we do at present is to give examinations after reading books. I have yet to meet even one young man who, after getting up early in the morning, has sweated and toiled in a farm for 8 hours. The man who wants to observe *brahmacharya* in all its senses must do that.

"The man thus terribly exhausted in mind and body can never fail to have dreamless sleep. Even a profligate's body and mind feel tired, but he cannot have dreamless sleep, as he had abused his senses. But the man whose body is exhausted by physical labour has earned his sleep—sailors on ships enjoy this dreamless sleep."

Q. "Is there any difference between national education and true education? Is national education a must for the service of the country?"

Bapu: "By its very nature national education can never be bad or misdirected. Can you gain a good thing by bad means? Never. But national education should be of the best kind. Knowledge of agriculture and weaving must be included in the curriculum of national education in India. In an industrialized country like England, one can do without having the knowledge of agriculture, but there he cannot do without learning the science of navigation. That is true education which provides for the needs of the large majority of a country. National education, moreover, in a dependent country will be different from that in a free country, because the diseases affecting a dependent and a free country are different. We cannot, therefore, imitate some other country to provide national education for ourselves. We have failed to gain success till now because we have been only imitating other countries.



"What national education means is a question. That requires a long explanation. We may not discuss it today."

Q. "Were it a time of fighting, we would prove our patriotism, by feverish activity. How can we serve the country in this age of non-violence? Don't you think success will take long to come in a non-violent fight?"

Bapu: "If we believe—and we should—that this is the age of non-violence, I don't think it is more difficult than violent warfare. We can win our fight quickly in the age of non-violence. War there certainly is, and plenty of it, in non-violence. There is physical fight in violent warfare, while here it is a fight of thought, of a moral attitude and outlook. The conquest achieved in the latter fight is superior to the conquest in the former. A violent fight has lost its attractiveness. Hatred and animosity have increased, not subsided. But that is the inevitable and quite obvious fruit of a physical fight. But if we put up a strong non-violent fight a fight for gaining a higher plane of thought—you cannot lose a single little gain you once make. A non-violent fight is like drawing a straight line (i. e. like the pursuit of a high ideal). It does not matter, if we cannot, right at the present time, draw a straight line that has no breadth at all. But the straightest (and so the shortest) road is that (non-violence) and no other for us. This (non-violence) is not a paltry thing that I would like to barter away for any material gain in the world. I would like to freely give it away to the world and wish there is a scramble for getting it. Even then it would remain with me as much as before, because, it is an inexhaustible treasure that I possess."

Q: "Who among the two is better—the one who is mentally above the world and loves to be in solitude or the one who remains in the world and serves it?"

A: "Both are good. You cannot say either that he is superior to the other."

Q: "What are the immediate causes of Hindu-Muslim riots?"

A: "Inertia and want of the true religious spirit on the part of both. These are the immediate causes. I gave you this cause because, I am fond of trying to find out the truth behind appearances and I could find no other reason. There was an unprecedented—even epoch-making awakening among us



in 1920-21. But the people were cherishing a false ideal till then. So even after the awakening they could not free themselves from that false ideal. The nation till then was under a spell of centuries of sleep. It woke up, and felt an unbearable pang of hunger, but where was the food? So we are eating one another. What is the practical means to do away with this situation? Preaching of peacefulness? What can man do in an overwhelming situation? Can he always follow Draupadi's example²? There are times when the very attempts to solve difficulties only increase them. All my attempts to solve an algebraical problem failed one day. I was tired at last and put aside my slate. Then in the morning the solution suggested itself. I was then forced to set aside my slate. In the same way, these riots are at present an incurable disease. When people have awakened in such large numbers that we cannot guide and control them, what shall we, what can we, do about them? The man who thrusts his hands into that mud (of quarrels) will only have his hands soiled, but not the mud cleared. A similar problem had arisen after the demise of the Prophet. All the good men then sought the solitude of caves and, only by doing so, saved Islam. He alone is going to win at last, who realizes his own limitations, his own helplessness, and sits silent. That man alone will one day succeed in curing this disease. If at present we sacrifice ourselves in an attempt to quench the fire, it will only grow more fearful. We should not feed the fire by our action. When there is a fire, firemen turn their hoses on houses that have not caught it, not on those that are already in flames."

Q: "Is not communal representation one of the causes?"

A: "No. It was once, but even if you do away with it just now, riots will not end. If even cow-slaughter is stopped, they will not cease. Because inertia and irreligion have spread all over the land. Removal of communal representation is not one of the means. Besides, Mussalmans must support that move.

"Now, Maulvi Saheb's question. The student never cares to give any weight to the opinion of the world at large. These are times when everything that I say—good or bad— is criticised. There would have been no protest if someone else had read the Bible. But that criticism cannot



and will not frighten us. As our conscience is clear and free from worry, there is no reason for fear.³ Let the American missionaries say what they like. What does it matter? I have but to conform to your choice and to have no fear about the consequence. If we want to take a wrong (immoral) step, we should be afraid even of walls, not to talk of (living) worms. The only essential thing here is my capacity to lead you to the study of the Bible from the right view-point. But if someone is bent upon misinterpreting my attitude and grumble, 'See: He (Gandhiji) took not the Gita, but the Quran to teach' what shall we do about it? We don't stand to lose if somebody is determined to misinterpret, our action; we only gain thereby."

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1. Hindu books state that man has 10 senses 5 of knowledge, (hearing etc.) and 5 of action (two hands, two feet, the mouth and the two senses of excretion.)
 2. When she was being disrobed and when she found her strength unavailing and her husbands, the Pandavas, as well as the Elders unable to save her from disgrace, she raised up both her hands in a frantic appeal to God. It was this appeal of total helplessness and surrender that brought about divine intervention which saved her honour.
 3. Voices had been raised against Gandhiji's discourses on the Bible. He answered the critics in an article in *Young India* d 2.9.1926, which is reproduced in App IV.



7-8-1926

Pandit Sukhlalji's (a Jain scholar) question:

Q: "You propound the idea that God should be regarded as our universal Father. Is it a theory with you based on your faith or was it but a casual expression, not to be taken too seriously?"

A: "It is not in my nature to propound fanciful theories. Nor could there be any intention (in me) to mislead others. I am not in the habit of giving ambiguous statements either. That statement comes from my reflections on the essence of Godhood. We then arrive at the question, 'who then is the father of God? The answer is that God may be termed as That which is beyond the apprehension of intellect and logical reasoning. But I am trying as best I can to bring within the domain of intellect what is beyond it. All the same, this question of God is ultimately one of faith. I can understand the fear behind Panditji's question: 'Is God then the Creator and all in all of the whole world (of both the good and the evil in it)? That He is not. Why then unnecessarily bring in the muddled world as an act of His creation?' My answer is that being a *syadvadi*¹, I believe that there is nothing that is exactly as we describe it at all times and in all its aspects. We ourselves are the cause of this our inability to describe it accurately. Our intelligence itself has definite limitations. Hence, it cannot go very far. We are really more insignificant or smaller creatures, than even an ant. That was exactly why the philosophy of 'syadvad' arose. Hence, so long as we do not arrive at the stage of omniscience and are unable to understand and make others understand everything, who is the teacher of truth in all its bearings and whom will he teach it—when all of us are so very imperfect? When I came to think like that, I felt at ease and decided in my mind, "I should not be afraid to express my thoughts to the world, no matter what the degree of perfection or truth there be in them since I am right from my angle of vision." To those who oppose my thought, I would say 'You too are right'. I would tell them that my power of thinking gets cramped and frozen at a certain temperature. And then I resort to faith which sustains me. The faith that keeps peace with intellect and stops where the latter does, is not faith. Faith has its rightful place after the point at which reasoning finds itself unable to proceed.

'Is, then, '*Ishwar*' (God) the agent, the doer, of all that is? There is doership at the root of '*Ishwar*'. The word '*Ishwar*' means one who rules. He is



both the Doer (कर्ता) and the 'Not-the-Doer' (अकर्ता). He is the Doer because we see continuously His action. Let us not dismiss as purile this idea of God's agency emphasized in the West. Limited as our intellect is, it can recognize this thing in only that way. There must be something that holds, or sustains, all this that appears to our eyes. He or It may have a thousand names or even be nameless. Hence, *Ishwar* is some Person who is at once the Ruler and not the Ruler. And, after all there, definitely is something which may be called '*chetan*' (vibrant with life). As there is the soul that holds this body, so there is—and I cannot affirm it too strongly that there is—the Soul (or call it the Oversoul) that holds the whole universe."

Q: "Does the man who earns his maintenance by intelligence render as much service as the man who earns it by manual labour? Should they be provided with equal means of sustenance? Can a man who earns by intelligence be said to be doing it 'in the sweat of his brow'?"

A: "The service rendered to society by both of them—the one who uses his intellect and the one who uses his body—are equal. Where both intellect and body are used for service, they are equally valuable. But where they are used for maintenance, one must give the expression only its literal meaning. (i.e. the sentence applies only to the manual labourer). This literal interpretation alone is correct because this body is composed of the five fundamental constituents (earth, water, fire, air, and sky or space) and is fed by those same constituents. So long, therefore, as the body is sustained by those material substances, one should not keep it alive by means other than material i.e. intellectual. If the world follows this bread-labour principle, it would become happy, or at least the quantum of sorrow would be reduced to the minimum."

Q: "In your article '*Aapbhog*' you say that non-co-operation was crushed to pieces, as it was caught into the coils of a particular system. You have not named that system. Do you mean, by that system Western civilization²?"

A: "Exactly. The body, or what is external, has been given the prime importance in the modern civilization of the West, whereas in the Ancient, the soul, which is distinct from the body, has been given the place of that honour. That activity which elevates and nourishes the soul is the Ancient or good activity. The reverse is the present Western activity. Admittedly, it is not true that there was once a time when we were perfectly good. But as what is called 'civilization' in



the West is of the kind I have stated above, I call it *Ravanaraj* (the rule of Ravana—Satan) or the coils of a deadly cobra."

Study of the New Testament

"I do not know the object which impelled you to invite me by a majority vote to read the New Testament before you. I had at first thought of asking some questions (perhaps about your object), but I dropped the idea later on.

"When I was a student, all the teachers asked us to read McMordy's book. There is something in it that is good. He was a missionary. Looking at the Bible from only the language point of view, he suggests that one may as well say that he does not know English who has not read the Bible. At that time I knew next to nothing of the Bible. One may, therefore, read the Bible either with a view to learn English or to know its message. The first is the lower view. I don't wish to read the New Testament from that point of view. And I am not going to explain all its philosophical concepts either, as that is beyond my capacity. I have read both of them (the Old and the New Testament) with an attitude of respect in order to understand their thoughts and reflect over them. But I did not read them with faith, for at that time, I read them to understand them only intellectually. I was even then endowed with the spirit of regard for others and so, though I had not the faith, I continued to cherish respect and not disgust after reading them. All that I claim is this: 'I have read the Bible with deep respect and regard.' I have never studied any religious book from a critic's point of view, but only to understand its message. But the reading confirmed me in my own ideas. All of them will necessarily have to be put before you on relevant occasions.

"I do not interpret the Bible in the way the Christians do. What is the real religion of the Bible? I cannot tell you what the (Christian) religion as it prevails at present is. On that point the views of those who believe in Christianity must be accepted as true. For that, a missionary should be called to learn from him what Christianity means at present. He too has a rightful place in the National College. Our respect for every religion could be regarded as proved only when we invite followers of all the creeds and learn from them the doctrines they believe in. If you have thought of getting that knowledge through my discourses, I must say that it is not my province. For that you must call some missionary. The same thing applies to Islam. But you should call only those who are not mere theologians, but are able to show the real essence and beauty of their creed by living in accordance with its precepts.



"But you may have known me as I am and thought, 'He is a liberal-minded person, let us know what he knows about the Bible. Gita, we shall learn by ourselves; and Islam, we can even from our Maulvi Saheb' (Muslim Professor in the National University). Probably you may have, therefore, thought 'Let us learn some English from the Bible and also Gandhi's thoughts on it.'

"If you think that the Old Testament is useless, you are wrong. There are germs in both of them, but it takes some trouble and time to discover them in the Old Testament. It is, as its name indicates, an old thing. There are in it some things incomprehensible and some disgusting. Hence, one can dispense with its detailed reading. If a physician says that some particular things build the body and are nourishing and if accordingly, a man eats only those things, he cannot sustain his life. Similarly, there are only 2 things in fresh air, which too give us health; but if we eat only air and nothing else, we cannot live. In the same way, one should, at least, know the Old Testament in order to understand the New. We shall, therefore, learn from the Old whatever there is worth knowing in it, as far as possible.

"It is generally believed that the teaching in the New Testament is contrary to that in the Old. This is what many or all Christians agree in believing. But they do not agree in the way I do. They say that the New Testament completes what is lacking in the Old. But, to me, the Old gave mankind what it could then digest. In the New, the precepts took further steps,—as is the case with the Vedas and the Upanishads. An English writer may say that the teaching in the Upanishads is opposed to that in the Vedas, while the believing Hindu will say that the Upanishads fulfilled what the Vedas left incomplete.

"But from a superficial view, the teachings do appear quite the contrary. There is one law of Moses and the other of Jesus. Moses speaks of an eye for an eye, while Jesus talks of turning the other cheek. Something like what Shamalbhatta (a Gujarati poet) says, viz., 'Bow down seven times as deep as the man who bows to you'. But the right thing is to return good for evil. There are many theories on the question how Jesus went to that great length. Many English writers have propounded the theory that you cannot find the root of Jesus' message in the Old Testament. They say that though there are examples in the Old which accord with Jesus' message, it is just the opposite of the law of Moses and cannot have its roots in the Old Testament.

"Those who do not see with the eye of faith and those who do not call themselves Christians, think that Jesus must have come in contact with believers in



Hinduism or some other creed, while in the Bible there is the claim that Jesus got His message direct from God. Pandit Sukhlal's question is not meant for demolishing this God. In short, there is no such God as would appear before us and teach us something. You may call it a poem or whatever else you like, but not divine inspiration. Only he would be afraid of this view, who has excessive faith (in the Bible) or who has too nicely discussed the concept of the Oversoul. But the New Testament says that God came to Jesus and said all this to Him.

"Or, it may be that since there was already communication with the East, Jesus may have arrived at this principle from discussions with them (Eastern philosophers). All that we need to know clearly is that this is the great difference between the two Testaments. Those men who obeyed the law of Moses, believed it their duty to beat the man who beat them,—while the law of Jesus says that it is only weakness if we beat the man who beats us, that such conduct casts a slur on humanity. That principle is the quintessence of the New Testament. We shall read the New from that point of view. We shall also see if this precept is set forth in other religions also.

"There are reasons for the Christian view that both the Testaments are closely connected. The very first chapter gives the geneology of Jesus. It begins from David. He was called 'the Son of David.' Though, in fact, he was Joseph's son, the line of ancestors is taken right back to David in order to show that all were followers of the law of Moses and that David was their greatest man. Thus Jesus belongs to the dynasty of David and he fulfils the then prevalent law.

"No gospel is written, or has even been written, from the historical point of view—neither the Bhagwat Dharma nor Islam. It is not a historian who has written this (any Gospel) for me. It has been written from only the religious point of view. If we read it from a historian's angle, we shall find ourselves caught in a maze.

"Hence, the Bible says that in the form of a man, He was the son of David, and as an '*avatara*' the son of God."

1. Believer in '*syadvad*', a Jain philosophical concept, which means either 'This may be true' (not the definite 'is' about any philosophical thought) or everything is only relatively true i.e. the philosophical opponent too may be right from his angle of perception. This thus eschews dogmatic finalities of doctrines, without yielding one's own view.

2. In an article in '*Navajivan*' entitled '*Aapbhog*' (self-immolation) d. 27-6-1926, Gandhiji had said: "The non-co-operation of my conception was aimed against the continuance of that system into the coils of which we (Indians) were being crushed to atoms."



14-8-1926

"The writer (Mathew) thought it necessary to connect Jesus with David: Mathew was a *Jew* and (naturally) he thought it good to show that the prophecy of the Old Testament came true.

BOOK I: 18 to 25.

"The story-teller has made the birth of Jesus a divine event. You can find many similar examples in Hindu religious books, for instance, Kunti¹ and Karna. I do not believe in this divine conception. At the same time I cannot affirm that this is absolutely impossible. Only that person who has the knowledge of the past, the present, and the future can definitely characterize any event as impossible. But we may doubt the authenticity of that event which our intellect cannot accept as true. We may set aside things supernatural that we read in religious books; otherwise, we are likely to cherish delusions. Faith is useful only where our intellect stops. We read of such things in the Quran also. Stories about Jnandev (a Maharashtrian saint) or Sahajanand Swami (saint domiciled in Gujarat in the 19th century) are full of miracles. The ardent devotees who write such stories do not do so for cheating the world. That exaggeration is excusable—even proper for an ardent devotee. 'Proper' I say with some doubt. But it is true that this kind of '*moh*' (—overfondness) in the heart of a devoted disciple is '*sattwic*' (of the best kind, i.e. the least mistaken). If the mother does not regard her child as the best in the world, she would not suffer as much as she does for it. It is the law of the devotee of God to apply to him as many adjectives of praise as he can. In pursuance of that law, Mathew has written of the divine birth of Jesus. He felt certain that it was impossible that the birth of Jesus could be of the ordinary type. Hence, he allowed his imagination to run.

"That imagination has run in a clean manner. There are good Christians who believe in it (divine birth) and if you question them about the birth, they feel a shock. The eye of faith is more powerful than the physical eye. Instead of regarding such a man of faith a dunce, we should respect his faith. And at the same time, we may not worry over our incapacity to believe in such things. We may regard this portion of the divine birth of Jesus as perhaps an interpolation, but never dismiss it as a senseless, wild, talk. And you cannot say that nobody would write such a thing in these modern civilized times. Take 'Pitt' by Lord Roseberry. Pitt's cook said that Pitt liked sausages very much!² As we have inherited the wisdom of Solomon, we can go further and say



"You cannot know a man after his death." Do not read the book with a malignant eye. Read it with respect and if even then you cannot believe in something given in it, quietly set it aside. Faith has the poet's eye and the poet should be given full freedom.

After this event, the story-teller has skipped over many years. He has not cared to give physical facts that have no spiritual value. Ferrar has written the life of Jesus in a spirit of great faith. His style is unusual and he has written it after actually visiting Palestine. Instead of giving minute details about his hero, the historian also should tell us what effect particular actions of that hero produced on his generation. Nobody need say that if a historian does so, readers cannot have a true picture of human life. Human life is full of holes. Hence, the right thing is to preserve only his good things in the story of a man's life. Mathew has thus skipped over 32 years of Jesus' life.

"Bhaagwat has been written after the age of Jesus. Hence, some say that we have stolen some events of Jesus from the Bible and applied them to Krishna. But that is a baseless story. Is it impossible that the stories narrated in the Bhaagwat may have been taken from our popular tales? But the truth is that the story of such divine life and action is possible in all countries and all peoples. Religions are certainly not formulated by lies and hypocrisy. It is only austerities and strength of character that consolidate religions. Kansa's slaughter of children resembles that of Herod and the second dream of David and his coming to Nazareth are similar to Krishna's incidents. Then baptism and the holy bath in the Ganga are alike. But if there is no Ganga near us, we can purify ourselves by singing the verses गंगे च यमुने चैव..... (—May the waters of all the holy rivers—Ganga, Yamuna and others (specified rivers) fall into this water and purify it). The scenes we meet with on the bank of the Ganga are seen on that of the Jordan (as described in the Bible). But Varanasi, Hardwar, Jagannathpuri have ceased to be the holy pilgrimages that they were! In the same way you cannot get an idea of what John, the Baptist, was from the missionary of today. John was an humble man, sweeper of the street on which Jesus would tread. He was the herald, who made the people ready to hail the advent of Jesus."

1. Kunti, mother of the Pandavas, was given a boon by which whenever she remembered any God with a particular formula of chanting, she would conceive a child with that God as its father. Kunti was a virgin then and with the curiosity of a maiden, she remembered the Sun. Karna was then born of her. All her other sons also were sons of Gods.

2. Disraeli used to narrate an amusing story. Pitt often took his meal at the canteen of the House of Commons. One of the cooks (Bellamy) recounted the followrog story about Pitt to Disraeli. 'It is not true', he said, 'that



Pitt's last words were: 'Oh, my country! How I love you!' He added that a man woke him up at midnight during the last hour of Pitt and said, "Come quick—with your pork pie" that he ran, but was too late, and that Pitt's last words were: 'I think I shall not be able to eat Bellamy's pork pie'. 'sausage' is a slip of memory.



21-8-1926

Q: "What is 'social service'? Do journalists serve society?"

Bapu: "They may or may not. Millowners serve society to the extent that they increase the wealth of the country, and they do not to the extent that they distribute their earnings among a few. Similarly, the service of journalists does not come up to the comprehensive definition of social service. But they do render service in some way. That is why we do not wish the complete destruction of all papers. I am myself conducting a journal. Likewise, it is quite possible that some papers may be for the service of society and they may not be published for any personal gain."

Q: "You said that *brahmacharya* must be observed in three ways. What do you mean by its observance through speech?"

A: "Every kind of wastage of vital force is breach of *brahmacharya*. It is definitely breach of *brahmacharya* even when that wastage is not deliberately intended, but, happens mentally. Breach of *brahmacharya* through speech happens when a man speaks something that betrays his desire for something. It occurs also when there is thoughtlessness, irrelevance and verbosity in a man's talk. If we give a narrow meaning to *brahmacharya* of speech we can say that a man whose language contains lewd expressions or those that suggest illicit sexual intercourse commits that breach."

Q: "What is pride? Is the consciousness of one's virtues pride?"

A: "Consciousness of one's good qualities is not pride. There is vanity in pride. If there is humility along with the consciousness of one's power, it is not pride. If in the use of that power there is the slightest tinge of egotism it is pride. There is an expression in English language, 'he who knows not that he knows not is a fool.' That man is wise who has complete knowledge of his knowledge. (He who knows he is wise, is wise)".

Q: "How would you plan a four years' course for the National College?"

Bapu: "I cannot give you a complete course—right at this moment. But I would frame a course that avoids lop-sided progress in the student's physical, mental, and spiritual evolution. I would bear in mind also the environment of the student and his country. Is there, for instance, simplicity in the hostel-life of his college? Is there humility? Is there conquest of the palate?"



Q: "Why do you spend as many as 75 thousand rupees over just a handful of students? Without this blind imitation of western education, why not start a modest educational section in the Ashram itself? The (National) College is a rotten plant—not a growing creeper. It renders no service to society today."

Bapu: "There is room for this doubt, if we look at it superficially. But we must not take such a superficial view. I am hanging on the branch of Hope and will continue the working of the college, so long as the branch does not break. I cherish the hope that this college will produce, at least, a few students who will adorn it. But when I am convinced that we are going to gain anything from this college, I shall close it. I don't see that that time has come and don't think that it will ever come. If some graduates from this college have turned out to be selfish, there are some others that are unselfish also. We should regard the questioner's criticism as bonafide and see by our actions and character that there remains no room for it".

Proceeding in his discourse on the Bible Gandhiji said:

"The New Testament speaks of Pharisees and Sadducees. Pharisees are those who stick to the letter, who believe in accepting only the literal meaning of the scripture. They would not take into any consideration a changed circumstance, and leaving the spirit of the written word, stick to the outer practice enjoined in it. Something like **मुखस्य त्रीणि चिह्नानि शिखा, टीका च पट्टिका** (There are three signs by which a fool can be known—a tuft of hair on the head, a book of elucidation and a tablet showing him as a graduate).

"Sadducees are intellectuals. They are not Rationalists, for the latter may not be believing in any gospel also. But by intellectuals I mean theologians who believe in the gospel, may even quote texts from it, but go on discussing hair-splitting interpretations of the gospel. They take the gospel as the final authority but in their interpretation of it, they would twist the words and give meanings which suit their particular school of thought and by logical nicety make 'the worse appear the better reason'. Their delving in niceties would, naturally, make them hypocritical and proud—unless they possessed the humility of Vasishtha (A well-known sage who attained self-realization through the path of strict ritual formalities in worship). Jesus called them generation of vipers, as they were dry intellectuals without any Godly love in them.

"In just a few sentences a poetic picture of John has been given."



Explaining Book III, 13 to 17, Gandhiji said:

"This gives us a glimpse of the culture of those times. Jesus is a soul far more advanced than John and yet he thinks he also should get himself baptised by John, as all others were doing. He felt that without being initiated by a Guru it is not right for him to start spreading knowledge. The actual words are 'It becomes us.' Both know that they want to do God's work. But they do not wish to disturb the even tenor of the mass understanding. A long-standing routine or custom must not be given up without a strong reason. That was the reason which made Jesus accept baptism. Even if a rooted custom appears to be bad, the only straight course is to keep to it, so long as people have not become ready for another track. Why, otherwise, should I spin? There are many other things which I can do in its place. It does not matter if the spinning wheel is like the rut that Jesus followed, but if I did not spin, there would arise doubt and confusion in the people's mind. That is why I must ply the wheel."



19-8-1926

Spinning Tests at Satyagrahashram

(M.D's English article in 'Young India')

@It will be remembered that some time ago we published in 'Young India' the results of the examination of some of the yarns received from members of the All India Spinners' Association. The results were in order of merit, merit being the strength or the test of their yarn. We have since carried on at Satyagrahashram a close and regular examination of the yarn daily spun by the inmates and compared results from week to week. It is now 10 weeks since we began to record our progress and the rate at which we have advanced is both interesting and instructive.

But before I proceed to give the figures of our progress from week to week, I shall briefly initiate the reader into the method of testing adopted by us. I must confess that it differs from the method adopted in mills and in the Technological Laboratory of the Indian Cotton Committee. The Laboratory and the mills have agreed on a minimum weight of yarn necessary for trustworthy spinning test. The unit of test is the '*lea*' i.e. a hank of 120 yards wound up in 80 rounds of 1 ½ feet. They adopt standard breaking loads for various counts of yarn and subject the particular yarn under examination to the Lea Tester. They have also a single thread tester and with the help of it they find out the tensile strength of a single thread of the lea tested. Now, our method differs from this, in that as we cannot afford to waste hundreds of yards of yarn at every test, we have not accepted the minimum of weight adopted by laboratory as a reliable spinning test. From a hank of 600 rounds, (i.e. 800 yards) wound up into 6 leas of 100 rounds each, we pick up at random 6 hanks of 4 yards each. Each of these hanks has a circular length of 2 feet, i.e. each contains 6 threads, and the tensile strength of each of these is measured on the testing instrument (devised after the standard instrument used in mills) and an average of the results of 6 tests is worked out. The standard breaking loads for various counts of yarn accepted by the mills are adopted by us and it helps us to compare results with those of mill yarn. Needless to say that we subject yarn obtained from various mills to the same testing instrument that we use for our own purposes and arrive at results which cannot, in any way, be questioned. Thus, for instance, the standard breaking load of a 4 yarn hank of 20 counts is 180 tolas (=4 ½ lbs.). That is regarded as a 100 per cent test. Not that all the mills produce yarn which stand that cent per cent test, but that is the standard of test. Now let us see the results of examination of yarn of 20 counts of three different mills in Ahmedabad. I have



purposely taken yarn of 20 counts, because that is the count usually spun in the Ashram. The Calico Mill yarn was found to be 90.9 per cent, the Shahpur mill 85.53 per cent and the Commercial Mills 69.29 per cent.

To come now to the results of the examination of our yarns, the first week showed that out of over a hundred samples examined, only 3 rose above 70 per cent 12 above 60 per cent, and 19 above 50 per cent, yarn lower than 50 being regarded as unfit for weaving. That is to say that the first week showed that no one approached the standard test, and more than 60% of spinners failed to pass even the minimum test. I forget to mention that we not only examined the tensile strength, we examined the evenness by working out an average of the counts of various 4 yard hanks examined. The yarn of the three mills mentioned above was found to be of 90 per cent evenness.

The *Third Week* showed the following results:

Above 70% test and 90% evenness—	2
" 60% " " 75% " —	9
" 50% " " 75% " —	29
	—
Total Spinners 85	40

Fourth Week:

Above 80% test and 97% evenness—	1
" 70% " " 82% " —	2
" 60% " " 85% " —	23
" 50% " " 85% " —	38
	—
Total Spinners 104	64

Seventh Week

Above 100% test and 96% evenness—	1
" 90% " " 91% " —	2



" 80% "	" 80% "	—	12
" 70% "	" 80% "	—	22
" 60% "	" 85% "	—	28
" 30% "	" 80% "	—	20
			—
Total spinners	99		85

Nineth Week

Above 110% test and 70% evenness—				1
" 100% "	" " 89% "	—	1	
" 90% "	" " 85% "	—	4	
" 80% "	" " " "	—	17	
" 70% "	" " " "	—	29	
" 60% "	" " " "	—	30	
" 50% "	" " " "	—	22	
Total Spinners	111		104	

Tenth Week:

Above 100% test and 85% evenness—				4
" 90% "	" " 85% "	—	6	
" 80% "	" " 90% "	—	22	
" 70% "	" " 85% "	—	25	
" 60% "	" " 80% "	—	10	
" 50% "	" " 75% "	—	5	
Total Spinners	73		72	

That is to say only one failed to pass the minimum test. Fewer were examined this week, because those who have steadily scored much above the average were exempted.

The results show the remarkable progress achieved. At the end of ten weeks we find four of the spinners spinning better than good mill yarn and six quite as good and



a large majority have reached the test of yarn produced by an average mill. Much remains to be done in the matter of evenness of yarn, which can be improved only by months of steady and careful practice.

Let every spinning and weaving centre test the yarn received from its spinners and insist on a minimum test, and we shall before long see a remarkable improvement in the quality of our Khadi. Let any member of the A.I.S.A. and any voluntary spinner desirous of knowing the quality of his yarn send it up properly banked to the A.I.S.A. and see wherein his yarn is defective and needs improvement. The efficiency achieved by a voluntary spinner cannot but react on that of those spinning for wages.

As it is, A.I.S.A. tests select samples out of the yarn it receives and sends detailed instructions to the spinners regarding the merits or defects of their yarn. A number of testing instruments are available at the office of the Technical Branch of the A.I.S.A., Sabarmati, which has already supplied over a dozen to some of the big Khadi depots.

At the loss of the Proprietary High School¹, Gandhiji gave vent to the following feelings:

"We were proud when that High School joined the National University; now when it has left us, we may, naturally, feel grieved. But even when such a strong prop falls, we should not succumb either to despair or anger. Nor should we despise the school authorities as spineless people. In a situation when the number of those who give up the fight grows large, you cannot say who are really strong and unyielding. The situation is such that our continuance of non-co-operation, may not mean much while those who may have made very great sacrifices to join non-co-operation but cannot keep up their stand now and fall in these hard times may be in reality braver than we. For instance, is there for us any thing worth shouting when we claim to be vegetarians? Nothing. But take that German lady (a German lady was then staying in the Ashram). Suppose she has given up meat and then the doctors recommend Beef Tea to her on her falling ill. We never take Beef Tea when we are quite healthy. She formerly took it in the normal course, and yet, suppose she refused to take it even in illness, because of her resolve. Her sacrifice in such a refusal is definitely invaluable. The heads of the Proprietary High School fell indeed from their resolve, but it is not possible to predict what a man will do when a very intricate situation faces him. We may, with self-gratification, say "Motilalji 'fell', Deshbandhu 'fell', Lalaji 'fell'² but in reality they did what they thought to be right under the then prevailing circumstances. Even the Proprietary High School authorities do not think that it is a good thing to have



affiliation with the Government. But they have taken this step because they cannot keep up their school. We should congratulate them for having stuck to non-co-operation till now. Besides, it requires courage and strength to do what they have done, namely, to put their situation frankly before the public.

'But we need not lose our balance of mind on this account. It is possible that more such things may happen—though I wish they do not. Even if the Bihar National University falls, even if the Muslim National University falls, we must remain fixed in our resolve not to fall. This National College is the foundation of non-co-operation in education. On no other institution has money been spent more liberally and attention paid more closely. Rich men have endowed munificent donations to it in the expectation that it will produce at least a few gems from Gujaratis who will help in the uplift of the country.

"I do not believe that the tide of non-co-operation has ebbed completely. Because we can still get money, professors, and buildings for it. Other activities also go on in India even now. But a time may come when nobody would care to give us a single paisa. In addition, Professors may say, we cannot conduct the institution by begging from door to door. Even 'Young India' and 'Navajivan' may have stopped publication—for I would conduct the papers only if the public cares for them and would refuse point blank to accept any offer of money for keeping them alive, if the people do not want them. I would not enforce my services on the people. Let them but give me a notice that they do not need them and I will stop immediately.

"What would happen in such a situation? Then only two will be left—the husband and the wife (you, the students, and I) I may be pleased at your sight and you at mine. But on your part you must be prepared even for the fall of your Chancellor (i.e. Gandhiji himself, as he was the Chancellor). If a heavy pressure on my brain deranges it and in a fit of madness I withdraw my weapon (of non-co-operation), you should feel, 'The man is in his dotage now, has lost his wits. But that cannot and shall not deter us from doing what he asked us to, when he was in his senses.' Only when you do your work here under this clear understanding, you can rightly be said to have done your duty.

"Don't give way to cowardice and say, 'What can we, now only a handful, do?' The history of the world—downright, matter-of-fact, history—shows that many great things have been achieved by only a few. When millions came to join us in the fight, I saw in it the sign of the advent of Swaraj. But it is not true that I do not see any such



sign now. It is an unquestionable fact that Khadi has now entered more doors. If you are only 50 students but students who know what nationalism means and behave accordingly, you are better than 500 who may be kept here by inducements. Fifty such students can beat even their professors in self-sacrifice, truth, and bravery. If you are such true students, there is no doubt about your fitness. This is what I want from you."

Continuing his discourse on the Bible he said:

"Let us now turn to Jesus' preparation after his baptism by John (Bk. IV—1 to 11). I have already told you we are not going to read the Bible from the missionaries' standpoint. What we want is to imbibe its general principles. We must understand and explain them as much as we can. In my view both the Old and the New Testaments give the history of man. This 'history of man does not mean a record of this event and that. 'Man's history' means the history of the soul. Through his description of the rise and fall of one man's soul, the gospel-writer has put before us one thing. We need not cling to the gospel in every detail—in every word and every comma. What we should do is to extract the essence of what men (the gospel writers) faithful to their religion and their God, put before the world.

"The gospel gives the first step (of preparation before preaching) as well for us as for Jesus. He was a servant of the people or a spiritual aspirant. The first lesson He took through baptism at the hands of John, was that of humility and self-purification. He thought of aligning himself with the millions by taking baptism and a bath in the Jordan. But after that he heard the Voice from within, 'Run away from here'.

"Not every man is entitled to go on a fast. There must be fitness for it. A man came to me and threatened to starve himself to death unless I gave him 30,000 rupees. I gave him a bit of my mind. "Yes, you have the right to commit suicide, but that attitude makes you only a burden on the earth." This seems to be a heartless rebuff, but it is non-violence in reality. There is nothing to laugh in what I say. Sometimes one has to practise non-violence only by making one's heart as hard as an adamant. When a surgeon uses his knife, he also practises a definite kind of non-violence.

"By his 40 days' fast, Jesus sought the Himalayas (solitude), but Satan sat behind Him. He said, "What will you do? There is no food to eat here." Pat came Jesus' answer: "I have not done this to confer some obligation on God". The man who does not live on bread alone, who can sit in deep contemplation is immortal. The man who sits still and quiet with the resolve to eat only when somebody comes up and gives him food



never feels a desire to eat. That is why He gave him this answer. But we have little to do with the literal meaning of those words.

"After thus passing through one test, another faces him.

"As there are among us, so here (in the Bible) also there are stories of temptations of the desire for wealth, for fame, etc. Religious books tell us that fasts and austerities endow the man with powers of working miracles. A man may even sell truth (give up his original aim of realizing truth) in order to acquire those powers. But he loses truth by thus selling it for a paltry thing. Placed in his situation, Jesus immediately answered: "I don't wish to test my God that way. And if anybody (Satan) tests me, God will save me" Jesus said so because He was all humility".

1. This school had non-co-operated in 1920 and had been affiliated with Gandhiji's National University. But in August 1926, it gave up its contact with the latter and had sought and obtained recognition by the Bombay University. It was the biggest school in Ahmedabad when it non-co-operated. The number of students continued to dwindle with the depression that followed 1921.

2. The first two for being leaders of the party that advocated giving up the Congress programme of boycotts of law courts and councils, the third for resigning even from the Swaraj Party formed by the first two.



2-9-1926

Khadi Statistics

(M.D.'s Note in English in 'Young India')

@ Statistics from Khadi-centres are now slowly coming in. It is not quite easy to bring the figures of every centre to conform to a standard table with fixed columns and headings, if only because conditions of work and of paying spinning and weaving charges differ in different provinces. Thus in Bengal and Tamilnad and Bihar the ginning and carding columns will be found to be blanks in as much as spinners gin and card their own slivers, the remuneration for labour on these items being included in the spinning wage. In Gujarat carding is done by professional carders, the rate being as much as 3 annas (1 anna= 1/16 rupee) per lb. with the result that during the three months of the cotton season each carder earns from 30 to 45 rupees monthly. The average income of a spinner in Gujarat as also the number of spinners in every centre is small. This is because the gentleman furnishing the figures has erred, and rightly, on the side of over-precision. Thus, the actual number of spinners who took advantage of the Khadi Ashram at Varad was 90, but their attendance not being regular the average weekly attendance was worked out and that was 16; in Kathlal centre also the actual number of spinners was 253, but the average is 109. We have in such cases noted only the average. Again (in Gujarat) the average earning of a spinner would appear to be very small. That is because some spin regularly and some only a month or two in the year. So the average is necessarily small, but the monthly earning of regular spinners in most of the centres exceeded Rs. 3 and in two centres it was much as Rs. 6. The same remarks apply to the weaving statistics, the actual number of weavers being much greater than the average number for the year.

The table (not reproduced here) gives the production of Khadi in lbs. by the Khadi Pratishthan (in Bengal) and in sq. yards by the Gujarat centres. Both methods are accurate, but they confuse the lay reader. As it is not possible to work out the number of yards per lb., the width differing with every variety, the sq. yard would seem to be simpler and more intelligible. Those who show their production of Khadi in yards, although they weave different varieties and widths of Khadi, certainly do not err on the side of accuracy.

The production in Gujarat in some of the centres includes Khadi woven out of yarn received from voluntary spinners; and the same centres are purely weaving centres and so the columns of spinning in their cases are shown blank.



Whereas the Khadi Pracharak Mandal (Gujarat) has sent figures regarding every one of its centres, the Khadi Pratishtan (Bengal) has sent a compact statement covering all its centres.

It is curious that both the Khadi Pratishtan and the Gujarat Khadi Pracharak have omitted to mention the number of villages served.



2-9-1926

Some of our Spinners

I

(M.D.'s article in English in 'Young India')

@ Sri Laxmidas Purshottam is collecting valuable information about spinners in various centres of Gujarat. The statements taken are not from spinners in villages, where for part of the year it is not easy to find labour, and where poverty and want are the order of the day. These are by spinners in homes situated in the heart of our busy towns and cities, where there are mills and factories where labour is always in demand and an able-bodied man (or woman) can, if he ventures out-doors, earn from eight to twelve annas a day. The statements are from simple illiterate people, mostly women, who told the stories of their uneventful lives in a brief and matter-of-fact form. But they are as telling as they are matter-of-fact. They want not a word of comment.

We shall first take some statements by spinners in Ahmedabad. A Mussalman woman, aged 55, staying in Dariapur, a locality in Ahmedabad stated:

"We are five in all. My son sells vegetables. Besides attending to daily household duties, I spin a quarter of a lb. every day, and earn about 3 rupees every month. This is a very great help, and the best means of turning leisure hours to good account."

A Mussalman of 35 from the same locality stated:

"I stay with my younger son. The elder son lives apart from us and scarcely sends any help. Spinning is an important means of our maintenance. I earn Rs. 4 a month."

A third, an old dame of 65, stated:

"I live entirely alone. My daughter sends me cooked food sometime. I depend not on her, but on my spinning wheel, which brings me enough."

The husband of a spinner who was absent when the inquiry was conducted, stated: " I am blind. My wife toiled and drudged, saved some money and married our two sons who have now left us. She cannot go out; but spins at home and earns Rs. 4.8.0 per month, and we manage to scratch along."

Another sister stated: "I have no house. I am staying with my little son in a mud hut. It is impossible for me to go out to work. I remain indoors and ply wheel, earning Rs. 3-4-0 per month."



Here is some evidence from Nadiad:

A Hindu woman of 75 stated: "I have been spinning these two months. I spin about 7 lbs. per month and earn Rs. 2, which is a godsend. God bless the man who gave me the spinning wheel."

A Patidar (high-caste Hindu) woman of 65 stated: "I have been spinning these 2 years and making Rs. 2 per month. That helps me to give something in charity and also in getting little necessities."

Another woman of 60 stated: "Out of the proceeds of my spinning, I can make clothes for my daughter."

And yet another of 65 stated: "I have been spinning for 2 years now and I utilize all my earnings for religious purposes."

A Bania woman of 55 stated: "I have been a regular spinner these two years. I pay my regular subscription to the All-India Spinners' Association and still save Rs. 2-8-0 per month, which I spend on periodical visits to temples and pilgrimages. I do not spin for my daily bread.'

We come now to Petlad (under Baroda State in Gujarat), where there are 2 mills and dyeing factories.

A woman aged 70 stated: "I am a wholetime spinner. I have nothing else from which to make an income. I should starve, had I not had the spinning wheel. I had a son who supported me. He died and I had to earn my living from outdoor labour which I am too old to do now. So I spin away the whole day. Not that I can fill my belly therewith, but it is something—Rs. 2-8-0 per month. Without that I should have to starve—to death.' As she went on with her story, she was choked and the tears trickled down her cheeks.

Another woman, aged 40, stated: "I have a son who has a *pan* (bettle-leaf) shop. His earning hardly suffices for us and out of my spinning we get our vegetables, oil, etc. and give what I save to my daughters. I earn about a rupee and eight annas, if I spin daily."

Another, aged 60, stated: "My son is a teacher in Ahmadnagar. We have a large family and every pie earned matters. The rupee or rupee and a half that I earn helps us to get salt and kerosene oil. It is a great pity that several days in the month we cannot spin because of our curious customs. After you once begin to spin, you cannot bear to sit idle."



Another woman of 55 stated: "There are three of us in the family, my two daughters and I. Our expenses come to about 8 rupees which we manage to earn, I spinning the wheel and my daughters making cotton buttons. During the period of mourning custom forbids spinning and those are our hardest days. We cannot go out and we must need work indoors. God bless those who brought us the spinning wheel."

And still another of 60 stated: We are two, my daughter and I. I had to sell the little plot of land I had, to marry my daughter. But she soon became a widow and now there is nothing for us to fall back on but the spinning wheel. We earn from 5 to 6 annas a day and make our living. We never went out but we do now to get slivers. A year ago, when there were no spinning wheels, every evening we had to think what we must do next morning to earn our meal. But those days are gone, thanks to the spinning wheel."

And yet another who stated that she was a hundred—she certainly looked over 80. "How much did you spin this month, mother?" was the question.

"What can I do? I am having fever and it is with the greatest difficulty that I can spin. But there was nothing in the house, not even a drop of milk. So I crawled out of my bed and here is the result—half a pound."

"But you need not have troubled to come, when you were so ill."

"*Kya karun? Ghar men Allah siva koi nahi hai. Voh to ata nahin hai*" (What can I do? There is no one in the house except Allah. And He would not come.)

"But surely our men would have come to your street to receive your yarn. You could have given it then."

"And starved until they came? Is that what you mean? Your men come once in a week. They do not come exactly when we are in need of a slice of bread or a cup of milk."

"But, mother, how did you manage when there was no spinning?"

"Now, now. Don't pursue the question. We used to eat dust. Are you satisfied now? Well, give me my money. What is this? Why a pice less this time? It means I must go without my *bajri* (millet)?"

That was sufficient to melt the cashier's heart. The amount paid, the *ma-saheb* hobbled away on her crutches.



9-9-1926

Some of our Spinners

II

(M.D.'s English article in 'Young India')

@Here are some more excerpts from the 'short and simple annals of the poor,' -this time of residents not of cities or towns but of villages. Bahial is a village 30 miles from Ahmedabad with a population of about 3000. There are 62 spinning wheels working there. All the spinners are, of course, women.

The first woman, aged 80, stated: " I have two sons, one of whom gives me Rs. 18 a year for my maintenance. My niece occasionally gives me something. I have no other income. But the spinning wheel has come to our village for the last six months, and it adds considerably to my income. But they hesitate to give me the quantity of slivers I require, as I cannot spin fine yarn and exhaust my supply too quickly. Every lb. of 8 counts brings me three and a half annas."

The second, aged 40, stated: " I earn six annas a week out of the lb. of yarn of 11 counts that I spin. I also know sewing. Whenever I have some sewing on hand, I put aside the spinning wheel. I am quite ready to learn carding. if you will kindly teach it to me. I do not disdain manual labour of any kind. The income from the spinning wheel helps me to purchase some of the daily necessities. My husband is a peon and earns just Rs. 20 a month."

The third, aged 55, stated: "We are only two souls, my husband and I. We had sons who passed away in the prime of their lives. God has given us enough to keep body and soul together, but there is not much work to do and it is impossible to kill time without some occupation. The spinning wheel, has fortunately, come into our lives to comfort and cheer us."

The fourth one, aged 35, stated : "I lost my husband 7 years ago. I have a son of about 10 years. I know spinning, sewing, and button-making. There is no demand for buttons and so they sell very cheap. Every house has some one or other knowing sewing, so I get hardly any work from outside and have to remain without work much of my time. The spinning wheel has come, but unfortunately, I do not get enough slivers. When I have a sufficient supply of them. I earn upto Rs. 2 a month, otherwise about 12 to 14 annas. But even that pittance means much to one who has to depend entirely on manual labour for her livelihood."



The fifth woman, who is close on 100, stated: "We are only two, my husband and I. He is an invalid confined to bed, having served in the army the whole of his life. He earns a pension of Rs. 5, but that is not enough for us. The spinning wheel has come in good time. I spin a lb. of slivers every three days, but alas! the supply of them is not inexhaustible."

"But" said the friend making the inquiry, "you spin very coarse yarn, mother, and there is no demand for coarse Khadi. Can't you spin finer?"

"It depends on the money you pay. If you paid more, I would try to spin with my finger nails."

"We do not pay for the quantity but for quality. But let us see the best yarn you can spin."

She had no slivers in stock and was given self-carded slivers by the friend and she spun 12 counts out of it.

"If you spin like that, we shall give you 6 annas per lb."

"Not unless you give me slivers like those you have given me now."

"Such slivers can be made, provided we card our own cotton. Will you do so?"

"Don't you see I am very nearly blind and there is no strength in my wrists?"

The questioner saw the heartlessness of asking any further question. She went on with her story however. There was nothing left in the house that they could sell and purchase grain with. The last thing that belonged to her—a pair of bangles—was also sold. The spinning wheel, quite rickety, was a borrowed one. The house, as dilapidated as the spinning wheel and its centenarian spinner, with the old man in his bed, a living shadow of death, was the most speaking picture of poverty that can ever be imagined.

But let us take another village a few miles from Nadiad. The first woman, aged 45, stated: "I am absolutely alone. I spin 2 lbs per week and earn Rs. 2-8-0 at the rate of 5 annas a lb. The spinning wheel is my sole resource. My nephew used to support me heretofore, but when God has given me hands and feet, why should I depend on others?"

The second, aged 45, stated: "I am alone. My brother supports me. The spinning wheel brings me a rupee and 4 annas. I used to sit idle when there was no spinning wheel."



The third one, aged 85, stated, "I have a son who earns Rs. 15 a month. When there was no spinning, I used to stay with him. Now he purchases me grain, and I get the rest of the necessaries by spinning."

The fourth, aged 37, stated: "My husband is a Government official. He had no issue by me, and with my consent he married again. She got him to drive me away from the house. I went to court. There was a compromise. I now stay in the house and ply the wheel. When he comes home on leave I go away, returning to the house immediately he goes back. The wheel brings me from Rs. 1-8-0 to 1-12-0 per month. It has been a blessing."



26-9-1926

Egyptian Lady's Visit

(M. D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

Miss Zakia Suleiman, an Egyptian lady, has come on a trip to India. She is a big *zamindar's* daughter, is educated in England, and being interested in education regards Froebel as her Guru. Besides being an Inspector and an examiner, she is conducting a school in Cairo with 250 children on the roll. It appears that she is an influential lady owing to her father's contacts with Government circles and, being a Government servant herself, perfectly satisfied with the present Government there. According to her there is nothing wanting in the Swaraj that Egypt enjoys today and it seemed that she was trying to show that the present condition of her country was the happiest and the best. She spent 2 days at the *Ashram* in long talks with the inmates.

She dresses herself in European style and gets her hair dressed in the fashion of European ladies, though she once wore a Banarasi *sari* also. She used to say: "Many people ask me, 'Has Egypt adopted the English dress?' The question annoys me and I say, 'You may call it European, but not English.' There is not one thing English which has appeared to us as worth adopting. England has totally failed to influence Egypt. Agreed, you will find plenty of French influence on Egypt, French culture has gone deep there and my dress also is of the French style. The student of law in Egypt has to study French law even now."

Showing the difference between the conditions of Egypt and India she said: "We are a small nation of only 11 millions and 400 thousands. It is, therefore, easier for us to do national work. Besides, we are of one and the same religion and almost all of the same race. There are, indeed, the original inhabitants of Egypt and they are all Christians still. But they are only one million. There is some difference between them and us in the build of the body, and so in appearance and dress, but we have kept up free and unstinted contact with them and there is no inhibition amongst us against inter-dining and inter-marriage. So the difference in religion poses no problem. Things are different with you here. It has been very easy for the English rulers to apply the divide-and-rule policy here and incite Hindus to fight Muslims, and vice versa, and Christians to fight with both of them. But in our country the Englishmen could not divide us even before we got *Swaraj*. Thus circumstances to form one nation are more favourable for us.



"There is a world of difference between the Egypt of today and the Egypt of the *ancient regime* under the British. 1919 was the year of the dawn of our freedom and prosperity. Before that year we had little knowledge of where our own Interest—our own welfare—lay. We got that consciousness in 1919 and today we are fully awake to our national interest. Zaghlul Pasha, a man of simple habits, is the Father of our national awakening and is adored in every home in Egypt. Parents give that name to their new-born ones. His sacrifices stagger one's imagination. Ever since our awakening began, we cherished one single aim: how to make our land free from Foreign yoke. We began to remove the control of foreigners in both the fields—politics and business. Our businessmen have not lagged behind in our march to freedom and complete national awakening. Thus we all presented a solid front and succeeded in ousting the foreigners. People withdrew their money from foreign banks and one proprietor made his bank an almost national concern in order to facilitate such mass withdrawals from foreign banks. And today the poorest Egyptian deposits his savings in that bank. I have a servant, who, if you ask him, 'Have you any account in that Bank,' will proudly reply 'So many shares and so much cash.'

"And the share of women in that awakening is by no means small. Women are held in high esteem in Egypt. One incident enhanced that respect immensely. In 1922 some students went to a certain spot and loudly proclaimed the independence of Egypt. Lord Ellenby turned his guns upon them, but none of them flinched. This went on for a day or two and everyone who went there was shot dead. But only in one or two days, hoards and hoards of women surrounded those revolving guns in thick rows and from that day the guns became silent. The veil too has entirely disappeared from our country. A large number of women are educated and women in general now take a lively interest in national affairs. It is true that women cannot yet get into the popular assembly or the Senate, but we are not worried over it because there is no doubt that as education advances, there will be room for women in those institutions too. They played a quite remarkable role in our fight for freedom. Our common dress is a *sari* of black colour. If you ask any woman in Egypt where her *sari* was made, she will say that it was made in a particular Egyptian mill. One leading industrialist accepted the challenge of the situation and declared, 'I will produce all the cloth our women require.' and now they take pride in wearing the cloth made by that mill."

"You say you have mills. Have you not thought of home industries? If you start them, you can meet all your requirements in cloth, since your country produces the best quality cotton. Has there been any progress of the spinning wheel in Egypt?"



She gave a long reply to this question: "Definitely, we are in a position to produce all the cloth we need. My father himself has extensive fields of cotton. All the same much of our cloth is mill-made. Unlike you, we have not stepped up the spinning wheel and handloom, and we can't, because our farmer has no spare time for spinning and weaving."

"Do you mean to say that there is no problem with you of unemployment and compulsory idleness for the tiller of the soil?"

"There is no idleness and unemployment in our country. Our farmer has enough work on hand all the year round, as there is always one kind or another of a standing crop in his field. Emphasis on cottage industries is not, therefore, as necessary with us as with you."

"You say, you have mills. Who are the proprietors?"

Proudly she answered : "Hardly any foreigner. Nearly all of them are owned by Egyptians."

"Is there no danger then of the ills of industrialism invading your country?"

"No. Because there are only a few places which can be called mill-areas. I remember only two or three big industrial areas in the south, where there is a cluster of yarn and silk mills. And they produce all the cloth needed for the country. It has never been our aim to produce cloth for export. And by 'evils of industrialism,' you may be thinking of the moral degradation of labourers. But our labourers live in very good conditions."

"Well, let's leave that point. But as mills are always in need of workers, do they not draw away farm-labour to that extent? And does not agriculture suffer accordingly?"

"There is no fear of that loss in our country, as nobody gives up agriculture to go to mills to become a labourer. The mill-labourers come only from the urban unemployed. There is no reason for a farmer to give up his work. As we have canals, we are not dependent upon rains. There is, therefore, nothing like famine in our country. Our country can be termed comparatively prosperous."

"If you go on growing more and more cotton, you will, naturally, be tempted to produce more cloth and the present age of industrialism will help you. Will not the



result then be the same chaos as has been produced by industrialism in other countries?"

"But we know our limitations. And you forget that we have Swaraj. The temptation to grow more cotton is curbed by the law making the cultivation of wheat on 1/3rd of his land compulsory for the farmer on penalty of a specified fine. However much my father would wish to grow more cotton he would find himself in a jail if he did so. And as we are content to produce only as much cloth as is sufficient for our needs, we entertain the fear of the evils of industrialism."

Despite this fervent advocacy, I suspected that the picture of the situation was really not as rosy as she painted. She said: "During 4 years, from 1919 to 1923, we sold cotton at 4 times the old price and we sold lots of it. We can afford to buy foreign cloth as the profit from the sale of cotton is enormous." That seems to mean that foreign cloth is still imported in Egypt, that Egyptian mills are still struggling against it and that its use in Egypt has not gone down appreciably either among the poor or the rich. She admitted: "The upper blue cloth which farmers wear is indeed Egyptian, but the import of chintz continues, regularly." Then again, even if the mills supply all the clothing needs of Egypt, the machinery for these mills has got to be imported from abroad and dependence on foreign countries thus does continue to that extent. She admitted that this dependence for machinery was a bad policy and that hand-spinning and hand-weaving industries should be developed for the sake of removing that defect and encouraging indigenous art.

But she seemed to emphasize the fact that education and their attempts to free themselves from British administration and British officials were more helpful in the achievement of their industrial independence. With the exception of the foreign army and ambassadors of foreign countries, there is now not a single British or foreign official in Egypt. She repeatedly emphasised that unity among themselves was the most important factor in gaining freedom.

"There are parties in our country, but take it from me, that they are only nominal. The Zaghlul Party and Liberal Party certainly exist, but they do so with regard only to the internal policy. We always present a united front against foreigners. Zaghlul Pasha got a majority and that created a commotion in England. 'With deep foresight, selflessness and tact he gave up the idea of forming his own Government and allowed the formation of a Liberal ministry. So now the Liberal Prime Minister does not take any step without consulting Zaghlul. The British Government wanted to involve 2



Egyptian ministers in the murder of Sir Lee Stack. But the judges appointed by the Egyptian Government made a thorough inquiry and then courageously absolved them. The present Government in Egypt is second to no other party in looking after the welfare of the people and acts in full freedom and fearlessness.

"And let me give another instance of Zaghlul's statesmanship. When he was the Prime Minister, 1/3rd of his Cabinet was composed of Christian Ministers, though the ratio of Christians to Arabs in Egypt is only 1:14. The Christian used to feel perhaps more happy with him than even Arabs. And there is another thing. Though the Arabs are 14 times as many as Christians, they have never tried to suppress the handful Christians."

This fact should open the eyes of both Hindus and Muslims here and set them thinking hard on it.

Primary education is free in Egypt and has become so popular that it has not been found necessary to make it compulsory also. There may be hardly any child of school-going age who may not be attending a school. Somewhat taken aback at the question: "What is the medium of instruction in your schools?" She said: "Of course Arabic. How could such a question arise? Only in college there is English. French is compulsory for the study of law. That apart, no other language is in vogue right up to the college. But that reminds me. Arabic is the one language used in all our public meetings, gatherings, law-courts etc. Foreigners among lawyers also have to conduct their cases in Arabic."

"Just the opposite of what is going on here. There is then no wonder that you enjoy Swaraj. All your text-books must be in Arabic then?"

"Yes. It is our Translation Department that prepares these books."

"What the Translation Department does here is simply this. It translates the laws of the Government and articles in Indian languages to help the Government in prosecuting the writers:"

She was surprised and said: "Translation Department is solely for our own use. I myself am going right now to get Froebel's books translated."

That was how our talk ended. What surprised and pleased me was her *zinda dili* as we call it in Urdu (-bubbling spirits), and her independent thinking. She told us, "I get up early at 5 a.m. and drive my car to a distant plain where I run briskly for about 2 miles daily. On return home, I have my bath and get ready for my inspection tour of



schools." As she was leaving us, she repeated her admonition: "There is no freedom without unity. Fight as much as you like among yourselves, but stand united before the foreigner."



30-9-1926

Satyagraha—True and False

(Gandhiji's article in 'Navajivan' Translated by M.D. in 'Young India').

@ There are many forms of Satyagraha, of which fasting may or may not be one, according to the circumstances of the case. A friend has put the following poser:

"A man wants to recover money another owes him. He cannot do so by going to law as he is a non-co-operator, and the debtor in the intoxication of the power of his wealth pays him no heed and refuses even to accept arbitration. If, in these circumstances, the creditor sits '*dhurna*' at the debtor's door, would it not be Satyagraha? The fasting creditor seeks to injure no one by his fasting. Ever since the golden age of Rama we have been following this method. But I am told you regard this as intimidation. If you do, will you kindly explain?"

I know the correspondent. He has written from the purest motive. But I have no doubt that he is mistaken in his interpretation of Satyagraha. Satyagraha can never be resorted to for personal gain. If fasting with a view to recovering money is to be encouraged, there would be no end of scoundrels black-mailing people by resorting to the means. I know that many such people are to be met with in the country. It is not right to argue that those who rightly resort to fasting need not be condemned because it is abused in a few cases. Any and every one may not draw his own distinction between fasting-Satyagraha—true and false. What one regards as true Satyagraha may very likely be otherwise. Satyagraha, therefore, cannot be resorted to for personal gain, but only for the good of others. A Satyagrahi should always be ready to undergo suffering and pecuniary loss. That there would not be wanting dishonest people to reap an undue advantage from the boycott of law courts practised by good people was a contingency not unexpected at the inception of non-co-operation. It was then thought that the beauty of non-co-operation lay just in taking those risks.

But Satyagraha in the form of fasting cannot be undertaken as against an opponent. Fasting can be resorted to only against ones nearest and dearest, and that solely for his or her good.

In a country like India where the spirit of charity or pity is not lacking, it would be nothing short of an outrage to fast for recovering money. I know people who have given away money, quite against their will, but out of a false sense of pity. The Satyagrahi has, therefore, to proceed warily in a land like ours. It is likely that some



men may succeed in recovering money due to them by resorting to fasting, but instead of calling it a triumph of Satyagraha, I would call it a triumph of Duragraha or violence. The triumph of Satyagraha consists in meeting death in the insistence on truth. A Satyagrahi is always unattached to the attainment of the object of Satyagraha, one seeking to recover money cannot be so unattached. I am, therefore, clear that fasting for the sake of personal gain is nothing short of intimidation and the result of ignorance.



2-10-1926

Gandhiji's Discourse on the Bible

(Translated from M.D's manuscript-diary)

"We are all travellers on the path of *mukti* (liberation). That is education which gives us '*mukti*'. And that is the motto of our Vidyapith¹. If any one of us goes to the Share Market for his evaluation, the people there will take him for a twopenny worth. But the same man will be highly honoured in the quarter where the spirit of service is given the first rank. Hence, that man who lives among us and yet wants appreciation from men whose standard of values is pound, shilling and pence, is certain one day to repent of his studies here.

"Jesus was one of the great servants of humanity. He wanted, therefore, to see what preparations He had made to fit Himself for the service which He rendered afterwards. The first of all of them was the fast He undertook. 'Fasting' does not mean nothing more than abstinence from food and wastage of the body. The act of fasting, singly by itself, has very little value. Spiritual or moral fitness is essential to entitle one to go on a fast. In order to gain that fitness, therefore, Jesus received baptism purposely from one who could be no more than his servant in spiritual standing. It was after this preparation in humility that He began His fast.

"It is far more difficult to taper off a fast than to keep it. Many temptations beset the man at the end of a fast. The first is that of the palate. How can the tongue like to give up its relish for taste and food, when it rebels against control of it in speech? And then specially at the end of a fast, a man is seized with a craving for tasteful dishes. Satan, therefore, tries to tempt Jesus by offering food to His palate. But as Jesus knows that He must first take spiritual food before He satisfies his palate, he refuses to accept the tasty dishes offered by Satan. Though Vishwamitra² did steal a piece of flesh from a tanner's house, he did not eat it off. He had to perform some ceremony before eating it. During its performance he realized that it was wrong on his part to steal the piece .. He did not, therefore, eat the piece at all. In the same way Jesus also gained conquest over the objects of the senses by His abstinence from the pleasure of the palate.

"When a man thus conquers the first temptation, he gains mastery over the objects of his senses. That endows him with strength. That strength itself is the second temptation. For instance, Naradji (a devotee of Lord Vishnu) conquered lust and the conquest went up his head. But Lord Vishnu created the form of '*Vishwamohini*' (a



charming woman who could entrance the world) and humbled Naradji's pride. In the same way Satan tried to excite pride in the mind of Jesus, but He remained unmoved.

"When a man thus gains mastery over strength, he becomes a master of *siddhis* (miraculous powers). These '*siddhis*' are His third temptation. Satan asks Jesus to use supernatural powers, but He refuses and says, 'I don't want to use supernatural powers—I want to humble myself to the dust. What I want is service of mankind.'

"After the establishment of the Satyagrahashram, its rules (the 11 vows enjoined for an inmate) were sent round for opinion. (Sir) Gurudas Banerjee gave his opinion that the vow of humility must be added. But one cannot gain humility by taking a vow for it. Humility must remain embedded in the mind all the while the 11 vows are observed. The man who does not become humble, loses the fruit of his austerities. That was why Jesus said, 'I am not going to make use of super natural powers. I would only obey the Lord's behest.'

"Jesus thus overcomes all temptations. Satan, therefore, feels helpless and goes away.

"If, therefore, we wish to be servants, we must take the same steps. We must confine ourselves into the cage of rules and regulations and regard the confinement itself as freedom. We must keep the *dharma* of self-restraint. Hence, for all kinds of service to the country, we must take the road of *dharma*, of renunciation, truth, non-violence, and self-suffering i.e. complete dedication of ourselves to service. We must first recite the "*Kalma*" (—the fundamental tenet of Islam. Gandhiji means here 'We must first remember God'). After that, we must warily refuse to succumb to any of the temptations that our fast (acts of self-restraint) brings in its train. Only then do we acquire the right, the privilege, the fitness, to serve lepers and hysterics.³ These 'diseases' are not to be taken in their narrow sense of diseases of the body. They are to be broadly interpreted, i.e., they include mental leprosy, hysteria, etc. Mental diseases are difficult to treat. We too are, at present suffering, from paralysis, hysteria, leprosy etc. And for all these ailments the sovereign remedy is what has been stated above, namely, taking to the eternal, immortal path of '*dharma*', That path stretches—spreads—all over the world and that, alone is the first step for fitness to render service to others."

In elucidation of IV—12 to 16, Gandhiji said: "Whenever a man earns by fitness the privilege of doing something, a special kind of knowledge springs up within him. Man can serve more through speech than through body. But speech does not mean



talkativeness. The man who is prepared to sacrifice his body for any cause is bound to have power in his words and greater power still in his thoughts. Speech is only a means of the expression of thought. Man cannot put all his thoughts in words. Thought is a veritable ocean. When Jesus becomes fit and prepared for service, a subtle air surrounds him automatically and it purifies the atmosphere. Similar is the case with this Gujarat Vidyapith. If it turns out even a single MAN all the money spent after it is spent properly. That MAN becomes fit to win Swaraj. Just as one lamp lights thousands of others, so thousands of men become men of knowledge (Self-realization) through one man's Self-realization. That is why we should keep patience and plod on in our work."

Then taking up IV—17 to 22, Gandhiji said: "Light thus spread around Jesus. Then He pointed out the path of self-purification by saying, '*Repent*'. His service began with the lowliest of the low i.e. with 'fishers'. But that made His work easier also, since the work of a teacher becomes easy when he starts with the first lesson and not with the best lesson. He made 'fishers' stop their vocation of catching fish and made them catch men, i.e., made them servants of men. Verse 22 states that those who were mending nets to catch fish renounced even their fathers as was done by Prahlad (who had to renounce his king-father in order to be loyal to Lord Vishnu). 'Renunciation' means here renunciation of contact between father and son. After the renunciation of gross (physical) contact, subtle contact (of love) grows thicker.

Explaining Verses 23 to 25 of Chapter IV Gandhiji said: "If the facts given in these are true, they are jarring. They are directly opposed to the idea in vogue among us. Missionaries highlight this thing and show how wonderful were the miracles Jesus performed. But that is like the use of '*siddhis*' (which Hindu scriptures forbid the use of). It suggests a defect in Jesus. Missionaries open hospitals and serve the afflicted. But their object is to convert people to Christianity. That is a bad object, since some of the converted Christians remain in that religion only for the sake of salaries etc. The man who serves his own end in his attempts to cure the sick of their diseases is an unclean man. For us the idea deserves to be scouted. It is not good that a man serves others in order to bring them into his creed. Our scriptures stress that this idea must be shunned. Hence, we should not attach any value to these verses."

1. सा विद्या या विमुक्तये | —That is learning (education) which leads one to complete mukti (liberation).



2. In order to bring down the rains, since people were suffering from a series of famines, Vishwamitra performed a sacrifice. As nothing else was available, he stole a piece of flesh as some offering was essential for its performance.
3. Reference to the cure of diseases by Jesus.



9-10-1926

"Let me say something about my resolutions in the Senate (of the Gujarat Vidyapith). Our University was founded in 1920 (D. 18.10.1920). What a travesty if even still we do not wear Khadi from head to foot: What a world of difference between 1921 and 1926: And that glorious month of September: But we cannot say even now that we have struck root. We can't claim to have understood the implications of the spinning wheel and to have made it our life-principle. But if we have not done so, what is the '*dharma*' of all of us—of my self, of Kripalani (the Principal), and of the professors? For myself, I know definitely what it is. I know what I must do, if I want to adorn my Chancellorship. There are one or two special powers in me. And I have grown dead certain that without Khadi, there is no Swaraj and no relief from starvation for the masses. 'Without Khadi' means without the spinning wheel. While, for the poor, the wheel is the means of keeping their bodies alive, for us, for you and me, it is the means of keeping our conscience awake. There is not much difference between our death and life. We are almost like dead men. The potent charm that can enliven us, awaken us, is this: All the students must ply the spinning wheel for half an hour daily and wear Khadi regularly. 'Can you beat anyone to make him spin?'—somebody may question.¹ I say 'Yes'. But my beating is not harsh, but sweet. What is the use of retaining in the College those who do not have faith in Khadi? And the boy, who has faith but not the strength to spin regularly,

must be coaxed to bind himself down with a pledge to do so. They say that an atmosphere congenial to spinning must be gradually created. But people will laugh at a non-Gujarati teacher here who says, 'I shall learn Gujarati slowly, by and by. If somebody says to a Muslim, 'You may learn to recite the *kalma* gradually, you must not be compelled to recite it' he also will be ridiculed. Some students tell me, 'You had asked us simply to leave Government-recognised schools and colleges and nothing more.'" They can say so. But what would be the result, if we cut at the root of national education? Just as the knowledge of the local language is essential for every dweller in the region, so is spinning an indispensable need for the whole of India. With what face can I go to the people for donation for the National University? I ask the students to think over this point. If some intending donor wants to know what the special feature of this institution is, what shall I tell him? He would expect poverty (simplicity), freedom and Hindi here. He would expect the use of the vernacular for all its activities and for discussions on topics of great importance. He would expect Khadi to meet the eye and the spinning wheels' musical hum the ear all through the College. It is now 6



years complete since the inception of the Vidyapith. If even now, after this lapse of time, it remains necessary to flatter students to make them wear Khadi, let us give up all talk of Swaraj. That German lady (then a visitor) may find it necessary to flatter you, so that you may learn German from her. But flattery for making you spin! That is the limit. And you are the salt of the earth. Be, therefore, like Gangotri (source of the holy river Ganga). Be the purest of the pure and show to India the key to Swaraj. If that does not happen, there is no place for you in this College. You may then have new colleges opened for yourselves. A Muslim 'madresa' (school) is justified in making the recitation of the '*kalma*' compulsory. Our *kalma* is wearing of Khadi and spinning. I would be dishonest, if I am lax in the matter of these two things here and still approach people for funds for it".

Principal Kripalani: "Will you drive out students now, when their course is still unfinished? And have we no freedom here?"

Gandhiji: "I say, this is not a new condition imposed upon you today. Besides, you must take these things in the stride. And I am sure you will agree that it is by no means a sin to wear Khadi and turn a spinning wheel. If it is a sin, the one course open for you is to leave this college. Only a poor student and none else can legitimately appeal to me to let him continue his studies here. Is it slavery? Is one ordered here to salute Khadi as people were ordered to salute the Union Jack? No. For we have entered this college after regarding it our '*dharma*' to wear Khadi. It is not slavery to think it our '*dharma*' to study Gurajati. Khadi is not slavery but self-restraint, an abidance by an essential rule of the place which we have chosen deliberately to enter. Why should I come here at 12 noon—when I would like to come at 12.30 ? But I must abide by the College time-table. I caught the whole trend of his thinking from the last sentence of the questioner. And I must say that the professors have not inculcated the right thoughts upon the minds of the questioners."

Proceeding with exposition of the Bible, Gandhiji said 'The Sermon on the Mount' is the pivot of the New Testament. Mathew has revealed Jesus' heart in full light in it. If everything else is destroyed in a fire, but if these maxims remain intact everything we require remains with us. All else is merely an expansion of the same theme-is even verbosity.

"I discussed this portion with a lawyer whom I knew in South Africa. He used to keep notes of his cases. He had a book with a red cover, which he kept in a drawer in his table. It was 'The Song Celestial' (Bhagwad Gita's translation in verse form by Sir



Edwin Arnold). I think it is the best name that could be given in English to the book. As a piece of translation, it may not perhaps pass the test, but the essence, the spirit, of the original has been reproduced in the best language and style. "Throw at least a cursory glance at the book," he pleaded rather earnestly. The book was given to him by his father, who was a resident of the Isle of Man. He had filled up all the vacant spaces in the book with notes. They were all quotations of parallel statements from the Bible. How nice would it have been, if I had taken the book from him to keep it with me! Lovers of the Bhagwad Gita should spend half an hour and see for themselves how very similar this Sermon on the Mount is with the Gita's precepts. We need not believe either that the Bible is an adaptation of the Gita or the Gita of the Bible. Nobody can claim the monopoly of inspired thoughts. The man, -wherever he be-who can purify his mind can have such thoughts. You can definitely find this in the Quran, because the Prophet had this knowledge.

"What was the situation under which this Sermon was delivered? When he was fed up with the crowds that besieged him, He fled and, going to a mountain, sat down in the midst of only his disciples. Here it was that the Sermon was given.

" The third verse teaches us complete non-possession. It reminds us of Patanjali's '*Yoga-darshan*'. We should be poor in spirit i.e. in the heart. It says that his is the kingdom of heaven whose soul is really poor, i.e. is free from pride, and who has renounced all things. There are many missionaries who say, 'We too are poor in spirit, though we appear to possess pianoes and other paraphernalia. These outward things do not affect us. The faithful give us these gifts, but we are really poor in spirit.'" But it is a must for a man to remain poor outwardly—and not only outwardly but inwardly also. If he happens to possess wealth, he must forthwith behave as a trustee. All the wealth of King Janaka was only for the use of his subjects. It was this that assured for him *moksha* (liberation), the kingdom of heaven, as a reward of his non-possession. There should not be any deliberately cherished desire to gain this *moksha* behind a man's renunciation of his possessions. But the kingdom would be his as the inevitable result of his desireless renunciation.

"Verse—4 does not mean that a person is meek if he always sheds tears. It means one who has a hearty sympathy for the sorrows of the world. A general of Hazrat Umar lived in poverty. Hazrat sent him 500 *ashrafis* (gold coins). But at the sight of the gift, the general felt so grieved that he shed tears, so very like Mirabai who sang, 'I weep at the sight of the world.' He who weeps in this way will become happy.



"The word used here is 'meek'. To whom does the world belong? To Changez Khan? To Temoorlung? No. It belongs to the poor. If everyone in this world became a Changez Khan, how could the world last for a day? In order that the world can continue, can go on living, there must always be people living in it. Hence, the world is not for those who grab, but for those who renounce. The examples of Harishchandra, of Parvati (both famous for hard austerities) are beacon-lights to guide us. Only that man can drench others in his love, who lives in the world in a meek, humble way. Such men become greater than mighty emperors by giving up the passing pleasures of the world.

"Verse 6 tells us that the man who is full of desires of various kinds is sure to meet with his doom. But the man who is hungering for self-purification will one day realize the Self. He will not suffer from the pangs of desires. Such a man alone will be filled with satisfaction. Of course, he will go on giving to the body what it needs, but only to exact work from it,-just as we feed bullocks for the same purpose. This is exactly like what Lord Krishna promises Arjuna, viz., He would bear the whole burden of the needs of a true, steadfast, devotee (Gita IX—22). Modern scientists may tell us that purity is a vain pursuit, but this Law-giver of ancient times says that that is the only thing worth striving for.

"Verse 7 affirms that he will gain God's mercy, who is himself merciful to others. It tells people "You are so full of corruptions in the mind that you require the mercy of the world for your redemption. How can you gain it without being merciful to others?"

1. Literally, "Is it right to beat anybody to make him a Muslim?"



10-10-1926

(M. D's translation in 'Young India', d. 21-10-1926

of Gandhiji's article in 'Navajivan' d. 10-10-1926)

Is This Humanity?

I

@The Ahmedabad Humanitarian League has addressed me a letter from which I take the relevant portions:

"The talk of the whole city of Ahmedabad is the destruction of 60 dogs on his mill premises at the instance of Seth Many a humanitarian heart is considerably agitated over the incident. When Hinduism forbids the taking of the life of any living being, when it declares it to be a sin, do you think it right to kill rabid dogs for the reason that they would bite human beings and by biting the other dogs make them also rabid? Are not, the man who actually destroys the dogs as also the man at whose instance he does so, both sinners?

"A deputation of three gentlemen from our Society waited on the Seth on the 28th ultimo. He confessed in the course of the interview that he had to take the course in question to save human life. He also said, "I myself had no sleep on the night I took that decision. I met Mahatmaji the next morning and ascertained his view on the matter. He said, 'What else could be done?' Is that a fact? And if so, what does it mean?"

We hope you will express your views in the matter and set the whole controversy at rest and prevent humanitarianism from being endangered by the shocks given to it by distinguished men like the Seth. The Ahmedabad Municipality, we have heard, is soon going to have before it a resolution for the castration of stray dogs. Is it proper? Does religion sanction the castration of an animal? We should be thankful, if you would give your opinion in this matter also."

"Ahmedabad knows the name of the mill-owner, but as 'Navajivan' is being read outside Ahmedabad also, I have omitted to mention his name in accordance with my practice to avoid personalities, whilst discussing a principle. The question raised by the Humanitarian Society is an intricate one. I had been thinking of discussing the question ever since and even before the incident, but on second thoughts dropped the idea. But the letter of the Society now compels me, makes it my duty, to enter into a public discussion of the question.



I must say that my relations with millowner have been sweet and, if I may say so, friendly. He came to me and expressed his distress in having had to order destruction of the dogs, and asked my opinion about it. He also said: "When the Government, the Municipality, and the Mahajan (group of leaders) all alike failed to guide me, I was driven to this course." I gave him the reply that the Society's letter attributes to me.

I have since thought over the matter and feel that my reply was quite proper.

Imperfect, erring, mortals as we are, there is no course open to us but the destruction of rabid dogs. At times we may be faced with the unavoidable duty of killing people.

If we persist in keeping stray dogs undisturbed, we shall soon be faced with the duty of either castrating them or killing them. A third alternative is that of having a special *pinjrapole* for dogs. When we cannot cope with all the stray cattle in the city, the very proposal of having a *pinjrapole* for dogs seems to me to be chimerical.

There can be no two opinions on the fact that Hinduism regards killing a living being as sinful. I think all religions are agreed on the principle. There is generally no difficulty in determining a principle. The difficulty comes in when one proceeds to put it into practice. A principle is the expression of a perfection, and as imperfect beings like us cannot practice perfection, we devise every moment limits of its compromise in practice. So Hinduism has laid down that killing for sacrifice is no '*himsa*' (violence). This is only a half-truth, Violence will be violence for all time, and all violence is sinful. But what is inevitable is not regarded as a sin, so that the science of daily practice has not only declared the inevitable violence involved in killing for sacrifice as permissible but even regarded it as meritorious.

But unavoidable violence cannot be defined. For it changes with time, place, and person. What is regarded as excusable for one time may be inexcusable at another. The violence involved in burning fuel or coal in the depth of winter to keep the body warm may be unavoidable and, therefore, a duty for a weak-bodied man, but fire unnecessarily lit in midsummer is clearly violence.

We recognize the duty of killing microbes by the use of disinfectants. It is violence and yet a duty. But why go even as far as that? The air in a dark closed room is full of little microbes and the introduction of light and air into it by opening it is destruction indeed. But it is ever a duty to use the finest of disinfectants—pure air.



These instances can be multiplied. The principle that applies in the instances cited applies in the matter of killing rabid dogs. To destroy a rabid dog is to commit the minimum amount of violence. A recluse, who is living in a forest and is compassion incarnate, may not destroy a rabid dog. For in his compassion he has the virtue of making it whole. But a city-dweller who is responsible for the protection of lives under his care and who does not possess the virtues of a recluse, but is capable of destroying a rabid dog, is faced with a conflict of duties. If he kills the dog he commits a sin. If he does not kill it, he commits a graver sin. So he prefers to commit the lesser one and save himself from the graver.

I believe myself to be saturated with '*ahimsa*'-non-violence. *Ahimsa* and truth are as my two lungs. I cannot live without them. But I see every moment, with more and more clearness, the immense power of *ahimsa* and the littleness of man. Even the forest-dweller cannot be entirely free from violence, in spite of his limitless compassion. With every breath he commits a certain amount of violence. The body itself is a house of slaughter and, therefore, *Moksha* and Eternal Bliss consist in perfect deliverance from the body, and therefore all pleasure, save the joy of *Moksha*, is evanescent, imperfect.

That being the case, we have to drink, in daily life, many a bitter draught of violence.

It is, therefore, a thousand pities that the question of stray dogs etc. assumes such a monstrous proportion in this sacred land of *ahimsa*. It is my firm conviction that we are propagating '*himsa*' in the name of '*ahimsa*' owing to our deep ignorance of the great principle. It may be a sin to destroy rabid dogs and such others as are liable to catch rabies. But we are responsible, the Mahajan is responsible for the state of things. The Mahajan may not allow the dogs to stray. It is a sin, it should be a sin, to feed stray dogs, and we should save numerous dogs, if we had legislation making every stray dog liable to be shot. Even if those who feed stray dogs consented to pay a penalty for their misdirected compassion, we should be free from the curse of stray dogs.

Humanity is a noble attribute of the soul. It is not exhausted with saving a few fish or a few dogs. Such saving may even be sinful. If I have a swarm of ants in my house, the man who proceeds to feed them will be guilty of a sin. For, God has provided their grain for the ants, but the man who feeds them might destroy me and my family. The Mahajan may feel itself safe and believe that it has saved their lives by



dumping dogs near my field, but it will have committed the greater sin of putting my life in danger. Humaneness is impossible without thought, discrimination, charity, fearlessness, humility and clear vision. It is no easy thing to walk on the sharp sword-edge of '*ahimsa*' in this world which is so full of '*himsa*'. Wealth does not help; anger is the enemy of '*ahimsa*', and pride is a monster that swallows it up. In this straight and narrow observance of this religion of *ahimsa*, one has often to know so-called *himsa* as the truest form of *ahimsa*.

Things in this world are not what they seem and do not seem as they really are. Or if they are seen as they are, they so appear only to a few who have perfected themselves after ages of penance. But none has yet been able to describe the reality and no one can.



16-10-1926

(Translated from M.D's manuscript diary)

In answer to Pandit Sukhlalji's question about the (preceding) article, "Is This Humanity", Gandhiji said:

"I was by no means sitting idle. My hands were full, but it is my *dharma* to cheerfully bear a burden that happens to fall upon me. "When the letter (in the preceding article) came, I said to myself: "If I claim to be a believer in non-violence, and if I hope to reach the stage of its perfect implementation in this very life, I ought to answer this letter of the Jains. I discovered truth first, and then *ahimsa*. When I first became an adorer of Truth, the idea of *ahimsa* had not arisen in me. At that time I killed insects and even believed that it was right to do so. But afterwards I began gradually to feel that they were not created for man's destruction. A man who practices non-violence can never be afraid of anything that befalls him. A series of articles by me on this subject has now begun (in 'Navajivan')¹ Some persons came to me when I was first going to bed and discussed the question. You (Pandit Sukhlalji) too may read the whole series and then discuss the subject with me.

"I do not claim to be perfect, but I claim to know non-violence perfectly. It is like the claim of the child who says he knows the figures upto a hundred or recites all the 18 chapters of the Gita. Nobody can attain the ideal perfectly. In the same way I too have not achieved perfection. I am lax in my implementation of the ideal, but not intentionally. And there is a constant effort to become perfect. The hand of a man seven feet tall cannot reach to a height that the hand of a man of 10 feet does. But as far as my definition (of non-violence) is concerned, it is perfect.

Q: "Do you, Sir, do your national work from the standpoint of an individual believing in non-violence?"

A: "No. I separate my personal view of non-violence from my national activity. Otherwise, how could my alliance with the Ali Brothers stand? They do not accept non-violence as their *dharma*. They would, on the contrary, say that it is their *dharma* to beat a man who beats them. But both the Brothers accept non-violence as a matter of policy—and that also only to the extent that they may win Swaraj thereby. Their thinking does not embrace non-violence towards men. They accept non-violence simply as a wise policy. If they feel they can win Swaraj by violent means, they are not the men to be afraid of saying so.



"Hence, I do not regard my personal view on non-violence as indispensable for the life of society. For it, the non-violence which the Brothers observe can do. I would, indeed, wish that the whole world accepted my view on *ahimsa*. If it does, let alone national rule, Swaraj, we can gain universal *raj*. But I don't believe that that large number will become non-violent all at once. I am a believer in the law of '*karma*' (—A man's actions in his past births colour his thinking, action etc. and bear fruit in this). How then is it possible for the meritorious deeds of each and every one to ripen at one and the same time? But the common view of non-violence (i.e. as a good policy) may be (according to *karma*) the outcome of the average of the good deeds of all. My own view of non-violence is different from the common. A difference in implementation is bound to continue as a result of this difference in my view and the common view."

Q: "Would you, Sir, save the most ferocious beast at the cost of your life?"

A: "That is indeed my ideal—my hope. I may cherish it all the 24 hours of the day. But I must say I feel afraid of a dangerous creature—for instance of a hissing cobra. But in my mind I would (even then) feel, 'I should rather like to embrace the cobra'. The other day I saw a deadly serpent. Two persons had caught and left it. I liked the fact that it was caught. And they carried it away and left it at a lonely spot. It is a matter of shame for me that I felt afraid, but I cherish the feeling that I should not, though the fact stands that I do. All the same I cannot say what I shall do when a particular situation faces me. With regard to my wife, for instance, I might have resolved on one thing in the morning, and my attitude would have changed in the evening. There are many similar occasions but I need not dilate upon them. You may dot the 'is' and cross the 'ts'. There have been occasions when I have put my life in danger. There is compassion in me to that extent.

"The answer to the third question is included in the first. Were I the single dweller in the Ashram, the Ashram life would have been different. People would have seen only leaves over my head. They would not have seen a single brick, but as things stand, I have made a regular village settle in the Ashram. I cannot make it observe all the *dharmas* to the extent of my liking. So I cannot observe my individual *dharma* as I conceive it, nor can I make anybody else observe it. Till that state is not achieved, I must keep patience and wait. In the Ashram also



the community life and its goal are the same (*ahimsa*). But my individual thinking (on *ahimsa*) is different.

"A sacred discussion took place the other day at a meeting of the Managing Committee². We were formulating the aims and objects of the Ashram. The aims and objects which all inmates were to cherish are similar to what has been given in my answer to the first question. (—The objects of the Ashram resembled the average quantum of non-violence etc. to be observed by all, while individually Gandhiji cherished their higher forms.) But if all aims and objects of the Ashram were framed according to my judgement, all the inmates would have been compelled to leave the Ashram. So we fixed those aims and objects which the average inmate could cherish. But that itself created a difference between me and the Ashram. But I accepted my own ideal as worthy of pursuit by only myself.

"The same is the case with the national policy and individual *dharma*.

"Thus *Dharma* is a difficult and complex thing. And yet it is easy also from another viewpoint. The faithful may believe that there does exist some Power. Call it God, or give it any other name, but recognize It and be firmly set in Its recognition. Our heart and mind must be fixed upon one thing only—truth and *ahimsa*. If we base our earthly life upon that foundation it will be saved from disintegration.

"If we want to conquer the enemy by means of *nirvair* (freedom from hate, i.e. love), we have to go deep into these questions. Then again there is no doubt that for society, *dharma* differs with different circumstances—and even for an individual it is so. Hence arises the fault of inconsistency between a man's past action and the present. But if anybody looks closely into the whole running chain of the man's career and thus perceives its subtle links, he would see no inconsistency in his apparently changed actions. Today perhaps I would ask somebody to kill a snake. But once I did not allow a snake that had crept on my body to be killed. And then once a snake had crept into the Ashram cow-shed and coiled itself at such a place as made it impossible to bring it out alive. I would sleep at ease if it did not come out, but others were worried. So Maganlal (Gandhiji's nephew) got it killed. That was not an inconsistent behaviour on my part. Or was it? You might say I saved my life at the cost of my principle of *ahimsa*. But in reality, there was no inconsistency, as I could have risked my life, but it was impossible to catch it and bring it out and it was my *dharma* to save the cows. However, let me say, that my nephew's killing the snake was as good or bad as my killing it.



"There is definitely a consistent chain running throughout this (my) life. All its actions are in pursuance of those principles I have stated.

"But for the nation, the behaviour pattern is different. I have talked of punishing a thief and keeping a small army for the protection of the country. But according to my concept of *ahimsa*, it is the country's *dharma* to see that it does not have to fight with any other country. Because the world wants peace today and India is fitter than other countries to carry out this policy of peacefulness. I would have given a different advice to Afghanistan. Advices vary with the parties to which they are given. If we want to implant in our hearts the principle of universal love which is the natural outcome of non-violence, we must believe that there is sin in us also, so long as a worst sinner exists in the world. The reason is that 'no man is an island.' All creatures are interlinked. And if one link of a chain is weak, the whole chain is weak. That is the Gita-Dharma. How can you implement it, if you want to? The Gita says, so long as a soul encases itself in a body, it cannot help doing action of one kind or another. Before a soul goes beyond the confinement of a body, it has to free itself from the grip of the '*gunas*'.³ The body cannot function without the existence of the 3 *gunas* in it, hence a man who wants to gain liberation releases himself from the clutches of the 3 *gunas* to the extent that his contact with and dependence upon them decreases just as in science 'nature abhors vacuum'.

"A (geometrical) straight line is the ideal. The thinner a straight line is in breadth, the nearer it is to its strict definition. All our acts and things must manifest our ideal (as a straight line drawn on paper should show in the best way the ideal of no breadth). All things are concrete formations and when concretised they become narrowed and recede from the ideal to that extent. Even this discussion that is taking place among all of us is based on the ideal—the chain of truth and non-violence. Don't imagine that I am itching to write and speak and these articles and speeches are present experiences. It pains me when I write. But as long as I have not grown perfect, these articles may continue.⁴ I cannot escape from the world even if I wanted to. The sayings of the Bible are distorted. The principles of Mahavir (of Jainism) are twisted. In all the expositions of the Gita in Ahmedabad I see nothing but misinterpretations. Who am I when such giant souls are misconstrued? We must, therefore, bear things with patience.

"We shall have to put up with many things that may be going contrary to our ideals. Even living in a forest cannot shut you off from the world and make you



detached. Science also says that a man in the clouds is subject to the same influences as we on the earth are. Wherever we go, God's power always runs after us.

"Hence, the *ahimsa* of national life with strict limitations. And hence, my statement that I would not remain in India when it does not take Swaraj by non-violent means. I said I would go to the Himalayas, but my Himalayas may also mean secluded life in the Ashram. My Ramchandra is different. My Krishna is not the wearer of a yellow silken *dhoti*. My Himalayas may be in my mind, or in the Ashram, or in the Himalayas themselves. For instance, take me as living in the Himalayas with regard to the Hindu-Muslim agitation. If I come out, may I not lose my temper against the Hindu or the Muslim? What would happen then? At present I am helpless. I have got a sovereign remedy for communal quarrels, but nobody would accept it today. But if I realize that I could not remain aloof from the quarrels by living in the Ashram or in the Himalayas, there is for me a way out to enable me to practise my principles and that is going on a fast or living in the quarters of the Bhangis (the lowest even among the untouchables).

"It is not true that in my concept of Swaraj nobody would be killing dogs, tigers, or leopards. But, certainly, we will not think of assuring our protection by having a big navy or will not arm ourselves more powerfully than Afghanistan. We shall not build up a navy out of fear from Japan. If you read the correspondence between me and Europe and America, you would be struck dumb with surprise. They (the correspondents) are only a few. They may even be mad. But it is mad men that have brought about reforms in this world.

"I want you to join the army of truth and non-violence. That is my one goal, my one love. Hence, whether I read Ramayana or Bible's New Testament to others, I would emphasize this same theme. And I would push into it the spinning-wheel too, somewhere in my elucidation".

1. M.D. has translated these articles into English for the readers of 'Young India', (at Gandhiji's instance) and have been reproduced in this book.

2. The Ashram was handed over to a Managing Committee on 24-7-1926.

3. All life and matter possess 3 gunas (qualities)—*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* or equilibrium, activity and inertia.

4. Gandhiji thinks that a perfect man can influence the world by his thought power alone.



17-10-1926

Is this Humanity?

II

(Gandhiji's second article in *Navajivan* of the above date translated into English by M. D. in Young India of 28-10-1926).

@ When I wrote the article on this subject, I knew that I was adding one more to my already heavy burden of troubles. But it could not be helped.

Angry letters are now pouring in. At an hour when after a hard day's work I was about to retire to bed three friends invaded me, infringed the religion of *ahimsa* in the name of humanity, and engaged me in a discussion on it. They had come in the name of humanity. How could I refuse to see them? So I met them. One of them, I saw, betrayed anger, bitterness, and arrogance. He did not seem to me to have come with a view to getting his doubts solved. He had come rather to correct me. Everyone has a right to do so, but whoever undertakes such a mission must know my position. This friend had taken no trouble to understand my position. But he was not to blame for it. This impatience which is but a symptom of violence is to be found everywhere. The violence in this case was painful to me, as it was betrayed by an advocate of non-violence.

He claimed to be a Jain. I have made a fair study of Jainism. This visitor's *ahimsa* was a distortion of the reality, as I have known it in Jainism. But the Jains have no monopoly of *ahimsa*. It is not the exclusive peculiarity of any religion. Every religion is based on *ahimsa*, its application is different in different religions.

I do not think that the Jains of today practise *ahimsa* in any better way than others. I can say this because of my acquaintance with *Jains* which is so old that many take me to be a *Jain*. Mahavir was an incarnation of compassion, of *ahimsa*. How I wish his votaries were votaries also of his *ahimsa*!

Protection of little creatures is, indeed, an essential part of *ahimsa*, but it does not exhaust itself with it. Besides, protection may not always mean mere refraining from killing. Torture or participation, direct or indirect, in the unnecessary multiplication of those that must die, is *himsa*.

The multiplication of dogs is unnecessary. A roving dog without an owner is a danger to society and a swarm of them is a menace to its very existence.



If we want to keep dogs in towns or villages in a decent manner, no dog should be suffered to wander. There should be no stray dogs even as we have no stray cattle. Humanitarian societies should find a religious solution of such questions.

But can we take individual charge of these roving dogs? And if we cannot, can we have a '*panjrapole*' for them? If both these things are impossible, there seems to me to be no alternative except to kill them.

Connivance or putting up with the *status quo* is no *ahimsa*, there is no thought or discrimination in it. Dogs will be killed whenever they are a menace to society. I regard this as unavoidable in the life of a householder. To wait until they get rabid is not to be merciful to them. We can imagine what the dogs would wish if a meeting could be called of them, from what we would wish under the same circumstances. We will not choose to live anyhow. That many of us do so is no credit to us. A meeting of wise men will never resolve that men may treat one another as they treat rabid or stray dogs. What shall we expect of them, if there were some beings lording it over us, as we do over our dogs? Would we not rather prefer to be killed than to be treated as dogs? We offend against dogs as a class by suffering them to stray and live on crumbs or leavings from our plates that we throw at them, and we injure our neighbours also by doing so.

I admit that there is the duty of suffering dogs to live even at the cost of one's life. But that religion is not for the householder who desires to live, who procreates, who would protect society. The householder can but practise the middle path of taking care of a few dogs.

Our domestics of today are the wild animals of yesterday. The buffalo is a domestic only in India. It is a sin to domesticate wild animals inasmuch as man does so for his selfish purposes. That he has domesticated the cow and the buffalo is not out of mercy for them, it is for his own use. He, therefore does not allow a cow or a buffalo to stray. The same duty is incumbent regarding dogs. I am, therefore, strongly of opinion that if we would practise the religion of humanity, we should have a law making it obligatory on those who would have dogs to keep them under guard, and not allow them to stray, and making all the stray dogs liable to be destroyed after a certain date.

If the Mahajan has really any mercy for the dogs, it should take possession of all the stray dogs and distribute them to those who want to keep them. It seems to me to be impossible to protect dogs as we can protect the cow.



But there is a regular science of dog—keeping which the people in the West have formulated and perfected. We should learn it from them and devise measures for the solution of our own problem. The work cannot be done without patience, wisdom and perseverance.

So much about dogs. But with *ahimsa* in its comprehensive aspect I propose to deal on another occasion.



23-10-1926

(Translated from M.D.'s manuscript diary. The date given above is the inference of the editor—Translator.)

Explaining the sentences "Protection may not always mean refraining from killing. Torture or participation, direct or indirect, in the unnecessary multiplication of those that must die," (in the above article) Gandhiji said:

"What does 'unnecessary multiplication' mean? What we do at present is to let dogs exist in a town or a village. That means we partly tame them and partly let them loose. The unnecessary multiplication of such dogs is dangerous. 'What then', some one may question, 'about the millions of men in India who carry on a miserable meaningless existence?' 'Well,' I would say, 'participation, direct or indirect, in their multiplication also is sin. You can multiply such instances. Where adultery is in vogue, it is a heinous sin to support it directly or indirectly. This idea seems to be novel. I once visited an Anathashram (orphanage), where I had a talk with its manager. About the Foundling Box there, I told him: "I do not like this idea. The innocent orphans that live here must be saved from the company of these babies." In having that Foundling Box, there is an unnecessary multiplication of prostitution. Either I would not donate any money to such an institution or would not let a Foundling Box be kept there.

"When we believe that the human species is superior to animals and when we want it to thrive without obstruction, shall we do so by killing other creatures? Certainly not. But this point has not much to do with the question of roving dogs. I have not suggested the destruction of dogs with a view to make human life safe from its enemies. I gave an immediate reply to Seth , because I had already pondered deeply over the question. Where there was no fear of transgression of *dharma*, we acted at once. But where we have deduced a principle from that *dharma*, we may pause a little before implementing it, specially when our action goes against the prevailing mode. I did feel that the dogs had got to be destroyed, but not in order to make human life free from thorns. Mankind, it is certain, is doomed if it makes it its principle to destroy other creatures to save its own species from danger. The beast will use its teeth and paws to secure its protection from another beast's attack. But control of the senses (of perception and action) is the *dharma* and ideal which mankind should follow. I suggested the destruction of dogs as a temporary measure that we have got to adopt in this our present stage of transition, so long as we have not reached a very high stage in the control of the senses.¹



"Sometimes it becomes one's duty to kill. For instance, suppose an enemy has cut only a half of my son's throat. It is my duty then to completely cut it off, for I must release him from his unbearable agony. Twenty years ago we had cats and dogs with us in Phoenix. A cat's skull became septic and white worms infested it. We applied many remedies, but to no effect. In a tone of despair and irritation, I was then asked what was to be done with the cat. We drowned it. There is a third example of deliberate killing. History shows that Rajputs followed the custom of *johar*. They would light a huge pyre and burn their wives to save their chastity. But there is mercy, not violence, in that act. That is violence which springs out of anger and desire to do evil to the creature killed. But in this action there is neither anger, nor desire to do evil, nor wanton destruction for its own sake, nor the murder of an enemy. Of course, blood is spilled, but we (Hindus) are never going to learn *ahimsa* in its true spirit, so long as we do not cease to be afraid of the sight of spilt-blood. There was one Baba Ramachandra who was a queer sample of man. He said "Englishmen must not be killed, but boiling water must be poured into their throat." Is that *ahimsa*?

In answer to the question: "Is it true that man wants to go on living, no matter how very painful it be to do so?"

Gandhiji said: "My experience is quite the contrary. The man who tamely submits to an intolerable situation is crazy. 'Why did they not die rather than crawl like insects through the Crawling Lane'² was the universal cry of India. And we (Hindus) have imagined that dogs are sensible beings capable of true knowledge. I myself once advised people in South Africa—and my advice was acclaimed with loud cheer that it was better for the Indians there to be blown up by guns or to leave that country altogether, than to go on living under the humiliating treatment meted out to them. And there were lustful men, adulterers and murderers among those who accepted my advice and marched out of Transvaal. There were women also but, unlike you college girls here, they had not bedecked themselves in the latest fashion. They were simple illiterate women. Those people preferred death to dishonour. Harbat Singh lost his life.³ He insisted on his accompanying us in the march and refused to go back home. There are also men who say, 'Kill me, if I go mad.' I at least am one of them. If I grow so mad as to rob the honour of a woman, do kill me. Then there is a vow called the *sanlekhana* vow among the Jains themselves. The man who takes it binds himself down to remain without food and water for a specified number of days. If a man takes that vow, but grows mad with thirst afterwards and cries for water, it is good to let



him die of thirst. There can be no talk of giving up a vow after once taking it in the case of a man of 'knowledge.

"Thinking over the problem of stray dogs, an entirely novel idea has struck me. But in propounding that new idea, I have not given up my principle of *ahimsa*. The new principle logically follows like a corollary, the old one of *ahimsa*. If it is possible, we all may domesticate dogs. But that is hardly possible. When, consequently, the dogs have grown into a terrible hardship, we shall have to kill them as an unavoidable step. When I burn *neem* leaves in my house and kill mosquitoes by its smoke, does it mean that I *wish* that mosquitoes may go on breeding and I go on destroying them? No. I do it as an unavoidable *himsa*.

"My solution of this question has nothing to do with what other nations would do in such cases. It would be a different matter, if I myself can save mosquitoes. If Whitemen come, destroy my jungles and thus, freeing a vast plain from mosquitoes, ask me to live there, am I a true *Vaishnava* (follower of Vishnu believes in non-violence), if I go there to stay? No. But we connive at others committing violence for our sake, because we are in a state of ignorance of the right principle of *ahimsa*. Hence, we have to commit this violence, just as we eat vegetables and green leaves as an indispensable necessity. So the principal element that makes for non-violence is mercy, pity, compassion.

"Somebody may object, 'Should not a man cease to be so fond of his own life as to kill other creatures to preserve his own?' This is my answer: 'In order to keep alive the body of one creature, we should not allow the destruction of another. If the Seth does not fear death, if I do not fear death, you will find that the dogs' lives will be saved. I do not do any such thing in my Ashram and go on putting off the question. But how long shall I go on beating them off with heavy sticks? If a surgeon's hand shakes during an operation, what would be the plight of the patient? So let us not entrust a cowardly doctor with the treatment of the dogs. There are some men in Ahmedabad who are bold and strong. I want to see dogs in Ahmedabad also of the same stuff."

Continuing the discourse on the New Testament Gandhiji said:

"The sentence 'The quality of mercy is not strained' is an adoption of this verse No. 7. He who is merciful to others, can claim mercy for himself. "Is '*ahimsa* really *paramo dharma*' (the highest *dharma*) or is it only a policy?", the question arises, 'Does it really supersede and cover up within itself all other *dharmas*? The word '*ahimsa*' (a – not, *himsa* – violence) was lighted upon, when *Swami* (Mahavir Swami, the last and



the latest 'Arhant' i.e. a perfected soul) saw *himsa* all round, when he saw जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् (Life sustains itself upon some other life). By coining the word '*Ahimsa*', he showed us the highest kind of spiritual practice. The Vedas discovered the word '*Neti*' (– not this, not whatever man can imagine or speak about) and that is Truth. And the Vedas have shown the *Path* to attain it, namely, *ahimsa*. That *rishi* (Mahavir?) wanted to discover the quality of '*atman*' (– Soul). Hence, his choice fell upon a word of a negative concept—*ahimsa*.

"The eighth verse refers to 'the pure of heart'. That means that such a man is saturated with the spirit of '*sat*' (truth or existence). The man who is pure of heart is bound to be truthful. Because Truth is God. What has been put in the *Vedas* in an implicit form has been put here in an explicit form. To the *man* who is kind and compassionate, truth is as clear as dayligh (literally, like the fruit of the *Emblic Myrobalan* in the palm of a man).

"There is nothing much to say about the nineth verse. Those who incite others to a quarrel cannot be happy. If any of you think of being a lawyer, do so with a view to bring about or keep peace.

"In the eleventh verse emphasis is to be laid on these two 'falsely and for my sake'. That man is sure to feel happy, who is unjustly censured and whom people will spit upon, though he lives and acts in a spirit of dedication to the Lord."

1. M. D's long-hand manuscript notes are necessarily scrappy, and Gandhiji often asks his hearers 'to dot the 'is' and cross the 'ts', i.e. is very brief and leaves things to the imagination of the hearer. For both these reasons I am not sure, if I have interpreted Gandhiji correctly—Translator.

2. There was a specific lane—it came later on to be nicknamed Crawling Lane in Amritsar which people were required to crawl through, and not walk through, under a Martial Law Order in the Punjab in 1919.

3. An aged Satyagrahi in the South African Struggle.



30-10-1926

Explaining V—12, Gandhiji said: "Observers of rites and rules' does not mean those who do so with a glum face. Pharisees also observed the rules, but unwillingly—like a burden imposed upon them. Jesus says that the injunctions must be kept not reluctantly, but very cheerfully. One must embrace poverty in fact and in spirit and, in order to cleanse the heart accept cheerfully as much suffering as falls to his lot in the wake of poverty. And why suffer so much? Because 'your reward is great in heaven'. This 'heaven'—this kingdom of heaven—is in the heart. The reward—the salary-of a servant is his service itself. When a servant demands payment for his service, he ceases to be a servant and becomes a menial. A servant of the country may expect anything else, but not money. But he must not expect even thanks. Chalmers has said: 'Duty will be merit, when debt becomes a donation.' With empty hands we are born and with empty hands we have to go. We are born in order that we may repay our debt. Debt and duty are one and the same. In this age, even that man who pays his debt is adored as a hero. But the man who pays off his debt confers no obligation upon anybody. We are indebted to *Bharatvarsha*. Whom then are we obliging by our service of our country? What does it matter if people even kill us? For, so 'did they persecute the prophets'. And does it matter at all, if in the same way people bitterly condemn you and incite others against you? I had a friend — an Englishman. When he decided to help me, he said: "I am going to help you because you are a few (in South Africa) and we are many." The man, with a majority on his side, is a bloated egotist. When everybody joins in acclaiming you, take it that there is something fishy in it. At his very first meeting, therefore, that Englishman gave me a warning: 'You will be oppressed. If you point out the disease that has affected the modern times, they will shake their heads in disapproval. But the more you are persecuted, the deeper you may go into your heart and rejoice at your suffering.'

V—13:

"You are the salt of the earth. This world can keep up its tastefulness through your life. We get the purest air from the sea. If it gives up the salt it has, the world would become insipid. You are the sea that produces life-giving air to the world. You must never lose your savour."



V—14, 15

"These sentences. 'You are the light of the earth etc.', have been abused also by men who belong to this creed (Christianity). When men, going out to serve others, proclaim themselves as the light of the earth, would not these 'servants' grow puffed up with vanity? But these sentences do not exhort servants to be proud and insolent. There has already been the commandment to be humble—to be poor in spirit. Streams of pity must always be flowing from the heart of the servant. But from fear of getting proud, you must not run away from the field of service. Do not carry a false sense of humility about you and never shrink from your duty of service. You must come forward and boldly declare, 'Here we are! Ready to mount the scaffold, if you wish it so.' Because it is the characteristic of the candle to consume itself and give light to others. Never therefore, avoid serving people as best as you can."

V—16

"You are going to the people as witnesses (of God's truth). People will, therefore, be believers in God from your testimony. And at the sight of your work and life, they will not pat you on the back, but bless God. You are not the light in fact, but the outer case of the Light. If you hide the Light that is within you, and do not let it shed its lustre around, you are faithless to Him—the Light within. Behave, therefore, in such a way as will make people praise God."

V—17

"Don't think that some altogether new man has descended upon the earth and that I (Jesus) have come to make a new world and new laws. I have come but to fulfil the Law that sustains the world or to complement the limitations in it made by the Prophets."

V—18

"That is the inevitable law of '*karma*'. Even God has not reserved for Himself the power to change His laws. The power of God is so difficult to perceive, that we can see it only from His laws. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. But that too He is



within the limit of His Law, Let the Lords on the earth—mighty potentates—claim to be under the subjection of no law. God definitely is subject to that law."

V—19

"Therefore, whosoever transgresses the laws made by God or instigates others and makes them break them, cannot keep the first rank (He will be called 'the last')."

V—20 to 22

"Your righteousness—purity—has got to excel that of the Pharisees. If you don't become purer, there is no hope for the doors of heaven to open for you. It is possible for them (the Pharisees and others) to go to heaven, for they do not possess much wealth. But as you did not return with more money than were given you, you will be regarded as fools.

"Non-violence demands that you must not prod a bullock either with a sharp nail, or even with its blunt end. There are the words 'without a cause'¹ (in V-22), but they are not to be taken as a modifying condition. Christ has used even more bitter words—than '*Raca*', but perhaps it will be said that he had a reason for it. Let nobody abuse this text (and justify anger on any account). Can we, for instance, say that General Dyer² had reason for what he did and said?"

V—23 to 24

"If, when you are carrying even a little flower to a temple you remember that your brother does not speak with you because of a quarrel with you, your going to the temple without conciliating him will be regarded as hypocrisy. You must, first, beg your brother's pardon and only then your little gift will be accepted by God. If you want to observe the rules of '*yama* etc.'³, there is but this Law for you."

V—25, 26.

"You must come to terms with your enemy at once. What you of all people must do is to settle your dispute, with him by a direct approach. That is, let alone a law court, you are not to resort to even arbitration. The laws shown here are meant for leading



a man to perfection. Even though imperfect men are asked to do this thing in this imperfect world, you will find that in 95 cases out of 100, you need not resort to law or arbitration. You are not to owe anything—money or grudge—to anybody. At the time of his death, the prophet (Mohammed) suddenly remembered that he was owing a few pennies to somebody. After giving the instruction that the debt was to be paid off, the Prophet breathed his last.

'Without cause' (in V—22) jarred in my mind. I looked into the revised edition—Moft's translation. Weymouth does not give the words at all, and Moft gives them only in brackets. These words are inconsistent with the *ahimsa* of Jesus."

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1. The sentence is: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment".
 2. Reference to General Dyer's massacre of unarmed men, women and children at Jallian-wala Bag in 1919, and his proud justification of the act.
 3. The 'yamas' and the 'niyamas' are: Truth, *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya*, non-possession, non-stealing, contentment, purity and cleanliness, austerity, study, and surrender to God—in all 10.



4-11-1926

Is This Humanity

III

(M. D's translation of Gandhiji's article)

@Whilst I admit the possibility of having made a mistake in giving the opinion that the destruction by Mr. Ambalal's order of those sixty dogs was unavoidable, I do not regret having expressed that opinion. The result so far is all to the good. We shall perhaps now understand our duty to such animals. Much wrong has been done partly out of ignorance, partly from hypocrisy and partly for fear of public opinion. All that should now cease.

But if the good is to be maintained, a clear understanding is necessary between the readers and myself. I have received quite a pile of letters on this subject, some friendly, some sharp, and some bitter. They do not seem to have understood my attitude on the destruction of dogs by Mr. Ambalal. I have often had the misfortune to be misunderstood. In South Africa my life was in peril over an action which was quite consistent with my avowed principles but which, as was proved later, was rashly regarded as contrary to them. The so-called 'Himalayan blunder' of Bardoli¹ is a recent memory. Bombay Government very kindly imprisoned me at Yeravada and saved me the trouble of much writing by way of explaining and clearing my position. The Bardoli decision, I still hold, was not wrong. It was, on the contrary, an act of purest *ahimsa* and of invaluable service to the country. I feel just as clear about my opinion regarding the present question. I hold that the opinion is perfectly in accord with my conception of *ahimsa*.

The critics, whether friendly or hostile should bear with me. Some of the hostile critics have transgressed the limits of decorum. They have made no attempt to understand my position. It seems they cannot, for a moment, tolerate my opinion. Now they must be one of two things. They are either my teachers or they regard me as one. In the latter case they should be courteous and patient and should have faith in me and ponder over what I write. In the former case, they should be indulgent to me and try to reason with me as lovingly and patiently as they can. I teach the children under my care not by being angry with them, but I teach them, if at all, by loving them, by allowing for their ignorance and by playing with them. I expect the same love, the same consideration and the same sportsmanlike spirit from my angry teachers. I have



given my opinion with regard to the dogs with the best of motives and as a matter of duty. If I am mistaken, let the critics, who would teach me, reason with me patiently and logically. Angry and irrelevant argument will not convince me.

A gentleman called on me the other evening at a late hour. He knew that my time was completely occupied. He engaged me in a discussion, used hard and bitter language, and poured vials of wrath on me. I answered his questions in good humour and politely. He published the interview in a leaflet which he is selling. It is before me. It has crossed the limits of truth, obviously of decorum. He had neither obtained my permission to publish the interview nor showed it before publication. Does he seek to teach me in this manner? He who trifles with truth cuts at the root of *ahimsa*. He who is angry is guilty of *himsa*. How can such a man teach me *ahimsa*?

Even so the hostile critics are doing me a service. They teach me to examine myself. They afford me an opportunity to see if I am free from the reaction of anger. And when I go to the root of their anger, I find nothing but love. They have attributed me *ahimsa* as they understand it. Now they find me acting in a contrary manner and are angry with me. They once regarded me as a *mahatma* (a high soul), they were glad that my influence on the people was according to their liking. Now I am an *alpatma* (a little soul) in their opinion, my influence on the people they now regard as unwholesome and they are pained by the discovery; and as they cannot control themselves, they turn the feeling of pain into one of anger.

I do not mind this outburst of anger, as I appreciate the motive behind it. I must try to reason with them patiently, and if they would help me in my attempt, I request them to calm their anger. I am a votary of truth and a seeker after it. If I am convinced that I am mistaken, I shall admit my mistake (as I always love to do), and shall promptly mend it. It is the word of the Scriptures that the mistakes of a votary of truth never harm anybody. That is the glorious secret of truth.

Just a word to friendly critics. I have preserved your letters. I usually reply to my correspondents individually. But the number of letters I have received this time and have been still getting is so large and they are so inordinately long that I cannot possibly reply to them individually. I cannot, I fear, make time even to acknowledge them. Some of the correspondents ask me to publish their letters in Navajivan. I hope they will not press the request. I shall try to answer all the arguments that are relevant as well as I can and hope that will satisfy them.



I bespeak the indulgence of the reader for this necessary preface. I shall now take up some of the letters before me. A friend says:

"You ask us not to feed stray dogs. But we do not invite them. They simply come. How can they be turned back? It will be time enough when there is a plethora of them. But is there any doubt that feeding dogs cultivates the impulse of compassion and turning them away hardens our hearts? We are all sinners. Why should we not practise what little kindness we can?"

It is from this false feeling of compassion that we encourage *himsa* in the name of *ahimsa*. But as ignorance is no excuse before man-made law, even so is it no excuse before the divine Law.

But let us analyse the argument. We cast a morsel at the beggar come to our door and feel that we have earned some merit, but we really thereby add to the number of beggars, aggravate the evil of beggary, encourage idleness and consequently promote irreligion. This does not mean that we should starve the really deserving beggars. It is the duty of society to support the blind and the infirm, but every one may not take the task upon himself. The head of the society, i.e. the Mahajan or the State, where it is well organized, should undertake the task and the philanthropically inclined should subscribe funds to such an institution. If the Mahajan is pure-minded and wise, it will carefully investigate the condition of beggars and protect the deserving ones. When this does not happen, i.e. when relief is indiscriminate, scoundrels disguised as beggars get the benefit of it and the poverty of the land increases.

If it is a sin on the part of an individual to undertake beggars, it is no less a sin for him to feed stray dogs. It is a false sense of compassion. It is an insult to the starving dog to throw a crumb at him. Roving dogs do not indicate the civilization or compassion of society, they betray, on the contrary, the ignorance and lethargy of its members. The lower animals are our brethren. I include among them the lion and the tiger. We do not know how to live with these carnivorous beasts and poisonous reptiles because of our ignorance. When man knows himself better, he will learn to befriend even these. Today he does not know how to befriend a man of a different religion or from a foreign country.

The dog is a faithful companion. There are numerous instances of the faithfulness of dogs and horses. But that means that we should keep them and treat them with respect, as we do our companions, and not allow them to roam about. By



aggravating the evil of stray dogs we shall not be acquitting ourselves of our duty to them. But if we regard the existence of stray dogs as a shame to us, and therefore refuse to feed them, we shall be doing the dogs as a class a real service and make them happy.

What then can a human man do for stray dogs? He should set apart a portion of his income and send it on to a society for the protection of these animals, if there be one. If such society is impossible—and I know it is very difficult even if it is not impossible—he should try to own one or more dogs. If he cannot do so, he should give up worrying about the question of dogs and direct his humanity towards the service of other animals.

'But you are asking us to destroy them', is the question angrily or lovingly asked by others. Now, I have not suggested the extirpation of dogs as an absolute duty. I have suggested the killing of some dogs as a 'duty in distress' and under special circumstances. When the State does not care for stray dogs, nor does the Mahajan, and when one is not prepared to take care of them oneself, then, and if one regards them as a danger to society, he should kill them and relieve them of a lingering death. This is a bitter dose, I agree. But it is my innermost conviction that true love and compassion consist in taking it.

The dogs in India are today in as bad a plight as the decrepit animals and men in the land. It is my firm conviction that this sorry plight is due to our misconception of *ahimsa*. Practice of *ahimsa* cannot have as its result impotence, impoverishment, and famine. If this is a sacred land we should not see impoverishment stalking it. From this state of things some rash and impatient souls have drawn the conclusion that *ahimsa* is irreligion. But I know that it is not *ahimsa* that is wrong, it is its votaries that are wrong.

Ahimsa is the religion of a Kshatriya. Buddha was a Kshatriya, Rama and Krishna were Kshatriyas and all of them were votaries of *ahimsa*. We want to propagate *ahimsa* in their name. But today *ahimsa* has become the monopoly of timid Vaishnavas and that is why it has been besmirched. *Ahimsa* is the extreme limit of forgiveness. But forgiveness is the quality of the brave. *Ahimsa* is impossible without fearlessness.

Cows we cannot protect, dogs we kick about and belabor with sticks, their ribs are seen sticking out, and yet we are not ashamed of ourselves and raise a hue and cry when a stray dog is killed. Which of the two is better—that five thousand dogs should wander about in semi-starvation, living on dirt and excreta and drag on a miserable



existence, or that fifty should die and keep the rest in a decent condition? It is admittedly sinful always to be spurning and kicking the dogs. But it is possible that the man who kills the dogs that he cannot bear to see tortured thus, may be doing a meritorious act. Merely taking life is not always *himsa*, one may even say that there is sometimes more *himsa*, in not taking life. We must examine the position in another article.

IV

Taking life may be a duty. Let us consider this position. We do destroy as much life as we think is necessary for sustaining the body. Thus for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitoes and the like by the use of disinfectants etc. and we do not think we are guilty of irreligion in doing so.

This is as regards one's own self. But for the sake of others, i.e, for the benefit of the species, we kill carnivorous beasts. When lions and tigers pester their villages, the villagers regard it a duty to kill them or have them killed.

Even man-slaughter¹ may be necessary in certain cases. Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about with a sword in hand, and killing any one that comes his way; and no one dares to capture him alive. Any one who despatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded a benevolent man.

From the point of view of *ahimsa* it is the plain duty of every one to kill such a man. There is, indeed, one exception, if it can be so called. The *yogi* who can subdue the fury of this dangerous man may not kill him. But we are not dealing here with beings who have almost reached perfection, we are considering the duty of the society, of the ordinary erring human beings.

There may be a difference of opinion as regards the appositeness of my illustrations. But if they are inadequate, others can be easily imagined. What they are meant to show is that refraining from taking life can in no circumstances be an absolute duty.

The fact is that *ahimsa* does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is *ahimsa*.

The physician who prescribes a bitter medicine causes you pain but does no *himsa*. If he fails to prescribe a bitter medicine when it is necessary to do so, he fails in his duty of *ahimsa*. The surgeon who, from fear of causing pain to his patient, hesitates



to amputate a rotten limb is guilty of *himsa*. He who refrains from killing a murderer who is about to kill his ward (when he cannot prevent him otherwise) earns no merit, but commits a sin, he practises no *ahimsa* but *himsa* out of a fatuous sense of *ahimsa*.

Let us now examine the root *ahimsa*. It is uttermost selflessness. Selflessness means complete freedom from a regard for one's body. When some sage observed man killing numberless creatures, big and small, out of a regard for his own body he was shocked at his ignorance. He pitied him for thus forgetting the deathless soul encased within the perishable body, and for thinking of the ephemeral physical pleasure in preference to the eternal bliss of the spirit. He therefrom deduced the duty of complete self-effacement. He saw that if man desired to realize himself i.e., the Truth, he could do so only being completely detached from the body, i.e., by making all other beings feel safe from him. That is the way of *ahimsa*.

A realization of this truth shows that the sin of *himsa* consists not in merely taking life, but in taking life for the sake of one's perishable body. All destruction, therefore, involved in the process of eating, drinking etc., is selfish and therefore, *himsa*. But man regards it to be unavoidable and puts up with it. But the destruction of bodies of tortured creatures being for their own peace cannot be regarded as *himsa*, or the unavoidable destruction caused for the purpose of protecting one's wards cannot be regarded as *himsa*.

This line of reasoning is liable to be most mischievously used. But that is not because the reasoning is faulty, but because of the inherent frailty of man to catch at whatever pretexts he can get to deceive himself to satisfy his selfishness or egoism. But that danger may not excuse one from defining the true nature of *ahimsa*. Thus we arrive at the following result from the foregoing:

- (1) It is impossible to sustain one's body without the destruction of other bodies to some extent.
- (2) All have to destroy some life
 - (a) for sustaining their own bodies,
 - (b) for protecting those under their care; or
 - (c) sometimes for the sake of those whose life is taken.
- (3) (a) and (b) in (2) mean *himsa* to a greater or less extent. (c) means no *himsa* and is, therefore, *ahimsa*. *Himsa* in (a) and (b) is unavoidable.



(4) A progressive *ahimsaist* will, therefore, commit the *himsa* contained in (a) and (b) as little as possible, only when it is unavoidable, and after full and mature deliberation and having exhausted all remedies to avoid it.

The destruction of dogs that I have suggested comes under (4) and can, therefore, be resorted to only when it is unavoidable, when there is no other remedy and after mature deliberation. But I have not the slightest doubt that refraining from that destruction when it is unavoidable is worse than destruction. And, therefore, although there can be no absolute duty to kill dogs etc., it becomes a necessary duty for certain people at certain times and in certain circumstances.

I shall now try to take up one by one some of the questions that have been asked to me. Some correspondents demand personal replies, and in case I fail to do so threaten to publish their views. It is impossible for me to reach every individual correspondent by a personal reply. Those that are necessary I shall deal with here. I have no right, nor desire, to stop people from carrying on the controversy in other papers. I may remind the correspondents, however, that threats and impatience have no place in a sober religious discussion.

A correspondent asks:

"How did you hit upon the religion of destroying dogs at the old age of 57? If it had occurred to you earlier than this, why were you silent so long?"

Man proclaims a truth only when he sees it and when it is necessary, no matter even if it be in his old age. I have long recognized the duty of killing such animals within the limits laid down above, and have acted up to it on occasions. In India the villagers have long recognized the duty of destroying intruding dogs. They keep dogs who scare away intruders and kill them if they do not escape with their lives. These watch-dogs are purposely maintained with a view to protecting the village from other dogs etc., as also from thieves and robbers whom they attack fearlessly. The dogs have become a nuisance only in cities, and the best remedy is to have a law against stray dogs. That will involve the least destruction of dogs and ensure the protection of citizens.

Another correspondent asks:

"Do you expect to convince people by logical argument in a matter like that of *ahimsa*?"

The rebuke contained in this is not without some substance. But I wanted to convince no one. Being a student and practiser of *ahimsa* I have had to give expression



to my views when the occasion demanded it. I have an opinion based on experience that logic and reasoning have some place—no doubt very small—in a religious discussion.

1. See the article 'The Greatest Good of all' d. 9-12-1926



6-11-1926 (probable date)

V—27 to 30

“This sentiment is nobler than the former. If your mind sinks into mud, what avails your outward cleanliness? Such a man may be saved from the clutches of the law of man, but before God he is definitely a criminal. The world has not the measure to assess the gravity of that crime. You are not *brahmacharis*, so long as you do not wash off the corruption of the mind. The guilty eye must be plucked, so that one member of the body may perish in order to save the whole body from hell. Here the whole body has the sense of the soul. Can we obey this command to the letter? I say, if anybody plucks his eye, he is not mad in the eyes of Jesus. There certainly are such examples in history. There is a scriptural text also that supports such a step, viz., if a man does a thing he never should and if he realizes the gravity of the sin, he may commit suicide. One scripture imagines a situation in which suicide for the man is a virtue and abstinence from it a moral crime.

"But how many of us have the guts to do so? And if we simply turn away our eyes, or close them, even then we are admired.

"Young men have been always flooding me with letters to say that their thoughts and eyes never cease to wander. Some (White) sisters in South Africa used to tell me, "We, women, fear to attend your meetings." Fear, not of a physical touch—because if anybody made a pass at them, they would shoot him. And this woman used to wander fearlessly in the streets of Johannesburg. I asked her the cause of her shrinking. She said, "Many of your men (Indians) have the impertinence to stare at us." But I do not thereby mean to say that Europeans generally surpass us in character. Our young men cannot close their eyes as that is their habit. The verse means one must pluck the eye of the mind. In 'the hand must be cast off' it means the hand of the mind. But Jesus went further and said plainly that there was nothing wrong in following the commandment even to the letter. For, these limbs must be regarded as the gravest offenders."

V—31, 32.

"Is the wife included among 'women', in these verses?" asks somebody. I say "certainly". That Woman—the wife—is your fellow-pilgrim, your co-partner in the performance of your *dharma*. The man who never deviates from regarding his wife as



his sister wins the battle of life. But if he does not do that and looks upon his wife as one that is bound to satisfy his lust, he is a profligate. From sacramental marriages we have come down to contract marriages. Today we have turned a holy marriage into a contract at will. Moses had only said that women also must be given the freedom of divorce, but Jesus says that the wife must never be put away except for fornication. It is true indeed that in Europe a big tangled web has been woven round these words of Jesus and any amount of licence is taken.

"What I have written about child-widows has been misinterpreted. I have only said that a child-marriage can never be a marriage sanctioned by religion. Jesus also emphasizes the same point. He does not talk of marriages that are forced upon the marrying parties. But among us people become butcher and slaughter their daughters. Read Tagore's "The Wreck".

V—33 to 38

"Moses contented himself by saying, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself." He gave to the world only as much as the people of his times could assimilate. There is no doubt that Moses also was a great reformer. Jesus goes further. He says, "Swear not at all". He asks, "How dare you swear when the earth does not belong to you? Not even a hair of your head is yours. You are to do everything in the spirit of dedication to God."



11-11-1926

Is This Humanity?

V

@ A friend writes a long letter mentioning his difficulties and pointing out what Jainism has to say to him, a Shrawak (a Jain house-holder), in the matter. One of his questions is:

"You say that if we can neither take individual charge of roving dogs nor have a *panjrapol* for them, the only alternative is to kill them. Does that mean that every roving dog should be killed, although it may not be rabid? Don't you agree that we leave unmolested all harmful beasts, birds, and reptiles so long as they do not actually harm us? Why should the dogs be an exception? Where is the humanity of shooting innocent dogs wherever they are found roving? How can one wishing well to all living beings do this?"

The writer has misunderstood my meaning. I would not suggest the destruction of even rabid dogs for the sake of it, much less that of innocent roving dogs. Nor have I said that these latter should be killed wherever they are found. I have only suggested legislation to that effect, so that as soon as the law is made, humane people might wake up in the matter and devise measures for the better management of stray dogs. Some of these might be owned, some might be put in quarantine. The remedy, when it is taken, will be once for all. Stray dogs do not drop down from heaven. They are a sign of the idleness, indifference, and ignorance of society. When they grow into a nuisance, it is due to our ignorance and want of compassion. A stray dog is bound to take to its heels if you do not feed him. The measure that I have suggested is actuated no less by consideration of the welfare of the dogs than by that of society. It is the duty of a humanitarian to allow no living being aimlessly to roam about. In performance of that duty it may be his duty once in a way to kill some dogs.

Here is another question:

"I agree that the dogs are sure to be killed whenever they become a menace to society. But you say, 'To wait until they get rabid is not to be merciful to them.' This means that every dog is potentially rabid and that, therefore it, should be killed as a matter of precaution. I met a friend from the Ashram who assured me that you did not mean this, and that you had suggested it only as a last resource when dogs had become a manace. This is not clear from your articles. Will you make it clear?"



My previous articles and my answer to the first question leave nothing to be cleared. I must explain what I mean when I say that you cannot wait on until the dog gets rabid. Every stray dog is harmful. The harm is confined to cities alone and it must stop. We do not wait until the serpent bites us. The rabies of the dog is concealed in its capacity to bite. A friend has sent me cases of hydrophobia treated in the Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad:

Period	Cases from the city	Cases from the district	Total
Jan to Dec 1925	194	923	1,117
Jan to Sept 1926	296	695	990

These figures must alarm every one who is interested in the welfare of the community, especially if he is a humanitarian. I admit that all the cases may not be hydrophobia. But it is difficult to say whether a dog is or is not rabid and many run in fear to the hospital because most dogs are found to be rabid afterwards. There is only one remedy to relieve them of this fear and it is not to allow dogs to roam about.

I was in England 40 years ago when effective measures were taken to stamp out rabies. There were, of course, no stray dogs there. But even for the dogs which had regular owners, an order was passed that dogs found without collars with the name and address of the owner and without muzzles would be killed. The measure was taken purely in the public interest. Practically the next day all the dogs in London were found to be with collars and muzzles. It was, therefore, necessary to kill only a very few. If any one thinks that the people in the West are innocent of humanity, he is sadly mistaken. The ideal of humanity in the West is perhaps lower, but their practice of it is very much more thorough than ours. We rest content with a lofty ideal and are slow or lazy in its practice. We are wrapped in deep darkness, as is evident from our paupers, cattle, and other animals. They are eloquent of our irreligion rather than of religion.

Here is a third question:

"You have different definitions of religion for the individual and for society. But why should not religion in both cases be the same? The ideal ought to be the same for both. That it may be impossible to carry it out is a different matter. For even in case of the individual, only the occasion can show how far he has been able to carry out his



ideal in practice. You yourself have said that your ideal is to save even a cruel animal at the risk of your life, but you could not say what you would actually do when faced by such an animal. There is no reason why society should not similarly have a lofty ideal and leave the individuals free to practise it according to their capacity."

My definition of religion for the individual and for society is the same. The ideal must always be the same, but the practice I have conceived to be different in the case of the individual and the society. Truly speaking, practice differs in case of every individual. I do not know of two men having the same extent of the practice of *ahimsa* though their definition of *ahimsa* is the same. The extent of practice in case of society is the average of the different capacities of its members. Thus, for instance, where a section of the society is milkarian and the other fruitarian, the practice of the society extends to the use of milk and fruit.

The writer next sets out two Jain doctrines as follows:

"Jainism is based on the doctrine of *syadvada* many sidedness of reality. As is aptly said: "No absolute rule is correct; only the relative rule is the correct rule." Which means that an act which may be described as *himsa* under certain circumstances may be *ahimsa* under other circumstances. Man should always use his discrimination in determining his conduct. There are two classes of Jains. *Sadhus* (the monks) and *Shrawaks* (the laity). Their code of conduct is thus defined: The *Sadhu* is always non-violent. He may not eat to save himself, may not cook for himself, may not walk even a step for his own purpose—all his activity is for the welfare of the community and it should be as harmless as possible. He has to avoid the 42 infringements laid down in the Shastras. The *Sadhu* is described as *nirgrantha*, free from bonds. So far as I know, there is no *Sadhu* today who can satisfy the definition of a *Sadhu* given above.

"The *Shrawak* may not kill or injure any living being, except when it is essential for himself. He is a worldly man and he cannot take his humanity farther than this. So if 20 percent compassion is expected of the *Sadhu*, 1.25 percent is expected of the *Shrawak*. If the latter goes beyond the measure expected of him, he approaches the state of a *Sadhu*, but as a *Shrawak* nothing more is expected of him."

I knew the substance of this distinction. I am quite conscious that the Jain doctrine is not contrary to the opinion I have expressed in these articles. If the Jains accept the interpretation given above, the opinion expressed by me can be deduced from it. But whether they accept it or not, I humbly submit that my opinion is capable of being, and has been, independently justified.



13-11-1926 (probable date)

V—38 to 48

"Compare these verses with Shamal Bhatta's poem "He who gives water to you"¹. The spirit of this couplet is the same as that of these verses. Jesus' Sermon rises to the climax of its beauty in these verses. They are the key to the life of Jesus. These expressions are the briefest commentary on *ahimsa*. He who understands *ahimsa* to mean merely refraining from taking life does not know the abc of it. If the writer of the scripture (Patanjali on Yoga) is right in describing the result of *ahimsa*, hatred and even natural enmity between creatures subside completely before the man established in *ahimsa*. If that is so, the meaning of *ahimsa* cannot be limited to refraining from only taking life. Millions of people may be observing *ahimsa* in that coarse sense today. But where do you see the result? From the *ahimsa* stated here, we gain deeper faith in our own religion. There is not a single expression in these verses that is ambiguous. The verses give even two or three instances (of *ahimsa*). As long as *ahimsa* does not spread into every fibre of your being, you will not be able to implement *ahimsa* to this degree in life. When a test comes, the coward will take to his heels and the brave will stand firm. He will not give way to anger or hatred, nor will he browbeat any body. Armed simply with compassion and courage, he will face the situation. How very heroic we sometimes find the spirit of women in Hindu society! They do not pit themselves against their husbands. I remember the instance of one English woman also. Her husband thrashed her. She did nothing whatever in return. Only, tears were streaming down her cheeks. All she said was, "If you want to beat me still more, here I am." That incident turned the husband into her adorer. If this is not bemeaning yourself, this is not like crawling on the belly, when you are asked to rub your nose against the ground. The latter is done out of fear and with the inward hope that somebody may come up to help the person. But this English woman was a brave lady. She simply exhibited in an impressive form the innate power she possessed. It is only before the like of her, that *ahimsa* may dance attendance.

"Such *ahimsa* we are not able to imbibe easily and quickly. But that should not lead us to the conclusion that such feats of *ahimsa* are impossible. That conclusion forgets the fact that the potential power of the soul is boundless and infinite. It is human nature to confine one's belief to only that which appears possible today. But all the discoveries of modern times are nothing before the discovery of this infinite



power of the soul. Which is the greatest discovery in the history of the world? To me they are only two.

"The first, of truth, or the definition of it which Shankaracharya has given, viz., Brahma is the One Truth. Mohammad said, "Allah is one." That also is a hint of the same truth. सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः| (—There is no religion higher than truth). The second discovery is अहिंसा परमो धर्मः (—*ahimsa* is the highest duty).

"To me it seems that there never can be any discovery greater than these two. We are all imperfect creatures. But why should that deter us from speaking out what we feel? It is because I have experienced this kind of life (of truth and *ahimsa*?) for many many years that I say so. I remember Wallace-Darwin's contemporary—to have stated at the ripe age of 90 that, comparing the Western civilization with the primitive, he felt that all our modern civilization was of little account and there has been no progress whatever in morality.

"But if more sublime principles will not be discovered, how wonderful and numerous are the discoveries we make as we traverse along that path! Explorers who head towards the North and the South Poles will show courage and adventure, undoubtedly. But how high will these exploits raise the world spiritually? To me for one it seems that these adventures are not going to raise our moral calibre.

"By saying what he did in Verse 40, Jesus wished men to be *aparigrahi* (free from possession) A man may possess wealth, but only as a guardian or a trustee. What is the meaning of these sentences—'Do not possess things,' 'do not beat the man who beats you', and 'give away whatever somebody demands from you?' Does it mean that everyone is free to do anything he likes with your body? If we understand the words literally, we would only become fools and dupes. But the meaning of the words is different. We are, in fact, born debtors. We have much to repay and to many people. This body, that you have with you has been lent to you for good use. Give it to anybody who wants it. And you know, I am sure, the story of that half-gold mongoose². Even Yudhishtir's sacrifice could not turn the mongoose's body into that of gold. Take these verses to mean only this much: 'If you have food and some deserving person comes up, give it away to him.'

"Then it is said: 'Love your enemy.' What else should a man do, if the principle of *adwaita* (non-duality in life, matter and everything) is true?



"What is the meaning of the idea that a man should desire to see others as himself? One must forget the separateness of one physical frame from another. This is the description of a man who has as much compassion as Ramdas (a mediaeval saint of Maharashtra) had.

"Abuse was answered by murder in the times of Moses. Hence, he curbed the urge for retaliation by giving the law of an eye for an eye. He felt that if the people of his age could observe even this much restraint; it was good for them. One must understand the difference between a permissive and an obligatory law. 'Tooth for a tooth' was a permissive law, not an obligatory one. Were it the latter, Jesus could not have announced these maxims, because He had come to fulfil the Law. Moses contented himself with this much, but we are his heirs. It is necessary for an heir to increase the wealth he inherits.

"That action will make you fit for the heritage you receive. You will then be the children of your Father which is in heaven. If a father trains the child in the right way, the son must be able to do what the father can. Hence, Jesus says, 'Don't you see what the Lord God does? His rain and His sun fall and shine equally on the good and the bad. You must have the attitude of equality. If you love the one who loves you, it means nothing.' 'Publicans' means those who collect the land-tax. What is the difference between you who serve the world and the publicans who are Government officers? Even the 'talati' (village officer who collects Government dues) salutes the person who salutes him. But you will be appraised as worthy to be called men, only when you salute even that man who does not salute you.

"By the use of the word 'therefore' in V—48, the chain of cause and effect has been shown. It is your ideal to be perfect and you are striving for it. If anybody wants to attain perfection, he has got to implement that ideal in life. This can be interpreted to mean also, 'You must love your enemies etc., because *ahimsa* is the one and the highest *dharma* for man'. One whose *ahimsa* has not reached perfection will always pray that it may do so. This verse means that you must be completely lost in God. If you wish to become God (to use the language of the Vedanta), you must observe *ahimsa*.

"Arguments can be advanced against this *ahimsa*. I, for one humbly say, 'Let everybody understand this principle, assimilate it, make frequent experiments in it and dedicate his life to such experiments'. If dangerous hazards have to be faced for the North Pole; we must give up our whole life for becoming perfect in imbibing this



principle. We must have the power to laugh, even if somebody spits upon us. The vow of *ahimsa* is as hard to practise as a sword-dance. Truth is far away from us, without *ahimsa*, but if we have *ahimsa* at heart, we can see truth near us. I see it (truth) coming nearer and nearer day by day. Hard work and austerity and patience are required to attain Truth. Shankaracharya has shown us what amount of patience and perseverance are needed³. What if *kalpas* and *kalpas*⁴ pass away in search of the Soul! But we? We may get tired after a hundred years or two! But only that man would be fed up with this pursuit, who believes that once a man dies, he ceases to exist. But that man who knows that thousands of 'kalpas' have already gone by and the period of time he lives on the earth is but a tiny drop, can keep up his morale and continue the attempt. Peace and happiness are otherwise impossible—are but vain pursuits.

"Thus Jesus has given a definition of perfect *dharma* in these verses."

1. The whole couplet is:

Give a meal to him who gives you water,
Prostrate yourself a hundred times to him
Who makes a courteous bow.

2. A very pious family remained hungry for four consecutive weeks in order to feed a guest with their scant provision. A mongoose rolled over the ground wetted by the guest, when he washed his hands after his meal. Its body turned into that of gold, but only half of it, because the water spilled on the ground did not spread sufficiently to make the whole body one of gold. That mongoose rolled again on the wetted ground at the sacrifice performed by the very virtuous Yudhishtira, where he had given away princely sums in charity. But yet the half-body remained untransformed, because the renunciation of that holy but poor family was superior in merit to Yudhishtira's sacrifice and bounties.

3. As much patience and perseverance as a man would need to empty a sea by collecting sea-water in his palms and throwing it out.

4. Kalpa—One day of Brahma (God as the creator), which means 4,320,000,000 human years. The present is the seventh out of the 14 such aeons of this universe.



14.11.1926

A Saint's Ascension

(M. D's Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

I had the good fortune not only of knowing the saint who shuffled off his mortal coil last week, but also of having uplifting contacts with him, off and on, for the last fifteen years. Newspapers have never mentioned his name. He has neither been the founder of a sect, nor a leader of any great movement. There are, therefore, a very few who know or recognise him as a result of their personal contact with him. But even a glimpse at his life, a momentary remembrance of him, is an exalting influence and that is what makes me think it necessary that the reader of Navajivan should have at least a peep into his life.

As regards his early life, I myself know hardly anything. I could get no chance to know anything from the saint himself, as he rarely opened his lips on the matter of his own career. He was born at Godhra (a town in Gujarat) in a potter's family. He himself perhaps never knew his birth-date but people guess that he must be about 75 when he gave up the ghost. His father was a devotee of God and sought the contact of saints and hermits. Purshottam Bhagat (the latter, an epithet meaning a devotee) must, therefore, have inherited his devotion for God from his father. Even in childhood he would eagerly serve any ascetic or *sannyasi* that he came across. One of these was an entirely naked *sannyasi*. He was a man of queer ways. He would keep away from men—he stayed in the crematorium—and content himself with whatever food he got by begging from only one or two houses. He would serve the town by dragging away and burying the carcasses of stray dogs, cats etc. that died in the streets. How could a man doing such 'dirty' work catch anybody's eye? But owing to some powerful '*sanskaras*' (natural tendencies formed from actions in past lives) the heart of Purshottam Bhagat was drawn towards him. He would not only give him unleavened bread and buttermilk when the recluse came to him, but in the monsoon would himself go to the crematorium and provide him a meal, though he had to put the bundle of food on his head and wade through waste-deep, or sometimes even neck-deep water. After many months' devoted service this world-renouncing saint made Purshottam Bhagat his own, gave him spiritual knowledge by long talks given in the crematorium and finally gave him the "*Gurumantra*" (a potent formula given by a Guru whose repeated chanting leads the disciple to Self-realization). Since then Purshottam



Bhagat's outlook on life and the world was changed altogether. But nobody knows where, after giving the *mantra*, the holy man went away.

Since that day, Purshottam Bhagat began to wander like a mad man. He travelled a lot on foot and visited many places of pilgrimage. After a long long time he came back, settled in his home-town and took up his potter's ancestral profession. He was already married-in his childhood-had two or three sons also, but all of them had died in infancy. Later on, since the wife did not bear a child or bore only still-born babies, his relatives exerted overwhelming pressure and compelled him to marry a second wife. But Bhagatji ('ji' is a term of respect) would not cast even a glance at this new wife, when she came. At this total neglect, the poor woman went back to her father's house the very next day. Since then, right up to his last moment, the Bhagatji continued to live with his first wife. After returning from his pilgrimage he lived in his own house. He was a success in his profession as he could make charming dainty earthen vessels. He spent in hymn-singing the whole time that he could spare from his work.

It is impossible to call him an educated man. His literary knowledge amounted to nothing more than his ability to read hymns and to manage somehow to write letters. When that was the limit of his academic knowledge, the reading of the *Bhagwatgita* and the *Upanishads* was out of the question. But the hymns of our saints filled up the want of his ignorance of the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. He drank to the dregs the nectar of the hymns of *Akha* and *Pritam*. And whenever he sang any of their hymns and explained its meaning, the hearer would never fail to feel that he was enjoying the treat of an exposition of the eternal truth given in the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

I do not know how and when in his life the encumbrance of visitors from outside began, as he kept himself immersed in his occupation and in the hymns he repeatedly sang for himself. But one fine day, it seems, his tense soulful singing caught the eye or rather the ear, of somebody and he realized that he was listening not to a common singer, but to a powerful soul that had already realized the Reality and also had the power to guide pilgrims and erring souls. Through him this unknown Bhagat came to be recognised as a saint by a handful of men in Godhra and outside. It was thus that the unbroken serenity and seclusion of his career was disturbed and God thrust upon him the task—the mission—of scattering tranquility on many people of various places. As time passed, Sheth (—a rich man) Vasanji Khimji, himself a seeker addicted to the



service of philosophers and learned men, saints and leading lights of various religious denominations, came to know of this saint living in a far corner of Gujarat. It was he who discovered him, brought him to light and made him give up his old profession of moulding vessels from mud and take up the new one of moulding men from mud. I came in contact with the saint through my father after his new vocation had begun. During my college days I had some inkling of spiritual life through the books of Swami Vivekanand and then through them of the personality of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.¹ I found in this saint a second edition of the Paramahansa. I could understand the deep essence of the sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa through the words that came out of this saint's lips. Naturally, he released Sheth Vasanji Khimji from the downward pull of the lower self. But over and above that, he transformed the lives of many men and gave them solace and peace.

For at least some time I stayed with him continuously and then had his *darshan* once or twice a year. During the period of this contact, I saw him so absorbed in one incessant round of hymn-singing and talks about the Divine and so detached from the body, that I have hardly seen any body else who had attained to his state.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्ग.दोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः।

द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥

"To that imperishable heaven those enlightened souls go, who are without pride and delusion, who have triumphed over the taints of attachment, who are in tune with the Supreme, whose passions have died, who are exempt from the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain." (Gita XV—5. M.D'S translation).

He was, as far as I could see, the perfect embodiment of a God-man's qualities described above.

He had attained to that state by means of one-pointed devotion and he always asked others to follow that path of single-minded love for God. I am perfectly convinced that his life bore an irrefutable testimony to all the characteristics of a real devotee of God, as described in the 12th Chapter of the Gita. Again and again I would find that his behaviour illustrated the example of a God-lover 'who', in the words of the Gita, gives no trouble to the world and to whom the world causes no trouble' (M. D.'s translation of यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः। Gita XII—15). And I experienced in his speech and act the perfect realization of the following line of 'Bhakta Narasaiya' (Narasinh Mehta, a mediaeval saint of Gujarat):



सकल लोकमां सहने बंदे निंदान करे केनी रे |

(In praises free, to slander untrained)

His sermons were based mostly on the hymns that he would first sing. Even in casual talks, he would burst into a a hymn and then elucidate it. "Our ascetics have taught us the Essence, the Reality, in a few easy but telling words: "Turn your mind's searchlight inwards, which at present is outwards. Don't go out in search of the Reality. Dive down deep into yourself. Heaven and hell are not abodes situated somewhere far away. You experience them in this your very life. If you believe, if you have the faith that moves mountains, you are a liberated soul, you are in heaven. If you don't, if you are a doubting Thomas, nothing but fetters of hell is your fate. It is this our mind that is sinful. Only destroy this mind (let ruffles, even ripples of thought completely subside in it) and you will attain the Pure, Untainted Soul and rest in bliss". As I write this, he stands before my mind's eye, repeatedly emphasising this one thing and explaining it through many stories interspersed with poems and psalms.

He had a wonderful knack of explaining in a very homely, simple style, ideas that generally appear abstruse and mystifying and hence above our heads. I have already said that he was almost innocent of literary knowledge. That was why he explained everything in the simplest way. Let me give an example or two. "What is the message of the Gita?" he would ask and then answer the question himself. "Only repeat the word 'Gita' several times and you automatically say '*tagi*', '*tagi*' and that is the message. I hope you understand. You get the essence of the *Gita* by being a '*tagi*' or '*tyagi*' (i.e. a renouncer). That man has known the Gita who has renounced the body-consciousness (i.e. who knows that he is the Soul and not the body). He had once startled an erudite Sanskrit scholar by his original explanation of '*moksha*' (liberation). He said: "*Moksha* is made up of two words *mo* and *aksha* i.e. *moha* (delusion) and *kshaya* (destruction). Delusion's destruction is liberation". And once he defined sin and virtue, good and bad deeds, in this way: why make much of it? Has not Pritamdas sung: He who performs bad deeds by remaining raw, ('*kacha*'), will receive the lashes of *Yama*? (God of Death who judges a man after death)?' Here '*kacha*' means those who do not know that they are the spirit and not the body. That means all actions impelled under the belief that the body is real and not illusory are bad acts, are sins. And every act performed and the conviction that the Soul alone is real, is a good act and virtue'. Comparing the poet and the man of knowledge (Self-realization) he once said: "The *kavi* (poet) can reach the place that the *ravi* (sun) cannot. But the *anubhavi* (the



realized soul) goes beyond the limit that the *kavi* reaches". Once there came to him a Pharisee who indulged in a long dissertation on the various types of devotion and the different stages and processes of *yoga*. To him he said, "Dear friend, I know only this one simple thing: As the poet says:

दिल मां दीवो करो रे दीवो करो |
कूडां काम क्रोध ने परहरो ||
दया दीवेल प्रेम परणायुं लावो |
मांहे सूरतानी दीवेत बनावो |
पछी ब्रह्म अग्नि ने चेतावो रे ||
दिलमां ||

"Light, I say, the candle in the heart,
Throw out; I pray, bad deeds
And resentment's dart.
Put the oil of mercy
In the earthen bowl of love
Have the wick, 'at-one-ment'
And light the Brahma lamp."

"There is pitch darkness in our heart at present, let this light shine in the heart and remove the darkness, and then, devotion, knowledge, *yoga* and everything else shall be added unto you."

He was never tired of saying that the means to overcome 'I-ness' (not God, but I am the doer) or the delusion of body-consciousness, is humility—complete humility—and service. He would raise waves of laughter by his inimitable humorous style of telling the story of Gorakh and Machhandar² and then immediately switch on to a serious tone to point out the spiritual lesson to be drawn from it. The laughter of the audience would then at once dry up and everyone would grow silent and repent for his own littleness and unworthiness.

And then would begin the hymn:

नमिये सो तो साहब को प्यारे लगे
नमिये सो नर भारी रे |....



The humble are loved by the Lord, the best
Those bent in bows grow tall as trees
And tower above the rest.
When Narad grew humble, and poor in spirit
His crooked heart was cleansed;
The Brahmin bent before the Shudra
Made his Guru a fisherman,
For him no more the countless births
And deaths that shackle man.

Then a *sakhi* (a couplet of a specific melody) would come to his mind and he would sing:

रामरस ऐसा है मेरे भाई ! ...

His head held high, man strides on the earth,
Filled with pride the mind;
A few, the wise, they choose to be
Humble and meek and kind.
God favours them and lifts them high
Above the whole mankind.
God's love is such—the drink ambrosial
Of the uplifting kind.
Dhruva drank it and Prahlada
Kabira is steeped in it;
And yet he wishes more and more,
You never have enough of it.

As he sang this hymn of Rama-rasa (the tasteful drink of God) he himself used to be so intoxicated, so deeply absorbed and overpowered, that I have rarely seen anybody else in such ecstasies. And then I had the good fortune of seeing tears streaming down his cheeks, as he was narrating the stories of Dhruva and Prahlada.

Besides, I have often watched him stopping tears of joy and love, that would inevitably glisten in his eyes as he sang the following lines of Mira:

मैं नटणी नाम की प्यासी

निरखूँ मेरे नाथ को !

I, Thy crazy love-lorn lass



In vain the horizon scan;
But wait! I see! I see Him now!
—The Lord of my heart, my Man.

But he sang hymns of this sort only when the spirit moved him. Otherwise, in order to drive home the Truth, his favourite implement was the hammer of Akha:

समजण बिना रे सुख नहिं तुजने रे,
वस्तुगति केम करी ओळखाय ? ...

No peace for you, without knowledge gone deep;
How else can the Self be realized?
No use repeating: "The Self abides in me";
That will not redeem the soul.
Say 'the sun', 'the sun' a hundred times,
Will that end the night?
Darkness recedes as daylight dawns.
When Knowledge rises within
The end is easily gained.

A regular shower of hymns, beginning with the one given above would then fall on the people around. As he sang the following:

प्राणी प्रीछजो रे ए संत केरी सान,
अन्य साधन सांभळी तुं मेला कां करे कान ? ...

"O man! Catch the straight tips the saint gives;
"Why sully your ears with hearing of other means?,"

per chance his eyes would fall on a man sitting opposite who, like myself, was 'learned' but not 'wise' in true wisdom. He would then smile and say:

"O learned man! It is love for the Divine that by itself carries you across the sea of the world. Learning will not bring you to the end of your wanderings on the earth. It is empty knowledge without the substance. "Jiva (the soul) and 'Shiva' (the Oversoul) are one my friend! The crooked will not understand It."

“संतो भाई समजणकी एक बात,



समज्या सोई नर फेर न बोल्या,
छोड़ दिया सकल उधमात ।”

"O saints! O friends! What is essential is

(experiential) knowledge.

Those who caught it, became silent—did not say a
word afterwards.

They gave up all these encumbrances and worries."

Streams of hymns would thus flow incessantly and nobody know how the evening slipped into the midnight hour. After singing the hymn:

आपे आप तुं रे; हुज न मळु शेष जी” ।

"Thou art, and Thou alone, the 'I' does not remain."

he would sing again and again with ecstatic delight the following lines in it:

हुंपडछन्दो ताहरो तारे ते श्वासेश्वास

मन तुं तन तुं त्रीकमा तुज माँहें मारो वास ॥’

"I am but Thy reflection, Thy echo.

Every breath of this ('I') is Thou.

Thou art the mind, Thou art the body as well,

O Lord:

I dwell—I am contained—in Thee."

He was a singer and I have heard many a good artist but I never experienced that superb joy and that perfect subsidence of passion, which I used to experience when I heard him singing.

But perhaps the reader will get tired. When I begin to think of the hymns he sang, they throng in my memory in such quick succession, that I am swept away in the tide. Let the reader forgive me.

My last meeting with him took place about a month and a half ago. Immediately after his return from Bombay, he had an attack of dysentery. When I heard that he had often passed blood in large quantities, I went to him. Specially, only two or three days before I went, a regular stream of blood had fallen out. He was bed-ridden since then,



but as soon as he saw me, he sat up and kept up the sitting pose with back so straight for an hour or an hour and a half that with all my robust health and youth, I never sit so straight for so long. The doctor had advised him to keep silent. He would, therefore, answer questions put to him in writing with a chalk piece. I just asked him: "Why such terrible pain to you of all people sir?" He smiled and wrote. "There must have been too much blood in the body. It took its natural course and left it." "But why such suffering even to an even serene and unperturbed soul like you?" somebody asked. He wrote: "I am not a saint, not a true *bhakta* (devotee). All I can say for myself is that I feel happy and content with whatever situation God puts me in." vWith a short pause he added: "This body is inanimate. The One Conscious Paramatma (Oversoul) is Real. Let Him keep this body in any condition He likes. It is His business, not mine."

"Strive for Self-realization during this life, this very life, tear the bonds which the body imposes and throw them out." —These expressions I have repeatedly heard from him. He had made his body a piece of wood and, after swimming across the ocean of life on that floating raft himself, he had shown the way to many others to do the same. Today as I go on remembering him his inebriation from the deep draughts of God's love comes back to my mind. And which he drank as I remember him singing:

‘रामरस ऐसा मेरे भाई,
पिये सो अमर हो जाई ॥’

"God' love is such—the drink ambrosial

"That makes the man immortal."

the state of supreme bliss which that elevated soul always enjoyed rises up vividly before my eyes. During his talk on the traits of saints and sages, he gave a definition of the saints. I have seen that that definition, given below, has proved true in his case.

“शांति पमाडे तेने संत कहीए,
एना दासना दास थईने रहीए रे ।”

"He is the 'saint' who gives us 'shanti'

(peace, tranquility);

"Let us be his humblest servants."

For him it was thus a state of tranquility for all the 24 hours of the day and, for myself, I had the piece of good fortune to gain from his contact that tranquility for a



while. But that is small consolation. To quote his words. "So long as your account in heaven is not squared and cancelled, so long as you are not freed from the bond of countless births and deaths, it is practically all the same whether you have or have not any contact with a saint, a hermit, or a *Guru*."

1. The Great *Hansa*, *Hansa*, i.e., the swan has been attributed the habit of sipping only the substance of milk and leaving off the water in the receptacle. A *Hansa*, therefore, means one who discriminates between the substance and the chaff and accepts only the former and, of course, substance means Reality and chaff—the worldly life.

2. Gorakh, the disciple, weans Machchandar, the Guru, from the enjoyment of women's company.



18-11-1926

Is this Humanity?

VI

@ A friend has sent a long letter containing a number of questions and raising a number of difficulties. He has also sent me his copies of *Navajivan* with profuse marginal notes on this series of articles. Some of his questions have been already answered in these pages. Without reproducing here the rest of his questions I propose merely to give my answers.

I think I have been considering the whole question dispassionately. I do not think I could be accused of any partiality for '*himsa*' or for my own peculiar views in the matter. My partiality is all for truth, which I seek to find out through '*ahimsa*'. It is my conviction that it cannot be found out in any other way. The question in dispute for me is not whether truth is our goal or not, nor whether *ahimsa* is or is not the only way to it. There is no possibility of my ever doubting these fundamental principles. The question before me is about the practice of these principles. Everyday I see fresh aspects opening out to me. There is every possibility of my making mistakes in the practice of *ahimsa* and, though I am taking every precaution possible to avoid them, it is possible that I may err occasionally. Let not friends, therefore, impute partiality to me, when I cannot agree with them. Let them believe me to be unconsciously in error and bear with me. I now proceed to give the answers.

1. The question to solve is not what is hydrophobia and how to treat it.

2. The municipality or the Government will find a remedy not in accordance with *ahimsa*, but with what they conceive to be public interest. The Mahajan can find the right remedy, if they are truly non-violent. Government will never subscribe to the absolute principle of non-destruction of animals (dogs in the present case). Municipalities have members belonging to different faiths and different communities. They cannot, therefore, be expected to insist on a non-violent remedy.

3. The duty of finding a non-violent remedy is the Mahajan's. It is a mistake to think that the Mahajan is blameless or helpless.

4. For the purpose of this discussion, I make no difference between a rabid dog and a man who has been amuck and is in the act of dealing death. Habitual violence is a disease. The habitually violent man goes on in his murderous career, only because he is beside himself. Both a rabid dog and a rabid man are worthy of pity. When they



are found in the act of injuring others and when there is no other remedy than to take their life, it becomes a duty to do so to arrest that activity. The duty is all the greater in the case of a votary of *ahimsa*.

5. I have never meant that every one should own a dog. What I have said is that the dogs should in no case be ownerless. Not that the owned dogs will be immune, but the owners will be responsible for them, if they are diseased or get rabies.

6. The ownerless stray dogs are not innocent as lambs. They were never so. Owned dogs are generally so. The purpose of the present controversy is to make all the dogs innocuous.

7. I have never suggested that roving dogs should be killed wherever found, I have suggested enabling legislation in the interest of the dogs themselves. That will make humanly inclined people alive to their sense of duty and they will then either own dogs or find out some other remedy and thus make the existence of stray dogs impossible. In refusing alms to the beggar the purpose is not to starve him, but to teach him self-help; to make him a man. The duty of killing dogs arises in the circumstances and to the extent I have indicated in the previous articles. To say that it is a sin to extirpate dogs is not to contradict me. For I have never expressed a contrary opinion.

8. It is idle to discuss whether Mr. Ambalal's conduct was or was not proper, or whether my opinion about it was not correct. The public is not in full possession of the details of the incident. The broader question of *ahimsa* is the main issue, and to bring in Mr. Ambalal in the discussion is to cloud the issue.

9. The issue is: Whether in consonance with the principle of *ahimsa*, it may be a duty to kill certain dogs under certain circumstances, when no other alternative is possible? I submit that it may be, and hold that there cannot be two opinions in the matter. There may be difference as to whether particular circumstances justify the act. The consolation for a votary of *ahimsa* lies in the fact that from his standpoint such circumstances can only be rare.

10. But I can see one difference of opinion that must, for the time being, remain. In the letter under consideration, as also in many others, I see that there is an instinctive horror of killing living beings under any circumstances what-so-ever. For instance, an alternative has been suggested in the shape of confining even rabid dogs in a certain place and allowing them to die a slow death. Now my idea of compassion



makes this thing impossible for me. I cannot, for a moment, bear to see a dog or for the matter any living being, helplessly suffering the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced, because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated, because in its case I am without a remedy. Should my child be attacked by rabies and there was no helpful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life. Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child is to take his life.

But I shall not labour this point. What to my mind is impotence of the votaries of *ahimsa* is an obstacle to a true understanding of this *dharma*. I hope, therefore, that those who differ from me will for the present bear with me.

So much about the thoughtful letter of a friend. I shall now deal with an angry letter.

"You have been," says the letter, "so much under the Western influence that you have learnt to think it proper to kill lower beings for the sake of man. It is better for you to confess your error and apologize to the world. You should have made up your mind in this matter after exhaustless sifting. Instead, you have passionately taken sides and discredited yourself."

This is the least offensive sentence I have picked up from letters of this type. I submit I have not formed my opinion without much deliberation. It is not an opinion I have recently formed. Neither is it hasty. One should not let his so-called greatness come in the way of the formation of opinion, otherwise he cannot arrive at truth.

I do not think that everything Western is to be rejected. I have condemned the Western civilization in no measured terms. I still do so, but it does not mean that everything Western should be rejected. I have learnt a great deal from the West and I am grateful to it. I should think myself unfortunante if contact with and literature of the West had no influence on me. But I do not think I owe my opinion about the dogs to my Western education or Western influence. The West (with the exception of a small school of thought) thinks that it is no sin to kill the lower animals for what it regards to be the benefit of man. It has, therefore, encouraged vivisection. The West does not think it wrong to commit violence of all kinds for the satisfaction of the palate. I do not subscribe to these views. According to the Western standard, it is no sin, on the contrary it is a merit, to kill animals that are no longer useful. Whereas I recognise



limits at every step. I regard even the destruction of vegetable life as *himsa*. It is not the teaching of the West.

Argumentum ad hominem has no place in a discussion of principles and their practice. My opinion should be considered as they are, irrespective of whether they are derived from the West or the East. Whether they are based on truth or untruth, *himsa* or *ahimsa*, is the only thing to be considered. I firmly believe that they are based on truth and *ahimsa*.



20-11-1926 (probable date)

Continuing his discourse on the Bible Gandhiji said:

"My inability to complete the exalting sayings of Jesus pains me.¹ And I shall always remember wistfully the fact that I could not mix with you as much I wanted to."

In elucidation of Chapter VI Gandhiji said:

"As we have our Gayatri², the Christians have their prayer. Christian parents teach this prayer to their children. If we want to teach all religions here and if prayer is the pivot round which they revolve, we must accept this prayer heartily. Let us see the circumstances under which it was made. Jesus takes His disciples to the mountain top and delivers His Sermon there. First of all the five 'yamas' have been taught. And then he shows the way to enable man to observe them, namely, that of prayer. Somebody may here raise a doubt about the need of a prayer. He may argue: 'Why this—the prayer—when we believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent?' Its answer is contained in this Chapter. It describes first the common attitude and behaviour of the Jews, and then asks us to perform all our actions in a different way.

"God alone knows, not we. If anyone's heart also has fully accepted what his intellect has (namely, God omniscient and omnipotent), there remains nothing for him to do. (Then his life itself becomes one continuous prayer or communion with God). For instance, the rose has not to make any effort to spread its fragrance. It is its natural, not a voluntary action. But for us there is a scope for choice. Our spiritual effort lies in the very fact that we are determined not to go along the path of evil. God is not so indiscreet as to give us whatever we want. He will give us according to our deserts.

"But all this is God's angle. What is ours? We are but senseless, imperfect sinful. What should we do? In reply, Jesus says, "Let not yours be a prayer in name. Pray in this way." What kind of prayer it is? It for us, imperfect beings. God is certainly everywhere. True, He is in evil also, in stinking smell too. But when Shankaracharya talked of his high philosophy of '*mayavad*' (It alone is real and all we see is illusory) the believers in the Creator, i.e. God replied: "If we talk of *maya* even at preset when we are still so imperfect, we would fall into the plight of learned fools—like the one who wondered घृताधारे पात्रं वा पात्राधारे घृतम् (whether it is the vessel that holds the *ghee* (clarified butter) or it is the *ghee* that holds the vessel).³ We must not, therefore, rack our brains for abstruse philosophy. That is why Islam simply affirms, God is holy. Man found out the way to be virtuous and holy by attributing these qualities to God. He



made his own heart the place for God to dwell in. We may interpret God as only the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. We can rightly say, 'Hallowed be Thy name' only when we take His help alone and not seek anybody else's.

"Then He says: 'O Lord! Let Thy kingdom be here also'. Then comes the prayer for the welfare of the body. "Give us this day our daily bread." Bread does not mean literally bread only. It means livelihood. 'Have no worry of any sort', He says; 'God is Razaak, i.e. one who provides us our livelihood.' 'O Lord! Forgive me my acts.' That means forgive all my trespasses—wrongs. We too forgive men their wrongs against us. He who is not generous and forgiving at heart has no right whatever to ask for forgiveness of his sins. But how is it that a man commits sins? Man goes on falling a prey to temptations and if he is swept by the winds of (modern) civilization, he goes out to seek temptations. 'O Lord! The kingdom is Thine, the power is Thine, the glory is Thine.' This is the same sentiment as expressed by the Bhagwadgita in the idea of *yagna* (sacrifice). This neat little prayer contains everything that the few letters of the Gayatri Mantra mean. What a beautiful prayer this is. Unobjectionable in every way and one whose ideas can be reproduced in the language of every religion."

From the 16th verse Jesus refers to fasting. Explaining that idea Gandhiji said : "Why should a man who fasts 'be of a sad countenance'? He must never let anybody know that he is fasting. Disciplines for the mortification of the flesh are not to be exhibited before others. It is his heart that should fast along with the body. An aversion to food should spring up in his heart. He should think, "O Lord! 'Why art Thou not visible to me? Without Thy vision, my pondering to the flesh has no meaning. I see that wicked thoughts constantly invade my heart. They are the Kauravas.⁴ They are not a hundred in number, they are thousands." He who goes on a fast with this prayerful attitude, far from letting his face fall, will dance with joy. If the bundle of grass on my head is taken off, I shall breathe a sigh of relief and be glad. It is in order to lay down the burden on my mind that I fast—not in order that others may praise me.

"Jesus has exposed the hypocrisy of his times in these verses.

"If you pile up a treasure of material wealth, it will be of no use to you. Even the treasure of this body will prove itself useless. It is certain to be robbed by a highwayman called *Yama* (Death). Instead of making a vain effort to preserve that perishable treasure, 'lay up your treasures in heaven'. Pile up that treasure which is eternal and inexhaustible. That is the treasure which can be only increased and never decreased day by day. And it is that alone which will take us ever nearer to God.⁵



Referring to the incident at Voutha⁶ Gandhiji said:

"It is not the Policemen's business, but ours alone, to deal with such situations. If we are beaten black and blue, it does not matter. I would regard it as a good thing for us. Our first '*dharma*' is to sacrifice our lives. Those who do not wish to do it, must not go to such places. At the Boer War Indian and English (Red-Cross) troops were asked to keep themselves beyond the range of guns. The Indian Red Cross regiment was highly praised (for going even within the range and carrying away wounded soldiers). But why should one care for appreciation? (It was after all an unjust aggressive war). The war was started owing to a 'nervous breakdown'. And even "The Times" commented that the people had gone crazy in waging it."

1. Gandhiji had retired from public life during nearly this whole year of 1926. At its end he left Sabarmati for Wardha on 3-12-1926. Hence, his discourses on the Bible remained incomplete.

2. An ancient Vedic *mantra* praying for Light to guide the intellect.

3. The story ridicules empty learnedness. A philosopher was carrying home a pot with *ghee* in it. Being given to abstruse thinking, he asks himself the above question and in order to know the truth, he upturns the vessel with the result that he loses all the *ghee* he wanted for his food.

4. In the epic, the Mahabharata, Kauravas represent the forces of evil while their cousins the Pandavas represent those of good. The Kauravas are a hundred brothers in stox, and the Pandavas only five, but they win in the end.

5. The exposition of the Bible ends here in M.D.'s manuscript diary. It could not be carried to the end of the Bible, as Gandhiji left Ahmedabad on 3-12-1926.

6. A small town near Ahmedabad, where a big fair is held annually, as the town is situated at the confluence of Sabarmati and her six tributaries. Some volunteers had gone there to maintain order amongst the mammoth crowds on the fair day (d. 19-11-1926). Some people had created a row against the volunteers and the public had failed to stop the disorder.



25-11-1926

Is This Humanity?

VII

(Abridged translation by M. D.)

@ Some of my correspondents do not seem to realize the fundamental consideration underlying my suggestion for the destruction of dogs under certain circumstances. Thus, for instance, I have not made the suggestion in a purely utilitarian spirit. The utility to society incidentally accrues from the act, but the principal consideration is the relief of the long-drawn-out agony of the creatures, whose present condition it is simply impossible for me to tolerate. In the articles in this series there have not been even the remotest suggestions that man has the right of disposal over the lower animals and that he may, therefore, kill them for his own comfort or pleasure. One of the writers betrays a strange confusion of thought when he says that the characteristic of an exalted soul is that he remains unaffected by the misery around him. He is callous, rather than exalted, who has not learnt to melt at other's woe, who has not learnt to see himself in others and others in himself. Intense longing for the happiness of others was the mother of the discovery of '*ahimsa*'. And the sage who was the embodiment of compassion found his soul's delight in renouncing his own physical comfort and stopped killing for his pleasure the dumb creation about him.

A correspondent reminds me of the advice given to me by Shri Rajchandra, when I approached him with a doubt as to what I should do if a serpent threatened to bite me. Certainly his advice was that rather than kill the serpent, I should allow myself to be killed by it. But the correspondent forgets that it is not myself that is the subject-matter of the present discussion, but the welfare of society in general as also of the suffering animals. If I had approached Rajchandrabhai with the question whether I should or should not kill a serpent writhing in agony, and whose pain I could not relieve otherwise, or whether I should or should not kill a serpent threatening to bite a child under my protection, if I could not otherwise turn the reptile away, I do not know what answer he would have given. For me the answer is clear as daylight and I have given it.

A studious correspondent confronts me with some verses from a Jain philosopher and asks if I agree with the position taken up in them. One of the verses says, 'One should not kill even beasts of prey in the belief that by killing one such, he



saves the lives of many'. Another says: Nor should one kill them out of a compassionate feeling that if they were suffered to live longer, they might sink deeper into sin.' 'Nor', says the third verse, 'should one kill distressed creatures presuming that he would thereby shorten the length of their agony.'

To me the meaning of the verses is clear. And it is this, that a particular theory should not be the spring of action in any case. You may commit '*himsa*', not in order that you thereby realize in practice a pet theory of yours, but because you are driven to it, as an imperative duty. Work which spontaneously comes to one's lot, or action without attachment, in the words of the Gita, is the duty of a seeker after *moksha*. Confine your energy to work that comes your way, I conceive the Jain philosopher to say, never seek fresh fields of activity. The verses to me define the mental attitude of detachment that should govern one's action in cases where '*himsa*' seems to be imperative and unavoidable.

But I have arrived at my present views independently of any authority, though originally they have been drawn from various sources, and I submit that they are in perfect consonance with '*ahimsa*', even though they may be proved to be contrary to the teaching of the philosopher.



27-11-1926

(Shri Mahadev Desai delivered the following speech on the 27th Nov. during the Youth Week. As it is worth thinking over, omitting the part that deals with individuals, I give it below. The Leader of this issue has been based upon thoughts provoked by the speech—M. K. Gandhi in *Navajivan* 5-12-1926). (That Leader appears as Appendix V—Translator)

Message of the Takli

You have seen numerous *taklis* (whirligigs to spin yarn) delivering to you a silent speech for a long time past. That silent speech is still going on and yet I have come here to give a lecture on it in spoken language. And why? The reason is that only a *Guru* can deliver a speech through silence¹ and I am not at all your *Guru*.

Your *Gurus* preceded me as speakers— I mean your Professors and Principals. I seem to be a rustic before them, but, a rustic as I am, I gathered courage to speak before you when I saw that you had chosen another villager like myself, Sri Amritlal Thakkar—as your President.²

A propaganda of *saries* of various designs and of dresses of different styles made in foreign or Indian mills has been going on here for the last seven days. That impelled me. I thought, 'Let me also carry on a propaganda for my Khadi for a day. As there has been a propaganda of various colours, I thought I too should start one for the white colour—the basic colour from which all those numerous colours are produced. Experiments in Physics and Chemistry made by your Demonstrators, you see daily. I request you to see today the experiments of the Demonstrator of All India Spinners' Association. To show their experiment, this Association had sent a group of its workers to the Agricultural Exhibition held recently in Poona. The group found that numerous persons who visited that Exhibition had not even heard the name of Khadi, had never seen a spinning wheel or *takli*. Hence, the thought struck me that if there are any such here, I should show them the fundamental principle behind the idea, i.e., should give them what I call "The Message of the *Takli*."

But I have been warned. I have been told that I could speak on the *takli*, but not discuss before you its political implications. There was no need for this warning, for, first of all, I myself did not want to speak on its political aspect, and secondly, even if I did not touch that point, the very use of the *takli* has its indirect political repercussions. Let us take social reform. People may think it to be quite non-political, but the fact stands that it is bound to have its impact on politics. Uplift of untouchables and communal unity too sail in the same boat—they too have a pronounced political



effect. And even the Youth Week which you are celebrating here has for its object the increase of the power of co-operation and love between yourselves and hence it also has definitely a political bias. Whether, therefore, I speak on the political aspect of *takli* or not, *takli* will not fail to effect our politics. That is too patent to be concealed.

But rest assured I am going to present before you only the economic angle of the *takli*. Your Professor of Economics must have taught you that the aim of that science is to increase the country's wealth and find out the ways and means of removing unemployment. It is our claim that these two objects are served more by the *takli*, i. e. the spinning wheel and its concomitant Khadi, than by any other means: The expression 'the wealth of the country' does not mean to you, I am sure, the wealth of a handful of its millionaires. 'The wealth of the country' means the wealth of the many millions of the poor in India. That wealth can increase by the spinning wheel alone, not by big industrial plants. There was one Father Strong at Barisal, who invited Gandhiji to visit his handloom factory. He showed him round his beautiful looms and then remarked, "A number of men find employment through them". "But what is the kind of the yarn used here?" inquired Gandhiji. "O, that? 'Whatever we can get from Indian mills and foreign countries,'" he replied. "Then your handlooms will only enrich further the already rich millionaires and keep the countless millions of poor men in India as starving as before." That gentleman saw the truth in Gandhiji's retort in the twinkling of an eye. The highest among the various estimates of the average annual income of an Indian has been made by your Principal, Mr. Shiraz. And he puts it at 116 Rs. Even if we accept that figure as the right estimate it is but an average of incomes starting from zero to millions. Hence, if we estimate the average income of only the poor section of India, it would come to 30-40 rupees even according to that estimate. The spinning wheel possesses the power to increase it by at least 25%.

So much about the wealth of the country. Let us now look into an unemployment problem. It has now become an accepted fact that our peasantry remains unemployed for months together and that after the disappearance of the spinning wheel, it has no other occupation to fall back upon during those months. Dr. Menon, who had insisted that at the Government Agricultural Exhibition held at Poona, the All-India Spinners' Association should be invited to exhibit its processes, saw their working and he was completely convinced that there was no industry as natural, congenial, practical, and easy as the spinning wheel. But a few figures will explain the point more clearly (disturbance from students in the gallery). Well, if you



are in no mood to hear me, my silent speech through this *takli* will continue (laughter and quiet). Please don't shy at these figures. Compared with those of Calculus and Trigonometry, they are quite easy to understand. Oh, what a large number of unemployed people the spinning wheel maintains: 30 thousand in Tamil Nad, 30 thousand in Bengal, 4-5 thousand in Kathiawar (Saurashtra) and 15 to 20 thousand in Bihar. These women spinners do not mind sun or shower and trudge some miles to get cotton for spinning and give the yarn spun by them from cotton given earlier. Why do they undergo all this trouble? Because by no other means they can earn the annual average of Rs. 15 in Tamil Nad, 12 in Behar, 10 in Bengal and 15 to 20 in Saurashtra and Gujarat.

That means that the message of the spinning wheel or *takli* means the message of Khadi. I appeal to you to wear the Khadi spun and woven by these people, so that their occupation can go on and they may eke out a living. Compassion is the basis of this economics of Khadi. Christian missionaries have highly appreciated this point of view. That kind Father of Behar, Mr. Hodge, and Mr. Stanely Jones of U. P. were deeply impressed with this angle of mercy and Mr. Jones has even promised to make the experiment of introducing *takli* in the schools under his charge. Then there are numerous Government servants who too have liked the cult of Khadi. It may be that professors of colleges on this side of India may not be spinning and wearing Khadi, but in Bengal there are many professors and teachers who spin and wear Khadi. (Commotion again among the students, the silent speech of *takli* and then quiet again). Hence, my first request to you is: 'Wear Khadi as it is made for the service of the poor' and the second 'Begin to spin'. (Disturbance again. The President: "It is your duty to hear the speech even though you may not like the subject of Khadi") That you don't like this idea, that you have an aversion to it, shows the present plight of our country and our countrymen. But I shall be brief. If you call yourselves educated, if you claim to be wiser and more enlightened than they, it is your duty to show the illiterate masses the way to earn their bread, even though you have no taste for spinning. If you don't show the way, they are so inert that they will die of the disease of sloth-and-unemployment, but will not spin on their own initiative. You must, therefore, spin for inspiring them to action, for serving them and as an act of sacrifice for them. You feel ashamed to spin. But there are distinguished men who have no shame in turning the wheel, though they also have studied in colleges as you are doing, have gone to England and returned with imposing degrees of doctors and barristers. Mr. Bahadurji, a former Advocate-General, gets peace from spinning. In his retreat at Simla Dr.



Rajabali M. D. spun for 12 hours a day for a month and a half or two and presented one hundred thousand yards of yarn to Gandhiji solely for the service of the poor.

But I don't ask you to spin for 12 hours. For you there is this *takli*, the mother of the spinning wheel. That implement is the simplest of all—so simple that anyone among you who knows even the rudiments of craftsmanship can make it himself. And as you see it for itself, it easily turns out 40 to 50 yards of yarn in half an hour. It is, therefore, my appeal to you to spin for half an hour for serving the poor. You must have been wasting many a half-hour. When you are sitting in your classroom, your fingers are often moving mechanically. Many of you may be having the habit of carving your name on your desk or drawing pictures in your note-books in idle moments. Substitute for these habits, I say, that of turning the *takli*. Within a very few days the habit will grow automatic. You may be going on with your studies to your heart's content, turning off heaps of poems, and yet there must be some spare time left to you. Use that time in spinning, I pray. If, as you go on turning this *takli*, you give free reins to your imagination, and then write down your poems, they will gain in vitality and be charged with the fragrance that emits from the service of the poor.

And one last request. You are students, your avowed object is to study things. How can you afford to neglect the study of the situation around you? When a Currency Commission's Report is out, your professors refer to its recommendations and discuss them. If an Economic Inquiry Commission comes to India, they discuss the evidences given before them. If they do not discuss these live topics, it cannot be said that they teach you anything worth the name. But I believe that in this age of awakening, your professors also must be awake. And if they are, it is my contention that they should study what is more real and more important than all these Commissions, namely, the activity of Khadi. And you, students, should request them to discuss before you the great experiment which is going on within 2 or 3 miles of your college and which is based upon the idea that Gandhiji has been hammering in his weeklies for the last several years.

You have made friends with students of the National College. May that week-long friendship continue not for a week only but for all time. That friendship should bear the fruit of learning from one another. As a result of that friendship, may you start visiting villages in combined groups during your vacations, enter into the lives of the villagers, understand their joys and sorrows and try to serve them. But let me warn



you here. Only the spinning will make you fit for all that. You cannot enter into the lives of the poor without the means of Khadi and *takli*.

But all that requires from you an attitude of willingness to understand one another, and have a feeling of fellowship. If you have not imbibed that understanding spirit and that fellowship as a result of this Youth Week, I cannot regard these social gatherings a success.

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1. M. D. quotes the Sanskrit line—गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानम् | The Guru's silence is itself His sermon. Four great sages once approached Lord Shiva to learn from Him the way to Self-realization. Lord Shiva who was meditating opened his eyes and then closed them again. By silence He taught the Way—Meditation.
 2. He was known as Thakkar Bapa (father) as he worked in villages among aborigines and untouchables.



28-11-1926

(M. D.'s Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

It is a very great pleasure to note the activities of the 2nd annual celebration of the Youth Week. I do not know how this idea started, but at present Professor Malkani of the National College (Ahmedabad) has been straining every nerve to make it a success. Ordinarily, the students of the National College and those of Gujarat (Government) College as well as students of national schools and those of the Government recognized schools from separate circles of their own and have no mutual contact. This Youth Week is a laudable attempt to bind them together with the silken chord of love and that attempt can be termed a fairly good success.

This was the programme of the week: One day for the President's speech. (Shri Sumant Mehta was chosen as the President for year). One for sports and physical exercises, one for women, one for men, one for dramatic performances, one for discussions in a mock-parliament and one for lectures of speakers.

The love and fraternity with which the students of both the Government-recognised and national institutions took part in these functions shows that the student-world can carry out by mutual aid numerous activities that have no connection with politics or Government.

An exhibition also was held in connection with the Week. The section that attracted one's special attention in it was the Khadi Section organised by the special efforts of Miss Mridulabehn, daughter of Sri Ambalal Sarabhai. Had the youths met the Secretary of the All-India Spinners' Association and arranged through his help an exhibition showing the processes for making Khadi, this exhibition. would have been still more successful.

A specially attractive feature of the week was the women's day. Music is but natural on that day and the orchestra as well as Miss Raihana Tyabji's very soulful singing must have delighted the hearts of all. And then there were the speeches. Two sisters were chosen as speakers, the choice of both being very happy. Miss Mirabehn—formerly known as Miss Slade—was invited from the Satyagrahashram and the other speaker was Mrs. Sarojini Mehta. The speeches of both these sisters had each its own significance and beauty. Miss Slade read out a written speech which was short and sweet. After a reference to the influence that the life of Indian women had exercised on her, she gave a warning. She had seen that an unhealthy movement of



indiscriminately accepting wholesale Western thoughts and Western education was going on in India and she said the following:

"Service and humility are the natural privileges of women. Both these ideals have been elevating the lives of women in India, while in the West, specially among the educated classes, these ideals have been given the go-by and those of freedom and equality have taken their place. But why should it be so? True service is not slavery, it is nothing less than freedom. And in true humility lies not a submissive acceptance of inequality, but real equality.

"Admittedly, service often becomes slavery and humility helplessness. But there is no need, on that account, to discard the lofty ideals of one's own culture and adopt those of the West. Let us rather strive to be really fit for our own ideals, and proportionately with our efforts in that direction our lives are going to be pure and selfless. Freedom has often degraded into licence and selfishness and equality into cut-throat competition in the West. The discontent and unrest so rampant in the West are, it seems, due to the fact that both the men and women there have forgotten their respective '*dharma*' and entered into a rivalry with each other. Woman can realize the Self—God—not by gaining her own *dharma* and accepting man's, but only by gaining her privilege of service and humility.

"Women are educated at present exactly in the same way as men. To me for one, it seems to be a fundamental mistake and a queer unscientific approach. Give her an education that is suited to her genius and her *dharma*. If you make her a competitor of man, the foundations of society will be uprooted—as is done in the West."

After this warning she gave in a few words the duty of women:

"India is, at present, in the throes of a terrible calamity. How can the service of women be used to help her? I for one feel that women can render the highest service to the country by means of the spinning wheel, which is an emblem of service imbued with humility. It is the woman's forte, as it is suited to her nature. By adopting it she will perform her natural *dharma* and contribute her full share in the service of the motherland."

Mrs. Sarojini then rose to speak. Her speech was remarkable for its fluency and chaste well-chosen language. She described her own experiences of women's life in the West. Apparently the speeches of both these speakers differed fundamentally. Mirabehn's dissatisfaction at woman's life in the West and Sarojini's encomiums of the



women there would, naturally, seem to be poles apart. But really there was not this contradiction. At the end of the meeting Shri Ambalal remarked to Mirabehn, "Look at this! You are not satisfied with your conditions and we with ours. The speeches of both of you showed that man is always dissatisfied with his situation." That is one view. But the central fact is that a generous-minded person always sees his own faults and other's virtues. The speeches of both indicated this largeness of heart. The substance of Mirabehn's speech was this: "In our search for freedom and equality, we have lost the spirit of service and humility." What Shri Sarojinibehn wanted to drive at was: Indian women have debased the exalted ideals of service and humility into the detestable form of slavery and inequality. She said in effect: "Service of the husband is an excellent ideal, but do we, Indian women, possess a monopoly of it? Women in the West maintain their self-respect and serve their husbands and children as well, do all the work of a housewife, wash the clothes and carry on without a servant. The joint-family system among us has made woman helpless, has shut her off from the world outside and thus narrowed her vision. The single families in the West are well-balanced and contribute their due share in the service of the society. We need not take pride even in the idea that our women are the very embodiments of service, because the work the women in the West did during the War was incomparable. We, Indian women, cannot prove that we are prepared to do the same work. Our women have no value of time, while those of the West do everything on the stroke." A discriminative reader will not find it difficult to fill up the gaps in the speech. Shri Sarojini gives us her impression formed from her observation of some high families in the West. She chooses to see only the bright side of the Western way of living. But those who have heard Mirabehn describing the artificial, quarrel-some, unhappy and wasted life of the middle-class women in the West realize that all is not gold that glitters.

The day of the Parliamentary debate also was very delightful and interesting. The subject was rather difficult: The Bill in substance was: "Since it is necessary to stop the plethora of stories and poems, this Parliament prohibits the activities of writers for 10 years and even after that period relaxes the ban to the extent that their further creations may be published only by the society or the state that admires the writers." There was an excellent debate on it. The sponsors of the Bill were mostly the students of the National College, while the opponents mostly the Professors and students of the Gujarat (Government) College—though there was one student of the National College among them. If the Gujarati students and the Gujarati Professors of the Gujarat College had themselves come forward to oppose the Bill, and not put as



speakers non-Gujarati Professors innocent of Gujarati literature, the function would have been much grander. But let us not dwell too much upon a discussion on an imaginary subject. The significance behind the whole discussion lay elsewhere. From the speeches on both the sides, a discerning listener could not have failed to detect the tremendous difference between education imparted through the mother tongue and that through an alien language. The opposition submitted its case through a foreign language (English) and hence even the substantial arguments in their case could not be brought out quite effectively. But the sponsors of the Bill were, naturally, at home in the language they used (Gujarati) and so it was a child's play for them to present their difficult case impressively. The visitors from outside could not have been provided with a better instance than this of the great value of national education and of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction.



2-12-1926

Is This Humanity?

VIII

(Abridged translation by M. D.)

@ Letters on this subject are still pouring in, but I fail to discover in them any new question or any fresh argument advanced. I would, therefore, ask those who have been thinking on this subject to read this series of articles over and over again. I do so without the slightest hesitation, inasmuch as they are the result, not of ideas hastily formed, but of experience of many years. I have presented no new principles, but have tried to restate old principles. I cannot say how far the presentation is correct, but as it represents my honest conviction and as many friends expect me to solve intricate problems in '*Ahimsa*', I can only ask them to turn to the series I have been writing. Some of my correspondents wrench my own sentences from their contexts and quote them against me, some quote a part of them and omit the most essential remainder.

Thus I have never advocated the extirpation of dogs as a class. On the contrary, my suggestions have been made for their betterment. I have repeatedly said that I have suggested the destruction of certain dogs under certain circumstances. Even this may be open to question. If it is, the objector should address himself only to that and nothing more.

I continue to be the same votary of *ahimsa* that I was before. I still continue to hold life, not only in man and animal, but in plant and flower, as sacred, and yet make use of vegetables and flowers and fruit. Only the spirit behind the use is: 'He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.' Destruction of dogs even as that of plant or vegetable, is advised only when it is a matter of imperative duty and only when it is meant not to sow to the flesh, but to the spirit.

What torments me is the impotence of the votary of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* is not impotence. *Ahimsa* is not powerlessness. *Ahimsa* is unconquerable power. We shrink from it as we are dazed by its overpowering lustre. Only very few of us can catch a glimpse of it. *Ahimsa* is the distinguishing characteristic of an untrammelled spirit. It is at the root of a number of other qualities—discrimination, detachment, penance, equability, and knowledge. It is the way of the brave, not of the shrinkers. He who would understand *ahimsa* must understand the meaning of the inevitable *himsa* one



sees about oneself. This statement, I know, is liable to abuse. But what is there free from this danger? Is not even God's name turned to the worst account? Have not rivers of blood been made to flow in His name? Have we not worshipped the Devil in His name? But that does not diminish His glory. That does not mean that we shall take His name in a secret corner.

All action is tainted inasmuch as it presupposes *himsa*. And yet we free ourselves from the bondage of action through action itself. The body is the receptacle of sin, and yet we seek to achieve salvation by making of that abode of sin God's own sanctuary. Even so with *himsa*.

And this *himsa*, calculated to take us on the onward path, must be spontaneous, must be the lowest minimum, must be rooted in compassion, must have discrimination, restraint, detachment at its back, and must lead us every moment onward to the path of *ahimsa*.

I propose to conclude this series with a brief reference by way of illustration to the way in which we are trying to solve the dog problem in the Ashram.

The problem is as old as the Ashram itself. The activity of the Mahajan has made it more serious and we have put up with it not without reluctance. It is our practice to destroy rabid dogs. Two or three such cases have occurred during the last ten years. Healthy dogs have not been destroyed, they are being refused food. I see that if the rule is strictly observed we would be all happy, but we cannot do so. Every inmate does not yet realize the necessity of it, and those who do are not sufficiently alive to the observance of the rule. And there are also employees in the Ashram—how can they be made to observe the rule?

Some dogs we feed, there being no other alternative. Two bitches and their puppies are being maintained at present. The puppies have been kept in cosy boxes or baskets to keep them from cold, and are being given milk and the dame gets specially prepared food.

On the other hand, we have applied to the Mahajan to remove stray dogs from here. The request has been accepted, though their cart has not yet come.

I have explained to the best of my light our duty to the dogs. Every one has to act according to his own light. Let no one learn from me the duty of destruction. He may under certain circumstances permit himself to have recourse to it. I have laid down the limits. Every one observes and will observe the law according to his own



capacity. I have referred to the present practice at the Ashram simply to serve as an illustration of what my opinion means.

The religion of *ahimsa* consists in allowing others the maximum of convenience at the maximum of inconvenience to us, even at the risk of life. Every one has to determine for himself the amount of inconvenience he is capable of putting up with. No third party can determine it for him. Religion, even as the soul, is both one and many.



9-12-1926

The Greatest Good of All

[As this article by Gandhiji in '*Young India*' of the above date is an explanation of his articles entitled 'Is This Humanity', it is reproduced here—Translator.]

@ A constant reader of *Young India* sends the following:

"Here is news in a press-cutting of a year ago which would seem to support your view regarding the duty of taking life under certain circumstances, which you have been expounding in the series of articles under the caption 'Is This Humanity?', particularly in the fourth of the series published in *Young India* of November 4*.

Special to Times of India

LITTLETON, (Colorado), Nov. 13 (1925)

Harold Blazer, a country doctor, aged 61, who chloroformed his daughter because he felt that his own end was near, and there was no one to care for her when he was gone, was fully acquitted when the prosecution moved the dismissal of the case following the inability of the jury to agree after fourteen hours, at the end of which eleven were for an acquittal. Dr. Blazer's counsel, Mr. Howry, declared: "Blazer did a right and moral thing by keeping the poor girl whom he had cared for thirty-two years from becoming a charge on others. This imbecile girl, gargoyle, without arms, legs, speech or thought, whom it was necessary to feed with food already masticated, could not have a soul."

"At the same time last year I remember I read about a Paris case in which an actress shot and killed her lover at his own importunate request, as he was suffering excruciating pain from a disease from which there was no hope of recovery. The actress was tried for man-slaughter, but acquitted on the jury's verdict that no crime had been committed in view of the circumstances. Though there appears to be no law in France to justify such a verdict, I have read that in Denmark there has been actually a law passed making it no crime for certain authorised persons in cases like the above to put an end to a human life with 'happy dispatch.' I hope these cases may be of interest to you and many of my fellow-readers of *Young India*."

I reproduce this letter, for it helps me to elucidate my own position. If such a very careful reader of *Young India*, as I know this correspondent is, misunderstands my own position, as is evident from his letter, how many more occasional readers must



have done likewise? Several readers did draw my attention to the danger of a misunderstanding arising owing to the traditional hardness of our hearts which makes us prone to seize every opportunity of doing violence. One can only be—one ought to be—most careful in the handling of delicate problems; but no fear of misuse of statements can be permitted to stop a free and honest discussion of fundamental truths. For me, I shall learn to be and do right only by prayerful discussion, elucidation, and interchange of views. This letter I have quoted is an instance in point. The discussion has brought to light an honest misunderstanding of difference between the correspondent and myself in the interpretation of the same principle.

While I am of opinion that Dr. Blazer was well-acquitted, according to the test laid down by me, he was wrong in taking the life of his daughter. It betrayed want of faith in the humanity of those round him. There was no warrant for him to suppose that the daughter would not have been cared for by others. The position in the case of dogs under the circumstances assumed by me is materially different from the position in which Dr. Blazer found himself. Nor am I able to subscribe to the view that an idiot has no soul. I believe that even the lower creation have souls.

Weightier still is the difficulty which another earnest reader puts and which may be thus summarised.

"I appreciate the position you have taken up. It is the only true position. But does not your argument after all resolve itself into the utilitarian doctrine of the greater good of the greater number? And if that is your position, where does the doctrine of non-violence differ from the utilitarian which makes no pretence to non-violence and which will not hesitate to destroy life, if the destruction would lead to the greater good of the greater number?"

In the first place even though the outward act may be the same, its implications will vary according to the motive prompting it. Thus as non-violence in the West stops at man and even then, only where possible, there is no compunction felt either over subjecting animals to vivisection for the supposed greater good of mankind or over heaping up most destructive armaments also in the name of the same doctrine of utility. A votary of non-violence, on the other hand, might have done one act of destruction in common with the utilitarian, but he would prefer to die rather than make himself party to vivisection or to an endless multiplication of armaments.

The fact is that a votary of '*ahimsa*' cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He



will therefore, be willing to die, so that others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greater number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge at many points in their career, but there does come a time, when they must part company and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself. The absolutist, when he kills a dog, does so either out of weakness or in rare cases for the sake of the dog himself. That it is a dangerous thing to decide what is or is not good for the dog, and that he may, therefore, make grievous mistakes is irrelevant to the fact of the motive prompting the act. The absolutist's sphere of destruction will be always the narrowest possible. The utilitarian's has no limit. Judged by the standard of non-violence, the late war was wholly wrong. Judged by the utilitarian standard each party has justified it according to its idea of utility. Even the Jallianwala Bag massacre was justified by its perpetrators on the grounds of utility. And precisely on the same grounds the anarchist justifies his assassinations. But none of these can be justified on the greatest-good-of-all principle.

* See page 295.



12-12-1926

The Question of Unemployment

[The Tilak National College at Nagpur organises annually a series of lectures during the months of November and December. The first in the series this year was that of Shri Rajagopalachariar. Most of the students of the city were present. The subject of the speech has been stated above and its important portion is given below:—M.D. in "*Navajivan*" d. 12-12-1926]

"When you think of the problem of unemployment, the question arises: Whose unemployment—of the educated or the uneducated? Unemployment has grown fearfully among both these classes in India. We shall first think of whichever of the two you choose. [The students wished that unemployment among the educated might first be tackled]. If you think that unemployment among the educated is of greater importance, all right, let us talk of it first. But really the more important question is that of the unemployment among the illiterate masses.

"It is necessary first to know exactly what your unemployment means. If by 'unemployment' you mean your inability to pay your ever-increasing bills, I say, I do not give that meaning. I interpret 'unemployment' to mean the stoppage of the function of the educated, namely, that of bringing about a particular kind of the country's prosperity. While it is the business of the educated to increase culture and spiritual knowledge in the country, that of the uneducated is to enhance its material wealth. I propose to discuss why the educated have stopped performing this their natural function and not why they cannot get services, as I do not believe that the aim of education is to provide employment.

"Let us consider the question of the plight of young men who, at present, go from, one office to another, give up this occupation and take up that. I wish to deal with it from an angle quite opposed to the one which has been taken by many others. The remedy I suggest is this: If every educated man simplifies his way of living, not only will he get enough for his own subsistence, but will also contribute his share in the progress of the national culture. Is there any imperative law requiring an educated man to spend more money after himself than his illiterate brother? Is it the aim of education to make our lives more expensive? But what is the position? Go to your villages and see for yourselves. Men of your own caste, of your own religion, of the same qualities, good and bad, as you have, manage to live upon 10 Rs., while you cannot do without 100. Candidates who enter Government service begin with Rs. 30 and yet there is no end to their dissatisfaction. But if a villager happens to earn Rs. 30



per month, he will hail it as a heaven-sent bliss. We are uneasy and discontented—we want more money for our maintenance than the village—because our education has taught us to imitate the practice prevailing in the West. But this imitation will do us no good. Western countries are very prosperous and people can easily draw big salaries. We cannot afford those high salaries, and yet we cherish that hope and invite unhappiness ourselves. If we change our outlook and start living simply, we become free at once to live a cultured life. The beauty of the life in England lies in its having a big class of men, who content with modest means, increase the culture of the country. There is no such class among us because all of us have made a firm resolve to earn at least a particular amount. What a waste of energy that!

"As matters stand, the farmer who lives upon 5 Rs. a month renders greater service to the country than an educated man who maintains himself on Rs. 50. It is from the former's sweat and toil that corn is produced, cloth is woven and wealth is created. The labour of the educated supplies only his own needs which he has unnecessarily increased. How happy will our educated be, if they brace themselves up to lead the life of that farmer?

"That means that, for removing your unemployment, I wish a revolution takes place in your thinking and way of living. Without such a total transformation, the question of unemployment cannot end. If we learn to live a farmer's inexpensive life, this question is solved automatically. Your schools and colleges are not going to teach you to live in a simple style—though in books we do read that the aim of education is to make our lives simpler and more cultured. Today the educated young man does not like his home, looks down upon his village, and has an aversion to his parents' habits. He requires a variety of dishes and a number of dresses in his wardrobe. Is there any wonder then that he wants a high salary? Let alone the principle of education, the institutions in which we live to get it,—our hostels and residences—, instil into us the habit of living a life so artificial that we feel ashamed to use our own hands and feet. And that habit clings to us after leaving our college. What a matter of shame it is that if an educated man is seen carrying a bundle, a rustic standing by tells him, 'O, why take the trouble yourself? Give it to me. I will lift it for you,' as if the educated man's hands and feet are broken: When you go home from your college, you are not ashamed to make your grandmother bring you a cup of drinking water. And quite often the poor old dame has to draw that water from the well and bring it. When we alight from a railway train, a much older porter wants to take our burden from our hands and if I don't give it to him, I am dubbed a miser! That shows how universal is the



impression of an educated man doing nothing with his own hands! My aged uncle, when he was even twice as old as I am, used to wash his own dhoti himself. But I became like you a man with degrees and so gave up the use of my hands. If you discard this bad habit and become labourer, you will begin to take interest in your life, you will have joy and happiness, you will not need to sell your learning but will get an opportunity to use it for the service of the country. After you have done that much, you will find so much work waiting to be done in your country, that you will not be able to cope with it. Hence, in truth, the disease we suffer from is not unemployment but an expensive and artificial life. The disease is the destruction of our will and power to use our hands and feet and not any lack of work, which is plentiful.

"If you want the key that brings about this overhauling change in the mind, I can give it to you. Go to some village, watch how the farmer lives and try to live as he does. Request him to allow you to live with him. The idea will make you laugh. You will blurt out: 'What an absurd thing he is saying?' But it is not nonsense, not ridiculous. Let me tell you that in England there are sons of peers of high rank who, solely for having an experience of village life—for the pleasure of the experiment,—approach villagers and try to live within very limited means.

"But I may not discuss this point further. I come now to the question of unemployment among the uneducated. You will say, "How are we concerned in the matter?" But if you have agreed with what I have said so far, I must tell you that you are very much involved, because by simple living you may have solved not only your own unemployment problem, but will also have time to handle the question of these people.

The educated are at present immersed in their own worries, as they have increased their wants. Who will care to take up the problem of the illiterate then? To me for one, it seems that the question of their unemployment is far more important than yours, because it is a question of life and death for them. Hundreds of thousands of our poor men die like flies today. And why? From starvation? From plague? Malaria? No. They die of poverty. Their poverty is so dreadful that they cannot earn enough food to fill even half their stomach before the day ends.

"That is only the physical aspect of the disease of poverty. But have you ever thought that that disease has a terrible moral aspect also? They are hankering after a few annas at any moral cost. They have no qualms in selling their vote for 8 annas. It has been an accepted fact that, in India, bribery can give you whatever you want. And



the third aspect of that disease is political. We cannot talk of politics before the poor people, cannot melt their hearts, by the description of the plight of other part of the country. What is the reason? The reason for even that is their stark poverty. How can they take any part in politics unless they get sufficient food to satisfy their hunger? Thus our educated man is absorbed in meeting his artificial needs and our poor villager in gazing at the sky, day and night, in the hope of getting something to eat. That is why we are meekly accepting our present slavery.

"My suggestion then to you is that, instead of taking up a long course in art or science at your school or college, you should study this question of poverty, as it has made even life impossible to live in our country. You should think of how to make those poor people more happy and prosperous.

"So now I suggest the solution of this question by giving you a few figures and some proofs. Do you know that the population of our farmers is two hundred and twenty millions? Do you know that all the plants that exist in India—including all the cotton ginning and weaving mills, jute, silk and paper mills and factories, and printing establishments absorb only fourteen hundred thousand people? But the question that stares in our face is that of two hundred and twenty two millions. Hence, you cannot solve the question of the so many millions by asking yourself the question, 'which is better to wear—mill cloth or Khadi?'

"The question of Khadi has been very sadly misinterpreted in Maharashtra. I think there must be some misunderstanding somewhere. I cannot understand how while in Tamilnad eight hundred thousand rupees worth of Khadi is sold off, such a city as Nagpur, with a population of one hundred and fifty thousand souls, buys Khadi worth hardly a thousand and a half or two thousand rupees. Let me tell you that, in this matter of Khadi, you have fallen into a ghastly error. You put forward the boycott of foreign cloth and affirm that boycott can be accomplished most successfully by means of mill cloth. I admit that if the question with us were confined to only that matter, perhaps our mills could cope with the matter well enough. But what about the fact that half the time of two hundred and twenty millions is wasted and they have not enough food to eat for want of other occupation? The mills are monsters. They get a hundred men's work done through one. If we manage to employ two hundred millions in mills, they would produce so large a quantity of cloth that we shall have to seek markets for them in Mars and Jupiter. An Empire twenty times as big as our British Empire cannot consume that large quantity of cloth. Were we a small nation like



England or Japan, we could have perhaps easily solved our unemployment problem through machines. But God has given our mother so many children that it is indispensable for us to find out another way. What is your economics before the solution of this gigantic problem? How will your study of economics of authors like Marshall help you in this matter? Just imagine that you are in England and a foreigner comes and states that there is no need for coal, as petrol is plentiful and that the coal mines in England should be closed and all factories and plants worked with petrol. Will they accept this suggestion? The economists of England will not put up with it for a moment. Even if they had known that the price of petrol was dirt cheap, they would have scouted the plan, because hundreds of thousands of mine workers would have lost their employment and they would not have any other occupation as a substitute.

"Hence, for our two hundred and twenty unemployed millions there is one single occupation which is congenial, hereditary, easy for all, old and young, and one that can be successfully propagated in all our provinces. It is only through that occupation that we can convert the idle hours of our multi-million people into multi-million rupees. We have not the time to erect big plants. We have not the time to produce electricity from the waters of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra and work our industries through it. Nor have we the time to go in for big experiments in agricultural reform. Instead of allowing a single minute of our unemployed to go waste, give them work right today and money through that work.

"But have you done anything tangible?", you will question. I say, "Yes". My own eyes and hands are my witnesses and I am prepared to swear a solemn oath about the truth that I am now going to say. Two years ago, only two persons knew spinning at the place where I am now working. Today there are 3000 women-spinners and they take cotton from there and give yarn in return. I have never delivered a speech before them, as I am now delivering it before you. They come to the place with smiling faces because they get from there 1 ½ annas (1 anna= 1/16 rupee) per day. Through these 3000 spinning wheels I distributed last year 30,000 rupees. These rupees were put into their empty pockets or rather into their empty earthen pots, for they have no pockets at all! Besides that amount, rupees 18,000 were given to weavers. And all this I am talking of refers to only one village—mine—which is not extraordinary in any sense, is as common as any other. And this increase of Rs. 30,000 at one centre cannot be considered as an increase of only Rs. 30,000. Just as, in an election, if we lost one vote to the opponent, he gains by two votes, our production of Rs. 30,000 means a saving of the loss of Rs. 60,000.



“Thus though it is true that we shall be able to bring about the boycott of foreign cloth by our solution of the problem of the unemployed poor, that result is only a side-effect. The principal result is the destruction of unemployment of multi millions and equal distribution of wealth.

"Have you any doubt that our country is poor? Why should you have any? Even our Emperor has no doubt on that score. He has appointed an Agricultural Commission for the relief of poverty¹ . The distressing cry of poverty has been coming out from every dwelling, but you are too absorbed in your studies to have the spare time to listen to it. But the Englishmen want to relieve our poverty in a different way. They want to improve our agriculture, improve it by mechanical implements. No doubt, there is poverty in their country also, and there may be unemployment too. So, by making us use implements made in their country which will cost us thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds, they wish to remove poverty in our country. If our poor people have not the time and the means to buy those machines and mechanically-worked tools, money could be lent to them through Credit Societies. But that is their remedy—a remedy useful to them but of no use to us. If you agree with me, come along with me to my village and stay in the midst of villagers as I am doing. And if you see for yourselves how by a little effort from you, at least a few poor people can fill their stomachs, will there be any end to your happiness? Man cannot gain real happiness by gaining it for himself only. He earns true happiness and joy only by bringing happiness to other souls.

"And there is another remedy—easier still. It is that of wearing Khadi. My heart weeps whenever I see an educated young Indian wearing foreign clothes and firing off a foreign language with perfect ease. I wonder, 'Has all that 'high' education evaporated into thin air?'

"Wear Khadi, take the spinning wheel and go and settle in villages. There you will not have the trouble of providing for exaggerated needs, your own unemployment will end and with it that of the poor people."

1. A Royal Agricultural Commission with the Marquis of Linlithgow as the President was appointed on 31-3-1926.



16-12-1926

Students and Khadi

(M.D.'s article in 'Young India')

@ The students of Nagpur availed themselves of the presence of Shri Rajagopalachari in Wardha and had two heart-to-heart talks from him on Khaddar and what it means. The first which was in response to an invitation from the National College was on the 'Problem of Unemployment'. (Published in "Navajivan" d. 12-12-1926.)

"Tears come to my eyes when I see an educated man dressed in foreign cloth," said the speaker (in the end of that talk), "and the least I expect you to do is to discard your foreign clothes and wear Khadi."

I do not know whether tears came to the eyes of those to whom these words were addressed, but two young men, both dressed in Khadi, followed Shri Rajagopalachari to the station and importunated him to go to Morris College the next day and repeat the same argument. 'We belong to the Government College, sir, and we badly need a talk of this kind,' they said. 'But will you have a speech on Khadi? Will the Principal agree? Will he preside?' asked Shri Rajagopalachari. 'Certainly' said the students and they were as good as their word. They fixed up the meeting, succeeded in getting their Principal to preside and announced without beating about the bush that Shri Rajagopalachari will speak on 'Khaddar'.

And Nagpur had the unique credit of having a Government College with a Principal and students who invited an avowed Khaddarite to speak on Khaddar. But that was not all. It was an ideal meeting. The College hall was packed to its fullest capacity, with boys from other colleges as well. For close on an hour and a half they listened to the speaker with rapt attention, as he carried them slowly, like a practiced teacher, through the elements of Khadi economics. He went there, he said, as a hawker and a pedlar and he must advertise his wares as best as he could. In a room at the back of the wall were exhibited pieces of Khaddar Shri Rajagopalachari had taken with him, and like Faraday who spoke on the story of the candle he spoke on the story of the Khadi he was hawking. I may say that there was nothing new for those who have been regularly reading '*Young India*' and yet there was everything new for the students who had gathered there. I am taking a few sentences at random from his instructive talk. 'Try the experiment of living on Rs. 2-8-0 per month and then visualize for



yourselves the life of the living India, "the India of the villages..... Can you move these people from their homes? They are fixtures. You must find employment for them at their very doors..... I assure you, none of the industries that are available is neglected and yet you have millions and millions who cannot find two annas a day No man or woman who is fully occupied with anything bringing more than 2 annas a day is called upon to spin. Applied hunger is Khaddar..... You do not solve the problem of hunger by industrialising India, but by making it industrious Khaddar is cheaper in the end. If you are today purchasing Rs. 50 worth of foreign cloth, I assure you, you will be able to do with Rs. 25 worth of Khaddar. For, sweetmeats you may overeat and overspend on, but you cannot overeat rice. And so with Khaddar.... The first title that I thought of for today's speech was, 'What is decent dress?' Because it is my conviction that it is indecent to wear any other cloth but Khaddar. For, what after all is indecency? It is not caring for the feelings of the people around you..... The poorest people cannot be our customers today. I have come to ask you to be our customers. Government do not give it the subsidy it deserves, and I want the subsidy of your organized love for your half-starved countrymen."

The talk proved effective. Mr. Cheshire heartily thanked the speaker and spoke a few words of courage and conviction. 'Even as a Government servant I tell you I will not stand in the way of any one doing social service to his country by buying Khaddar. The actual wage today, the lecturer has told you, is Rs. 2.8.0 and I say the minimum living wage a man wants in this country is Rs. 11/- and I appeal to you to do anything honest by way of self-sacrifice for the millions of people who are living far below a living wage.' He thanked the speaker for giving them a real good talk on rural economics, and deplored that this subject, which was the only economics worth teaching in a country like India, had been displaced by economics divorced from actual life. 'I have seen Khaddar exhibited in Government museums,' he concluded, 'and I tell you, that was really the cloth that appealed to my sense of beauty. I tell you I am prepared to buy Khaddar myself.'

Interesting questions followed. 'You are a hawker, sir, what are your wages, may we know?' a wag asked. 'No wages, my young friend, but the satisfaction of feeling that I have persuaded some of you to wear Khadi,' was the reply. 'You want us to go back to our primitive condition. How long shall we remain in that condition, when all the countries in the world are advancing rapidly?' was another question. 'I do not want you to be primitive. I want you to go back to a normal, healthy life from one of poverty and disease.' 'It is a retrograde measure, sir,' retorted the friend who appeared to be



a student of law. 'Yes', replied Shri Rajagopalachari amidst considerable applause, 'as retrograde as asking a dishonest man to go back to honesty.'

But the last question was thoroughly business-like. 'Kindly give us a programme of work. What shall we do for the movement besides wearing Khaddar?' Shri Rajagopalachari detailed the ways in which they might help the movement. 'You will spin half an hour a day. You will wear and make others wear Khadi. You will hawk Khadi if you get time, and you will go to your village in your vacation and spread the message of Khaddar.'

Never was the effect of a speech more instantaneous. The students did credit to themselves and their college. Many of them took down the names of centres where genuine Khadi was available, some asked for the *takli*, and a number of them purchased Khadi on the spot. The organisers of the meeting insisted on the balance of the Khadi being kept there, so that they might dispose of it the next day. They have taken from us draft rules for forming a Students' Khadi union, by which, by a monthly contribution of a small sum, a number of students would be enabled to buy Khadi during the year.



23-12-1926

Don't Believe These Stories

(M.D.'s article in 'Young India')

@ 'Pray, don't believe these stories. Prohibition has not failed. It is the cry of a small section which wants the wet conditions back.'

This was what two American ladies who had come to see Mahatmaji said in effect, when I showed them a paragraph from the newspapers about how prohibition had 'failed' in America.

Non-co-operation is said to have failed, and yet people have not ceased to talk of non-co-operation. Prohibition is likewise said to have failed. But one may ask, 'If prohibition has failed, why do you still talk about it? Why is it that you are forming strong organisations to fight it? The newspaper paragraph stated that some eminent American doctor had said that things were far worse in America than they used to be in the days before the 18th Amendment was passed, and that drink was now prevalent to a frightful extent among women and young children. The two American ladies Mrs. and Miss Holt were surprised when they read the cutting. 'Don't believe these stories,' they said.

'But we shall talk more definitely,' said Miss Holt, who is a professor in an important college in Missouri, 'Let us take the working people. Go and ask them if prohibition has failed. It has changed their lives and their outlook on life. They have made an astonishing increase in their savings and whereas they had no homes in the days before prohibition, and lived in hovels they are in a position today to utilize building loans and make their homes. Half of the days' wages used to be wasted on drink on open saloon days. All that is now saved and goes to make their lives richer and more contented.'

'The same thing may be said about the farmers and field workers. I agree that illicit drinking prevails amongst them, but to nothing like the extent these critics represent. They make a sort of corn-whisky called 'hootch,' which is disastrous in its effect. It is so poisonous that instances have been known of young men having gone blind after a heavy drink, and not having recovered their sight until after hours of continued nursing. Ordinary liquor or good whisky is so difficult to get that some of these people take to 'hootch'. But as you can see, it contains its own corrective.'



'To come now to the lower middle classes. Well, Mother can tell you better.' And here Mrs. Holt bore witness : 'I can only say that people who had no family life and used to loaf about, have their own automobiles, go about in them on excursions and holidays with their wives and children, whom they now frequently take to the movies, which before was a costly luxury. They enjoy a domestic felicity and a fellowship amongst themselves which they never did before.

'Women are proud to tell how much they save every month. Instead of rented hovels they have nice comfortable homes. They now afford to have a new pair of boots and stockings when needed and have the time and inclination to go to 'Church'.

'As to young men,' Miss Holt put in, 'gamblers clubs have been converted into baseball teams and they have a fine time of it on Sundays. We may be said to represent the upper middle class living in the fine rich tracts of the Central States and I can assure you that no one wants the wet conditions to return.

'But about young people, Miss Holt, you could answer still more definitely as you have been in charge of a big college,' I asked. 'Yes, presently I shall give you some figures Young people do drink, I confess, but by no means more than they used to do. You know when prohibition first came, it was considered "smart" for a young man to go to a party with his flask of wine in the teeth of State regulations. And the school and college boys occasionally have a bout more for mischief than for anything else. But there are very few such cases and it is because the instances are few and far between that they become conspicuous and come up to the surface. We have fewer drunken disturbances than we used to have. I have seen life at three Universities and I may safely say that conditions are far better than they used to be. In the Missouri University the girls had a big meeting and passed resolutions that they would under no circumstances countenance drink. In our own institution out of 500 girls one girl was detected and three suspected during the year. I can say that out of 500 girls there are not more than 50 who have ever tested drink, and 450 who have never drunk.'

'And mother can possibly say with better knowledge how conditions in her days compare with those of today.'

'Yes', said Mrs. Holt, 'I can say that in our days we had seven saloons for a community of 5000. And whereas there were 25 to 50 cases of drunken brawls every year in those days of open saloons, there are hardly five cases today.'



'Pray, tell me then who are responsible for this cry of failure of prohibition? Only the rich?', I inquired.

'Not even the rich', said Mrs. Holt. 'As we have told you we can talk with some authority of the upper middle classes who inhabit the rich central tracts of U. S. A. It is the 'new rich' who are responsible for this cry. By the "new rich" I mean the class that suddenly sprang into wealth during the War. They have nothing to busy themselves with. Their young men wander about and their young girls drink. These people often go to London and Paris and spend their fortunes in luxury and drink and they have earned a bad name for us. And the English people support them in their propaganda against prohibition. An English lady met me on the boat and asking, "Now tell me, can prohibition be a success?" wanted me to agree with her. But it is the "new rich" who are mainly responsible.'

'Have they any organisation?' I asked.

'They have. But we have also our organisations and many more and popular. All Churches are on our side. There are numerous women's political organisations working for prohibition.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Holt. Just one more question. Supposing a plebiscite were to be taken now, do you think that there is any fear of prohibition being in danger?'

'No,' said both the mother and the daughter emphatically. 'An overwhelming majority of votes would be cast in favour of prohibition. Very few want prohibition to go.'



30-12-1926

Khadi in Gujarat

(Abridged translation by M. D. of Sri. Laxmidas Purushottamdas' annual report in Gujarati in *Young India* of the above date.)

@ The annual report of the Gujarat Khadi Mandal shows a production of 108,452 3/4 square yards. The year under report included four months of the previous year which closed early and the additional lunar month. Figures of production have been shown under three heads: (1) From yarn received from voluntary spinners; (2) from yarn spun for wages; (3) from yarn received from members and other yarn received as donation. The first head shows 52,321 sq. yards, the second 44,381 sq. yards and the third 11,750 3/4 sq. yards. This represents production done through 24 centres two of which are private and twentytwo work under the Mandal. 13 of these worked for full 17 months of the year under report, one for 16 months, two for 15 months; one for 14, one for 9, two for 2, and four for a few days only. The centres sold their own Khadi, and besides there were 5 stores in the principal towns which sold Khadi produced in the province as well as imported from other provinces. The total sales amount to Rs. 1,12,916-14-6. Rs. 26,157-3-0 worth being Gujarat Khadi and Rs. 86,759-11-6 worth being from other provinces.

As a result of the Khadi activity of the Mandal, the following amounts were distributed among different classes

of people:

36 workers	Rs. 9,902-10-6
18 families of carders	4,295-0-0
998 spinners	5,310-15-6
85 families of weavers	19,509-13-6

	Rs. 39,018- 7 -6

Rs. 9,902-10-6 were distributed as bounty to voluntary spinners, and on Khadi woven out of yarn spun for wages, the rate of the bounty being half an anna per *punjam* of 160 threads per yard. 103 villages were served through the 22 centres and the number of voluntary spinners who get their yarn woven through them was 1,686.



Besides the bounty given to self-spinners and on Khadi woven from yarn spun for wages, 6 per cent interest was allowed to individuals or bodies investing their own capital in the manufacture of Khadi, the condition being that the production should be four times as many square yards as the capital invested. The bounty of 6 pies per yard has been reduced to 5 ½ pies in the current year.

There were two centres (Vedchhi and Ramesara) where social reform work is going on hand in hand with Khadi work. There has been an appreciable reduction in drink at both the places and Barias now rarely incur debts to go in for heavy ceremonial expenses. The spinners gin and card their own cotton and a number of men from the so-called backward classes have now learnt weaving and do all the weaving in these areas.

Besides training fresh weavers, old weavers who were ignorant of handling handspun yarn were trained during the year, the Gujarat Khadi Mandal having borne the cost of training no less than 15 such families. These were sent to centres where there were no weavers, or none available to weave hand-spun yarn, or to weave large widths.

Technical education (in all the processes from picking cotton to weaving and dyeing Khadi) was provided at four centres: (1) Satyagrahashram, Sabarmati ; (2) Udyogshala, Madhda; (3) Khadi Ashram, Vedchhi; (4) Khadi Ashram, Ramesara. During the year the number of those trained was 5 at the first centre, 3 at the third centre and 1 at the fourth.

Efforts were also made in the improvement of carding. 9 families of carders were maintained at Bardoli at the expense of the Mandal and they were specially trained in the use of the different bows and in giving the best carding. As a result, carding showed considerable improvement and the count of yarn which used to be only 6 increased to 10 and 12; in consequence *Khadi* also became lighter and cheaper in cost and the weavers earned a higher wage. The increase in the wages earned by them will be seen from the following figures, the rate of payment being the same:

Name of Centre	Monthly Wages in Ashadh 1981	Monthly Wages in Ashadh 1982
Majur Udyogshala Ahmedabad	20- 9-9	25-4-10
Rahad Weaving School	16- 6-9	23-8-10



Karadi Weaving School	18- 8-3	26- 9-0
Varad Khadi Ashram	21-13-0	44-0-0
Bhadran Weaving School	15-12-0	25- 14-6

The figures show that because of the improvement in yarn the weavers were able to turn out more than they did the previous year. But there is yet much more room for improvement inasmuch as the rate given to the weaver is nearly twice as much as that paid by the mills on a yard of the same quality of yarn. The average percentage of strength and evenness in the yarn spun for wages was as follows:

Name of Khadi Centre	Strength	Evenness	Count
Kathlal	41.25	75	11
Dharmaj	34.75	81.5	10.5
Bhadran	32	79	8.5
Anand	33.25	71.5	8.5
Nadiad	32.25	75	8
Varad	42.50	80	11.5
Sarbhon	41.50	77.75	10
Majur Udyogagriha Ahmedabad	40.25	72.5	10
Manipur	42.25	72	10

Though the yarn is considerably better than before, it is evident from the figures given above that much ground has yet to be covered. Experiments have shown that more care in cotton-picking, carding, and spraying yarn has invariably yielded better results. If the workers continue experiments in the direction, they will easily be able to improve still more the yarn in their centres.

At Bardoli a technical shop was opened during the year. Services of a professional carpenter were availed of for training three of the workers in carpentry and they can now make everything in the spinning and weaving outfit. The following is an abstract of the implements etc. sold at the shop during the year under report:



Charkhas	....	318	Brass pulleys for spindles	....	74
Spindles	....	77	Sprayers	....	7
Hankers	....	61	Spindle Holders	....	86
Hankers (new type)	....	31	Spindle Holders (old type)	....	874
Taklis	....	2,563	Discs for spindles	....	505
Takli boxes	....	33	Carding bows	....	149
Hand gins	....	160	Carding Mats	....	7
Kakar	....	180	Sliver Boards	....	20
	Cotton		....		1,869 lbs.
	Slivers		....		3,844 lbs.
	Yarn		....		1,131 lbs.

The centres are inspected once a month and bounty given them after a satisfactory result is shown. The results of inspection are published monthly and attention drawn to drawbacks and defects.



Appendix

- I. Indulgence or Self-Denial
- II. The Crime of Caste
- III. Khadi in Kathiawar
- IV. Crime of Reading Bible
- V. Good Manners



Appendix-I

Indulgence Or Self-Denial

It is not without sorrow that I have to announce to the numerous co-workers the suspension of my touring programme for about one year. At least upto 20th December next, I am not to stir out of the Ashram, certainly not out of Ahmedabad, except for imperative reasons of health or some unforeseen event. This decision has been arrived at after consultation at Cawnpore with the principal co-workers who were there during the Congress Week. The reasons for the decision are chiefly three.

- (1) To give my tired limbs as much rest as is possible to give them. Dr. Ansari has sent me elaborate instructions forbidding even all avoidable mental toil.
- (2) To enable me to give personal attention to the Ashram, I was expected to do this when it was opened, but I have not been able to do so except for the first year of its existence.
- (3) To enable me to put the affairs of the A.I.S.A., satisfactory as they are, on a sound business-like basis. This requires constant supervision and attention to details. This is possible only if I am available at all times to the Secretary.

Any one of these reasons is enough to warrant the step I have taken. But the three combined make an overwhelming case for tying me down to the Ashram.

Probably the collection for the All-India Deshbandhu Memorial, i.e., for the A.I.S.A. will suffer. But it was thought advisable to take the risk. Co-workers will be expected to put forth much greater effort than hitherto. But my hope lies in friends sending their subscriptions without personal canvassing. Apart from the fact that the fund bears a great name, it is being raised for immediate use in carrying on Khaddar work. Nearly ten lakhs of rupees need to be spent now if the output is to be considerably increased and Khaddar cheapened, or in other words if more idle hands are to be employed and more hungry mouths are to be fed. Though I never announced it, I do not mind confessing that my own desire was to collect no less than one crore of rupees for the Memorial. If ten lakhs was to be the amount for the All-Bengal Memorial, surely ten times the amount was not too large for an All-India Memorial. Again if ten lacs was not too much for a hospital, ten times as much is none too much for Khaddar work, which is designed to drive away the wolf from several million doors. Whether this is to remain a dream or to become a reality, ten lakhs should not be



difficult to collect immediately. One lakh has been promised by a friend of which Rs. 12,000 have been paid. Syt. Manila! Kothari is responsible for another lakh of which Rs. 25000 have been already collected. Syt. S. Srinivas Aiyangar has authorised me to announce his contribution as Rs. 10,000. I call upon the workers who are lovers of Khadi to collect from their friends and send their collections to Sjt. Jamnalalji Bajaj, the Treasurer of the Memorial Fund.

But whether the fund is collected or not, the decision has been made. Man proposes and God disposes. When I left Bihar, I had given the Bihari friends every hope that they might expect me, all being well, to finish the remainder of the Bihar tour during the early part of the year and if possible during this very month. When the decision to visit Cutch was arrived at Syt. Dastane had taken from me the promise that I would tour in parts of Maharashtra soon after finishing the balance of the Bihar tour. Assam was to follow. And then was to follow the whole of the Southern Peninsula. But my unexpected fast of seven days upset the man-made apple cart. The Ancient of Days has asserted Himself once more and without warning set aside the whole plan. The friends in Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam and other provinces will appreciate my difficulty.

For me this year of grace is both an indulgence and a self-denial. It is an indulgence because I hope to fulfil the long cherished desire of being in the midst of the boys and girls and the fellow-workers of the Ashram. It is a self-denial because it was a pleasure to me to be with so many friends in the different provinces and be the recipient of the affection of the masses between whom and myself there is a bond which defies description, but is never-the-less felt alike by them and me. I see in the fellowship with them the God I adore. I derive from that fellowship all my consolation, all my hope, and all the sustaining power I possess. If I had not realised that bond in South Africa now fully thirty years ago, life would not be worth living for me. But I know that whether I live in the Ashram or whether in their midst, I work for them, think of them, and pray for them. I want to live only for them and so for myself.

M.K. Gandhi

Young India,
January 7, 1926.



Appendix-II

The Crime of Caste

In South Africa it is the crime of colour and race for which we are being punished. In India we Hindus punish our co-religionists of the crime of caste. The fifth caste man—the Panchama—is the greatest offender deserving the punishment of untouchability, unapproachability, invisibility and what not. An extraordinary case that was tried in a Madras Presidency Court brings vividly to light the sad plight of our suppressed countrymen. A simple, cleanly-dressed, Panchama entered a temple in a perfectly devotional spirit without the slightest intention of hurting anybody's feelings or insulting any religion. He had been in the habit of paying his respects at this temple every year, though he did not enter it. But last year in his ecstatic mood forgot himself and entered the temple. The priest in charge could not distinguish him from the others and therefore accepted his offering. But when he regained self-possession, he was terrified to find himself in a prohibited place and ran away from the temple. But some who knew him caught him and handed him to the police. The temple authorities, when they discovered the crime, had the temple duly purified. Then followed a trial. A Hindu Magistrate convicted him and imposed a fine of Rs. 75 or one month's rigorous imprisonment for insulting his own religion. An appeal was filed. There was an elaborate argument over it. Judgment had to be reserved. And when conviction was set aside, it was not because the court held that the poor Panchama had a right to enter the temple, but because the prosecution in the lower court had forgotten to prove the insult. This is no triumph of justice or truth or religion or morality.

The only consolation to be derived from the successful appeal is that the Panchama will not have to suffer imprisonment for having in his zeal for worship forgotten that he was a prohibited entrant. If, however, he or his fellow-Panchama again dare to enter the temple, it is highly probable that they would be severely punished, if they are not lynched by those who look upon them with contempt.

It is a curious situation. We resent, and properly, the treatment meted out to our countrymen in South Africa. We are impatient to establish Swaraj. But we Hindus refuse to see the incongruity in treating a fifth of our own co-religionists worse than dogs. For dogs are not untouchables. Some of us now-a-days even keep them as drawing-room pets.



What place shall the untouchables' occupy in our scheme of Swaraj? If they are to be free from all special restraints and disabilities under Swaraj, why can we not declare their freedom now? And if we are powerless today, shall we be less powerless under Swaraj?

We may shut our eyes and stuff our ears to these questions. But they are of the highest importance to the Panchamas. Surely, judgment will be pronounced against Hindusim, if we, as a body, do not rise as one man against this social and religious atrocity.

Much has, no doubt, been done to remove the evil. But it is all too little so long as criminal prosecutions for temple-entry are possible and so long as the suppressed classes continue to be denied the right of entering temples, using public wells, and sending their children freely to national schools. We must yield to them the same rights as we would have the Europeans concede to our countrymen in South Africa.

But this case is not without its relieving features. The quashing of the conviction is, no doubt, some consolation. But the best consolation lies in the fact of so many *sawarna* Hindus actively interesting themselves in the poor Panchama's behalf. The appeal would not have been noted, if some one had not gone to the accused's assistance. Not the least interesting feature of the case was the fact of C. Rajagopalachari arguing the appeal, —a fit application in my opinion of the principle of non-co-operation. Being in the court, when he got the opportunity, he would have been like a Pharisee if he had sat there stiff gloating over the sanctimonious satisfaction of non-co-operating, whilst the accused could have been discharged by his intervention. The Panchama knew nothing of non-co-operation. He had appealed to avoid payment of fine or imprisonment. It is to be wished that every educated Hindu will constitute himself the untouchable's friend and regard it his duty to free him from the tyranny of custom masquerading under the name of religion. Not the entry of a Panchama into a temple but the brand of prohibition against him is an insult to religion and humanity.



Appendix-III

Khadi in Kathiawar

The reader will find in this issue nearly the whole note which Shri Laxmidas has written after going through 3 centres of Khadi work in Kathiawar.

The Kathiawar Political Conference has taken over the ownership of the Khadi Karyalaya at Amreli. I hope to publish its accounts shortly in the 'Navajivan'. Here, I only want to draw the attention of the reader to Shri Laxmidas' note.

The reader will note that charges for spinning are paid and Khadi produced only at those places where a near-famine condition exists. We shall not, at present, discuss whether this Khadi is on the whole cheap or dear. It is enough here to accept the fact that though the quality of hand-spun Khadi has improved a great deal, it will not prove to be as strong as Khadi woven out of mill-yarn. All the same, after reading Shri Laxmidas' report, there should remain no doubt that Kathiawaris should use the Khadi produced in Kathiawar only. If this report is true, those who use Khadi made in Kathiawar are helping people who are nearly as much in distress as the famine-stricken. It is an indubitable fact that it is definitely better to provide work for the famine-stricken, and thus make them self-reliant, than to distribute corn among them by way of charity. Besides, all may not possess money enough to give in charity, but everyone of ordinary means can buy costly Khadi by economizing in the use of cloth and other things.

That is why I hope that every Kathiawari will give due honour to Shri. Abbassaheb (retired High Court Judge of Baroda State) who is on a hawking tour in Kathiawar, when he visits their town. I have received a report of his visit to Vadhwan. I can see from it that the residents of that town have hailed the visit of Abbassaheb and nobody has given the cold shoulder to him. I hope he will get more and more response as he proceeds in his tour.

The suggestion in Shri Laxmidas' Note about Khadi workers is worth bearing in mind. The trough near a well receives the same quality of water that the well has. Khadi workers can infect others with only as much sincerity and faith as they themselves possess. They cannot make others more adept than they are. If the women spinners learn up carding, their income would be doubled, as they would get carding charges, which they do not, at present, and the public would get better yarn. But so



long as Khadi workers themselves are not able to card excellent cotton, they cannot instil enthusiasm for carding among the spinner-women, much less teach them carding.

The same thing holds good about Shri Laxmidas' suggestion on testing the yarn spun. It is necessary to test the yarn received in order to make them stronger. If the yarn is sufficiently strong, it would cheapen Khadi. That means, without increasing the rates of spinning there would be an improvement in the quality and price of Khadi. In big industrial establishments efficiency can increase profit without raising the price of the article. Efficiency in our countless mills,—because every cottage is a spinning mill—, can increase the income of the worker and lessen the burden on the people. In big plants, there could be upheavals involving millions of rupees, owing to efficiency in crafty manipulations and changes in the exchange-rate, and the workers could be squeezed. While in our mills efficiency, instead of bringing about any upheaval, creates sympathy and as it increases, the workers' prosperity also increases. Such excellent results depend upon the renunciation, intelligence, skill, steadfastness, humility and enthusiasm of the Khadi workers.

Let nobody interpret either my criticism or Shri Laxmidas' Note as meaning that the work done so far has been wasted or has not been done properly. Both of them mean in substance that we have now become so steady and organised, that we can take a step forward. It is our duty to go on improving things as we gain in experience. If we compare the past with the present, Khadi has grown and prospered excellently. The consuming public has only to think of the following:

- (1) Are Khadi-workers honest and industrious?
- (2) Does the money spent after Khadi go to the poor?
- (3) Are the women-spinners really benefited?
- (4) Would their livelihood suffer to some extent, if they did not get the spinning work?
- (5) Is it a fact that there is no other occupation which can give them more money?

If the answers to all these questions are in the affirmative, the Kathiawaris must buy Khadi made in Kathiawar, without thinking whether it is cheap or dear.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Navajivan,
2-5-1926



Appendix IV

Crime of Reading Bible

Several correspondents have written to me taking me to task for reading the New Testament to the students of the Gujarat National College. One of them asks: "Will you please say why you are reading the Bible to the students of the Gujarat National College? Is there nothing useful in our literature? Is the Gita less to you than the Bible? You are never tired of saying that you are a staunch *sanatani* Hindu. Have you not now been found out as a Christian in secret? You may say a man does not become a Christian by reading the Bible. But is not reading the Bible to the boys a way of converting them to Christianity? Can the boys remain uninfluenced by the Bible reading? Are they not likely to become Christians by reading the Bible? What is there specially in the Bible that is not to be found in our sacred books? I do hope you will give an adequate reply and give preference to the Vedas over the Bible."

I am afraid I cannot comply with the last request of my correspondent. I must give preference to that which the boys lawfully want over what I or others may desire. When they invited me to give them an hour per week, I gave them the choice between reading the Gita, Tulsidas' Ramayan, and answering questions. By a majority of votes, they decided to have the New Testament and questions and answers. In my opinion, the boys were entitled to make that choice. They have every right to read the Bible or to have it read to them. I offered to read the Gita or the Ramayana as I am reading both at the Ashram to the inmates and as therefore the reading of either at the National College would have involved the least strain and the least preparation. But the boys of the College probably thought they could read the other books through others but they would have from me my interpretation of the New Testament as they knew that I had made a fair study of it.

I hold that it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty. We need not dread upon our grown up children, the influence of scriptures other than our own. We liberalise their outlook upon life by encouraging them to study freely all that is clean. Fear there would be when some one reads his own scriptures to young peoples with the intention secretly or openly of converting them. He must then be biased in favour of his own scriptures. For myself, I regard my study of and reverence



for the Bible, the Quran, and the other scriptures to be wholly consistent with my claim to be staunch *sanatani* Hindu. He is no *sanatani* Hindu who is narrow, bigoted, and considers evil to be good if it has the sanction of antiquity and is to be found supported in any Sanskrit book. I claim to be a staunch *sanatani* Hindu because, though I reject all that offends my moral sense, I find the Hindu scriptures to satisfy the needs of the soul. My respectful study of other religions has not abated my reverence for or my faith in the Hindu scriptures. They have, indeed, left their deep mark upon my understanding of the Hindu scriptures. They have broadened my view of life. They have enabled me to understand more clearly many an obscure passage in the Hindu scriptures.

The charge of being a Christian in secret is not new. It is both a libel and a compliment—a libel because there are men who can believe me to be capable of being secretly anything, i. e. for fear of being that openly. There is nothing in the world that would keep me from professing Christianity or any other faith, the moment I felt the truth of and the need for it. Where there is fear there is no religion. The charge is a compliment in that it is a reluctant acknowledgment of my capacity for appreciating the beauties of Christianity. Let me own this. If I could call myself, say, a Christian, or a Mussalman, with my own interpretation of the Bible or the Quran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Mussalman would be synonymous terms. I do believe that in the other world there are neither Hindus, nor Christians nor Mussalmans. There all are judged not according to their labels or professions but according to their actions irrespective of their professions. During our earthly existence there will always be these labels. I, therefore, prefer to retain the label of my forefathers so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debar me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else.

The hyper-sensitiveness that my correspondents have betrayed is but an indication of the intensity of the wave of intolerance that is sweeping through this unhappy land. Let those who can, remain unmoved by it.

M. K. Gandhi

Young India,

2-9-1926



Appendix-V

Good Manners

I publish elsewhere nearly verbatim the speech Shri Mahadev Desai delivered on 'Takli' during the Youth Week, as that speech is the language of his heart and as the climate under which it was delivered deserves consideration. It was not a meaningless speech delivered just for the sake of speaking something. It was given with the object of drawing the attention of the youths to their duty. But some young men were averse to hearing it and they began to disturb the speaker. I have often written that this practice of raising an uproar does not become the culture of Bharatvarsha. In this country at least, anyone who dislikes a speech may not pay any attention to it and if he finds it boring, he may leave the meeting quietly but will not use violence to silence the speaker. Creating an uproar is nothing less than violence. Increase in intolerance amongst us retards our progress. We have no reason to believe off-hand that what we do not like must be necessarily bad. In fact, there are many things in this world which are bitter in taste at first but prove to be sweet as a result.

That nation whose youth gives up courtesy, discrimination, humility, and tolerance, goes to rack and ruin. The life of the nation depends only upon its young men. Their responsibility is greater than that of the aged, because the latter have already given to the nation all that they could, or all that they wished to give. It is the nation's youth that is moulding a new era and is contributing substantially to its advent.

The young rowdies forgot this responsibility of theirs. It was Mahadev Desai's hands that were delivering his speech. It was a speech that could be heard by the eyes and the young people were incapable of stopping that speech given through the hands. They saw the futility of their effort and so they stopped their noises, but that did not save them from bringing disgrace upon themselves for their disturbances. The next day's papers reported that young men created a row and stopped Mahadev Desai from speaking. The report cast a slur not on Mahadev Desai but on the disturbers. But their disgrace is the country's disgrace. The prestige of a country is not something other than the prestige of its citizens.

Aversion to *takli* is like making a mountain of a mole hill. Quotations from old books reproduced in the 'Navajivan' have proved that *takli* is one of the most ancient



tools of man. *Takli* is an implement of the poor, it is their stay and support. Like the plough for food, the *takli* is an implement for cloth. Big mills have been produced from *takli*. A spinning mill means a mill of *taklis*. Like a man who takes away pipes of water from different houses, and collects them in his premises and thus makes all others dependent on him for water, the spinning mill has collected many *taklis* and made formerly self-reliant spinners dependent upon it. The *takli* is thus the symbol of freedom, and the mill that of dependence. Where is the sense in disliking this thing that supports us? It is our duty to understand the power of that little thing. Whoever can make us conscious of its power deserves our thanks, our gratitude.

As discarding the plough means starvation for us, so by the renunciation of the *takli* we have become naked. Let nobody believe that because a handful of Indians get clothes to wear, the hundreds of millions of India have the means to wear them. History proves that hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters move about naked and suffer from starvation.

The *takli* is twice powerful. It not only covers the body but gives it nourishment also, because spinning gives us cloth and the money thus saved increases our means to get food. Hence, I have called the *takli* or the spinning wheel our Goddess Annapurna (One who provides food). Thus the *takli* removes our idleness, covers the body, and feeds it. How could such a machine be detested?

Takli, moreover, is the link that unites us with the poor of our country and makes us share their disabilities.

Our sages have given us a parable which gives us an idea of the power of a blade of grass. Wind could not blow it away. Fire could not burn it. Let anybody despise a single blade of grass as small and contemptible. But if there were not numerous blades, we cannot get food or water. The same power that is latent in a blade of grass is latent in a *takli*. I request those who ridiculed it to ponder over that dialogue between Yaksha and the Gods. He who holds the *takli* in contempt, holds also the poor in contempt. And the man who looks down upon the poor cuts his own legs, lops off the branch on which he is sitting. The rich maintain themselves because there are the poor people to serve them. If there were no poor people, how could the rich exist?

Young men! Whether you are schoolboys or collegians, whether you are co-operators or non-co-operators, whether you are among those who made the uproar or those who were its unhappy witnesses, do not discard our ancient culture, do not cease to be polite, do not give up love for the poor. Just as the sword is the symbol of



destruction of life, the *takli* is one prominent symbol of its nourishment. Those who used the sword in the form of commotion did not do the right thing. You cannot, you should not, renounce and denounce the *takli*. Mahadev has drawn your attention to your duty. Those who do not perform the sacrifice of spinning, who do not wear Khadi as the sacrament of that sacrifice, do not know the poor and do not know God—'the Protector of the poor'. That is my firm conviction. May it be yours also.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Navajivan,
5-12-1926

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