



Day-to-Day with Gandhi

[SECRETARY'S DIARY]

Volume IX

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By

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Acknowledgement

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—*Narayan M. Desai*

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—*Publishers*



Publishers' Note

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

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

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

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

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

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



The period between 1917 and 1942 was a glorious chapter of India's non-violent struggle for Independence. We get a peep into Gandhiji's innermost thoughts through Mahadevbhai's diary. This period was packed with Gandhiji's most important interviews, correspondence and whirlwind tours all over the country. A vivid picture of the social, political and spiritual atmosphere of our country in those days is graphically drawn by Mahadevbhai in this diary.

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

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

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

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

This Ninth volume is a bit late to our previous schedule. We propose to bring out the tenth volume soon.





Preface

During the period this book covers—mid-December 1926 to mid-March 1927—the country’s sky continued to be enveloped with dark clouds of frustration and dismay, communal riots and political schisms. But Gandhiji, personally, was now fresh enough for work as he had spent the preceding year in the solitude and tranquility of the Sabarmati and Wardha Ashrams. He therefore decides to move from place to place to propagate Khadi.

This was one of the few cases of right man doing the right thing at the right time. Extraneous circumstances as well as his intense intellectual conviction and unquenchable faith led him inevitably to the advocacy of Khadi, it seems.

Without any pleading on his part and on its own initiative, the 1926 Congress, which Gandhiji attended when he emerged from his self-imposed silence and solitude, passed almost unanimously a resolution that required every Congress office-holder to wear Khadi habitually in place of the former concession to him to wear it on formal occasions of Congress meetings. Perhaps he thought it was then his bounden duty as well as the right moment to spread his favourite gospel of Khadi. Perhaps the gruesome murder of Swami Shraddhanandaji on the eve of the Congress showed him more clearly than ever before that communal tensions had reached a stage beyond his or human control. He must therefore serve the cause of unity only by his silent prayers to God and diversion of his energies to Khadi, so that it might ultimately bring about unity through the co-operation of both Hindus and Muslims that it inevitably required.

Let it be noted in parenthesis here that his reaction to the news of the murder of Swami Shraddhanandaji on 23-12-1926 anticipated so-to-say by 21 years his own state when he himself was shot dead on 30-1-1948. In his speech on Shraddhanandaji’s murder at the All India Congress Committee he said:

“Death is certain for every body, but rare is the man who is blessed with a death like this!.... this glorious death will create a far deeper effect than his death from ordinary illness might have. I have not sent a single wire or letter of condolence to Sri Indra. I could not tell him anything but this: “The death your father has met with is one of supernal bliss.”



And later on:

“You may now have understood why I called Rashid my brother. For myself, I do not consider him even an offender. The real culprits are my-self, Lalaji, Malaviyaji, Ali Brothers. The Gita says, समत्वं योग उच्यते (Equal-minded-ness is yoga—Gita II-48). It says: ‘Don’t differentiate between man and man, between a Brahmin and a Chandala (lowest in the social scale), between an elephant and a cow.’” (Gita V—18). That is why I said that Rashid was my brother and that he was not even a culprit. (This was not the empty boast of a braggart. Gandhiji did forgive his assailant, Mir Alam who had nearly fatally wounded him in South Africa).

To resume the thread, he begins a tour because, “After keeping aloof for a year, I can no longer hold myself back and I want to roam all over India (for Khadi). And he got with compound interest what he yearned for, says M.D.: “It has been a very strenuous time, what with noisy crowds and motor journeys over bad roads and what with friends’ anxiety to cover as many places as possible in the shortest possible time. At Daltonganj the villagers from the hillside had come from distances of 20 to 30 miles and mustered in their thousands. One speech or one speaker could not reach them at a time (there were no loud-speakers then), so Gandhiji first addressed the people in front, then those in the rear and then on the side.”

“His Yagna was to spin for one hour or 212 yds. at the least. He would give up sleep, give up his meal, but not that yagna even once.”

In fact his tour programme put such a heavy strain on his body, that in April—the period that begins with the succeeding volume, he is knocked down with fatigue and fever. But in the intensity of his desire to serve the people, he turns a deaf ear to nature’s warnings—right till the collapse prostrates him.

But from all this let not the reader jump to the conclusion that unbearable tedium will be inflicted upon him by this advocacy of Khadi, *ad nauseum*. Gandhiji cannot be classed among orators of high-sounding expressions, but he possessed the sixth sense to perceive the mentality of the audiences he was addressing and always varied his arguments. Some original in substance, some others in presentation—to suit his varying audiences.

To the students of the Benares Hindu University he pleaded:



“ ‘You have had your say now. No one is listening to you. Why not stop talking of Khaddar?’ —That was the advice being given me. But I don’t think people are tired; besides I have full faith in my programme. Why should I stop reciting my favourite *mantra* when I have before me the example of Prahlad of old refusing to give up *Ramnam* in the teeth of tortures worse than death?”

And further on:

“This is the only country in the world where for earning 5 millions the rich send away 95 millions to foreign lands and where they earn even these five millions at the expense of our villagers, the bulk of whom have to go without a square meal everyday.” (P. 86)

Against the Communist friend Sri Saklatvala (M.P.)’s stand for large-scale industries Gandhiji says:

“If all the multi-millions of India begin to work in big plants, our production would be so stupendous that we should have to find out unexplored countries,—even planets in the heavens, so that we can exploit them and compel them to consume the goods we produce.”

At the public meeting at Akola he argues:

“But my first love is Khadi and the spinning wheel. I talked to you indeed of untouchability and communal harmony, but there is no solid work which every common man can do for them. After freeing his heart of the dirt of untouchability and different treatment towards Hindus and Muslims, what else can he do about them?.... Hence I say ‘let everyone ply the spinning wheel.’ That is a work on a vast scale and it is easy and natural for everybody to give his tangible contribution to the work.”

‘Should mill-workers wear Khadi?’ he is questioned. He answers:

“Do you know that in Manchester the manufacturers do not wear their own products?..... The good Duchess of Sutherland saw the miserable plight of the poor islanders of Hebrides and placed spinning wheels and looms at their disposal. The citizens of Manchester, including mill-owners, do wear the handspun stuffs prepared by the Hebrides people even at three times the cost of the mill stuff.”

He had other weapons in his armoury for the politically-minded English educated people opposed to Khadi. He refutes the charge that the Congress ceased to



be 'national' because the resolution on the habitual wear of Khadi would drive out the sceptics.

“Does that justify keeping them all in the Congress, no matter what the cost?.... If you pass the Independence Resolution (which also was on the agenda), some Congress-men will leave the Congress. Can you then say that the Resolution is passed to get rid of them?.... If you want to make the Congress 'national'..... you have but to forge and maintain a link that joins you with the people.”

“They have cooked a Council programme. But how many can take a direct part in working it? Is India living in her 10 or 20 cities? What is the programme that can weld together 30 crores (300 millions) of India?”

That will suffice to show the freshness of outlook in the sameness of the subject which this book bristles with. There are moreover some other features—as ennobling as they are touching—that may endear the book to the average reader. M. D. reports:

“One can easily imagine Gandhiji’s exhaustion and fatigue after frightfully long motor drives, but his irrepressible good humour saved him and others from frustration. At Lanje where he reached after mid-night there were people anxiously waiting at the place of the meeting. ‘I do not know’, said Gandhiji, ‘whether I should pity you or myself for keeping you waiting until this hour..... I congratulate you on your yoga (of keeping a vigil when the world was asleep) (—Gita II-69), but you will better deserve my congratulations if you show that you are true yogis by contributing for the poor and purchasing our Khadi.’ And a peal of laughter woke up the audience who were half asleep.”

When Gandhiji_re-visits Bardoli, he casts a backward wistful glance at the Bardoli of 1921:

“I shake off my blues, by indulgence in humour, but the fact that I have to resort to humour is itself an indication of my inward grief. There was a time when not only the province of Gujarat, but the whole of India looked up to the Surat District with respect and regarded its work....for Swaraj as the highest in every respect...It was then that Bardoli was put on the world’s map. Look at that picture and this of today...Is it possible to forget the oath we had taken under the tree yonder?.... and the ultimatum....to the Viceroy?..... But now I have come here not to ride on the waves of enthusiasm but simply to open the Ashram. What we have to learn from it all is that



we must never accept defeat, never lose faith till the last, never beat an ignominious retreat.”

There are other such parts of tense situations, and instructive lessons but what appears to me for one to be the most inspiring thing in the book is the indomitable faith in God as revealed in the following:

“I said at Comilla that the problem (of Hindu-Muslim unity) has passed out of human hands and that God has taken it into His own. Maybe the statement springs from my egotism, but I do not think so. I have ample reason for it. With my hand on my heart I can say that not a minute in my life am I forgetful of God. For over 20 years I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God.”(P. 111)

Let us not lay the flattering function to our soul that what we cannot do ourselves, nobody else can. Let us rather cherish the faith that we too shall attain the faith that Gandhiji possessed.

Let me conclude with a word of apology. As M.D. wrote original articles in Gujarati in *Navajivan* that were often the expansion of his thoughts expressed in Weekly Letters in English, some repetition, not always unavoidable, has crept into this book. The reader is requested to overlook this inadvertence.

— Translator



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(God is Truth)

“In every country it always is, and must be, interest of the great body of people to buy whatever they want of those who sell it cheapest.”

A. Smith

quoted in “The Return to Protection” By Smart.



21.12.1926

The tranquility of the Sabarmati Ashram had continued at the Wardha Ashram, but now it ends. We have again started today on our usual tours. Gandhiji's silence before the public ended last night, -even before we left Wardha, —and we are going to Amraoti today.

Some correspondent had got up a story, which was even published in the press, to the effect that a Conference of No-changers was to be held at Wardha to decide their attitude to the question of council-entry. But no such Conference was held. Messrs. Rajagopalachariar and Gangadharrao came indeed to Wardha on the 4th, but their visit was for the Khadi programme, and had little to do with the coming Congress at Gauhati. It was the unanimous decision of all (No-changers) that they were not to take any active part in that Congress. Messrs. Rajagopalachariar and Gangadharrao went back yesterday to their respective places. Their visit to Wardha had mainly to do with the All-India Spinners' Association.

Sri. Jamnalalji did much work for his province (Central Provinces) during the last one or two weeks. He did the preparatory work to see that Gandhiji was given a warm welcome by the people, so that Gandhiji might feel encouraged. His outer activity—that of Khadi—is already well-known. He is conducting a Khadi Emporium in Wardha City and may rightly be called the patron of even the khadi work going on in the Wardha Ashram. The latter's object is to teach the people the processes of making Khadi. The Ashramites themselves pick the cotton, which they cultivate on their own Ashram ground, and they do it with such care and skill that the cotton remains free from dust or seed-particles. Then they card that cotton themselves, make slivers from it and spin it. This cotton can by no means stand comparison with Surati Cotton and yet the snow-white slivers made with such great care are superior to those made from the high-quality Surati Cotton picked by hired labourers. An interested spectator can thus see with what great care all this is being done in the Ashram.

As at the Sabarmati Ashram, at the Wardha Ashram also the number of yards spun by each inmate is registered every evening. But there are two or three points in which Wardha differs from Sabarmati. The unit of one hank in the former is 160 rounds and the inmate states his yarn out-put not in rounds or yards, but in hanks. If he has not spun enough yarn to complete one hank, the inmate simply says, 'I have spun' and then on the next day, if he has made a hank, he says, 'One hank'. The evenness and



tensity of the inmates' yarns are tested every Sunday and the results are put on a Notice Board on the front wall so that a visitor could see the record. A very interesting chart of the tensity of yarns spun during the week attracts everybody's attention. It records the progress of 14 weeks. There certainly are skilful spinners who draw out yarn of 80 to 100 tensity, but some others are unable to reach that standard. Real art lies in first recognising the quality of cotton and then in not spinning yarn of a higher count than the one that that quality can yield. The chart referred to above shows the progress in that art. An average of the tensions of all the inmates' yarns is found out and this chart shows the progress made. We find from it that in the first week the average tension was 30. Gradually it rises to 40, 45, 50, then 51, 52, 53, 54 and so on till now, on the 14th week, it has come to 60. It is remarkable that this progress has been so very regular even though the implements used—the spinning wheel and others—are of the old type. The fact that the Wardha Municipality in its Address to Gandhiji expressed its thanks for the work of the Wardha Ashram in educating people in khadi work shows that the Ashram is gradually increasing its hold on the people around.

But there is no wonder that the pace of that growth is very slow. 'Taking advantage of Sri. Rajagopalachariar's presence, Sri. Jamnalalji organized a public meeting to discuss only two topics—untouchability and prohibition. He delivered a brief but meaningful speech at the end of the meeting. In a loving but perfectly frank speech he said: "It is your devotion that draws you to the Ashram. But what is the good of that devotion, when Gandhiji is pained to see you clad in foreign or mill-made clothes and thus you undergo a meaningless trouble? How does it help you or Gandhiji? Is it not better, I humbly ask you, to refrain from going to him than going in a way that hurts him? He is going to end his year-long silence when he comes to our town on the 20th. Will you then welcome him in the clothes he dislikes?" But when the meeting was held on the 20th, it appeared that Jamnalalji's speech had little effect upon the people.

As regards untouchability also, Jamnalalji took a practical step and thus showed the people what they should do. He declared open to the untouchables 5 wells belonging to him—3 of his Ginning Factory and 2 of his garden. And instead of claiming credit for this significant step he modestly remarked: "There's nothing to shout in what I did. I should have done it long ago! How I wish I could throw open to untouchables the doors of the Laxmi Narayan Temple built by my ancestors! But I am helpless. That



Temple and its well are under the charge of the trustees and I have not succeeded in bringing them round to my views. I do not believe in forcing anybody. They should open the Temple not under my compulsion but under their conviction that real charity of heart lay in opening it. If people go on using the opened wells, even that is an expression of their sympathy for depressed classes.” On the third day he invited the elite to his garden to drink water from these wells and many leading gentlemen including members of the Municipality accepted the invitation.

When members of the Municipality sponsored the idea of giving a welcome address to Gandhiji, Jamnalalji appealed to them to make the address meaningful: “Your address has no value, if you do not contribute your share to Gandhiji’s work.” He even attended the meeting that was called to consider the question and there also he emphasized the same point. By way of a tangible response he got the Municipality to pass a resolution to introduce takli-spinning for half an hour in its schools and to buy only Khadi for all its needs in cloth.

It was only after the Municipality had thus expressed its love for Gandhiji in action that Jamnalalji requested him to accept the Municipal Address. Gandhiji was pleased that the Municipality had done what it could in this matter.

About 2500 people attended the Address-meeting. After the address was given Gandhiji said in Hindi: “I thank you for the address you have given me on the day when my one year’s silence ends. An account of the progress which the Municipality ‘has made has been read out before me and I congratulate the President and members of the Municipality on that progress. You say moreover that ‘untouchability is not as stinking here as at other places and I congratulate you still more on that account. You tell me that untouchable children learn their lessons freely and without fear of harassment, that there is quite a number of untouchable children among the destitutes you look after and that in the matter of water-supply also they are not neglected. In addition I congratulate those who have opened their wells for the use of untouchables. I was glad to learn from the President of this meeting that you, the members of the Municipality, had gone there and thus shown your sympathy and support to this question of opening wells. I congratulate you moreover on your promise to teach takli-spinning to the children of your schools and make them spin for half an hour. I hope you will stick to your resolve for all time. You know that it is one thing to pass such a resolution and another to implement it. Many municipalities have passed such resolutions, but nothing has been actually done. Every resolve must be



followed by effort and discrimination in its implementation. If you are going to act upon this Resolution, you will require competent teachers. You will have to bring all your teachers together and make them interested in spinning. If they are indifferent, if they ridicule the spinning programme, your Resolution will come to nought. As long as the Ashram stands near-by, there is no reason for you to say that you cannot make provision for teaching the art of spinning.”

Answering the question what he will do now that his silence period is over, Gandhiji said: “During my silence I have pondered over our questions as deeply as a man can. If all that I have planned is carried out, *Ramarajya* would be ours right today. It does not require big politics for the plan’s implementation. I have said that in that activity all can join—boys, girls, Government officers, everyone in fact. I say from my experience of the last 5 or 6 years that for 3 things we do not need the help of anybody else. My faith in them is as firm as before—if anything, it has grown firmer. The first of these three things is Hindu-Muslim unity. Any talk of Swaraj till that is achieved is useless. What shall I say of the woeful state into which it has fallen? The second is the removal of untouchability. So long as untouchability exists, Swaraj is a mere dream. The third is the spinning wheel and Khadi. So long as the middle class of India does not understand the potency of that *mantra*, does not realize how powerful the spinning wheel and the hand-loom are, it is impossible to gain Swaraj.

“My friends who criticize my faith raise various objections. I do not give any weight to them. But don’t believe that I adhere to my faith simply perversely. There is not a single thing in this world, which I cannot discard for the good of India. There are only two things—truth and *ahimsa*—at the cost of which even the welfare of India has no value for me. I value them so highly, because to me, there is no difference whatever between truth and God and I do not know of any way to seek truth except that of *ahimsa*. I do not wish the good of India, if it can be achieved at the cost of truth or God. I am firmly convinced that the man who can forget God, can forget his country, his parents and even his wife. Hence I cannot entertain any good of India that is bereft of truth and peace (non-violence). As I have such deep faith in khadi, this sight of the so-many children and adults without it pains me. Three boys sang before me the Vande Mataram¹ song. The song means that we bow to Mother Bharat. Only that man can rightly offer such homage to Mother Bharat, who loves his country, loves the country’s poor and has a liking for the Khadi made by them. I ask you all therefore to transform yourselves from tomorrow. How can you ask children to spin without convincing them



that it is their *dharma* to wear Khadi? Do you know what kind of training is given to children in Germany, Italy, France? Do you know what they are taught? The first lessons they are taught are those of the service of their country and these lessons remain imprinted in their mind all their life through. If therefore you appreciate my service to the country, will you not do these three things, straight and simple and clear as daylight? Make friends with untouchables, wear Khadi made by the poor and let both of you Hindus and Muslims, live in harmony.

“This is not the time to speak, but to act. How long will a man go on preaching? A hundred times, two hundred times, but at last he will prove his worth by practising what he preaches. Even if the whole of India says, ‘What Gandhi says is nonsense. There can never be any friendship between Miya (Muslim) and Mahadev (Hindu God, Shiva), I shall speak out, ‘No, the world is wrong and I am right. Hindus and Muslims are certain to unite’. If God or Khuda or truth, exists eternally, I say Hindu—Muslim unity is also an eternal truth. If India cries out: ‘Khadi is trash, burn it’ and throws it into the fire, I shall proclaim, ‘Our salvation lies in that same spinning-wheel and India has gone mad.’ And in the same way if a number of Hindus fling at my face quotations from big *shastras* (religious works) and *smritis* (codes of conduct made by religious leaders) and assert that untouchability has a place in Hinduism, I am certain to tell them: ‘All your *shastras* and *smritis* are wrong and I am right.’ In this way by reciting what I call my Kalma, my Gayatri, in the face of the world, I will claim to be a *satyagrahi*, so that God will say, “This my devotee has spoken out in plain, clear terms, all that should be spoken”.

1. As this song was banned, it soon became very popular and was for a long time the National Anthem of the country.



22.12.1926

After finishing the programme at Amraoti, we are now again on our way back to Nagpur. That will give the reader an idea of how hectic our renewed tour is. For a long time past Dr. Patwardhan had been earnestly requesting Gandhiji to open the new big building of the Vyayam Mandir (Gymnasium) at Amraoti. The late Sri. Yashwantrao Patwardhan was one of Gandhiji's beloved colleagues and Dr. Patwardhan is his brother. How could his request be rejected? But Gandhiji asked: "Will you do some thing for my Khadi?" "I shall open a Khadi shop myself and provide you with 100 life-long Khadi-wearers. Will that suffice?" "But may not all the boys of the Gymnasium wear Khadi?", Gandhiji asked. "I shall of course try", he replied, "but there are sons of Government officers also among them. If I make Khadi-wearing compulsory, the idea may perhaps work, but I am averse to compelling people to wear Khadi". This was the talk that had settled the matter, but how to spare the time for the programme? All the same Sri. Jamnalalji gave Dr. Patwardhan one full hour—not to talk of the five or six hours we had to spend in the journey to and fro. So within that one hour all the different gymnastic exercises were to be shown and some time to be spared for Gandhiji's speech. But the doctor agreed and the whole programme was successfully carried out and so now we are again in the train.

The Vyayam Mandir at Amraoti is no ordinary gymnasium. It has 500 students and 50 branches in Berar Province where 700-800 more students take their lessons. Gandhiji was pleased to see the many strenuous and skilful physical exercises the boys performed. But they took up 50 minutes and 10 minutes were left for him. Out of those 10 one or two were spent in silencing the crowd. I give the remarkable speech he delivered in the remaining minutes:

"The physical exercises that I saw today were excellent. I congratulate Dr. Patwardhan and the boys on the performances. You all know that I am a man of strictly defined activities. It is not my business to meddle in other things, but when Dr. Patwardhan requested me to perform this function, I could not say 'no' to him. I am told that this gymnasium is open to all—to both Hindus and Muslims—and that there are not only Muslims but untouchables also among the students. I am really very glad to know it.

"Our scriptures tell us that the student who wants to build a strong healthy body and wishes to put it to good use must observe brahmacharya. I can legitimately say that I have travelled over the whole of India. I know the sad state of the land. But the



saddest thing is that our young men have weak bodies. Where the evil custom of child-marriage exists, and consequently where there is early progeny, physical exercises become impossible, as even for them one needs some physical health and vigour to start with. Will anybody advise a consumptive to take physical exercises? You can prescribe to him some very light physical exercises, but the performances you saw today are impossible for him. That means that if we wish to raise India and the Hindu community, the evil custom of child-marriages has got to be eradicated. As Manu Maharaj (author of Manu-Smriti, probably the first codifier in the world) said, every student must observe brahmacharya till he is 25. If these two conditions are not fulfilled, physical exercise even of the best sort may prove to be useless.

“But let me say a third thing. It is my sacred pledge, my sacred dharma, not to take any part in any violent activity. Let others say that non-violence is not an eternal dharma. For me that alone is the eternal path and no other. Some one may hence wonder how a non-violent man like myself could attend a function like this. But there is no reason for the doubt. Non-violence means the voluntary renunciation of the power of violence. That man cannot be non-violent who does not possess the power to do violence. Non-violence is a quality that requires to be cultivated, developed, zealously. It is not a thing you can have for the asking, because, as I have said, it is a tremendous power. There is scope for being non-violent only when one possesses the power to commit violence. But I do not believe that it is quite essential to have great physical strength in order to gain that power. At the same time I believe that you cannot make your youths and children non-violent by making their bodies wasted and weak. You cannot make young men non-violent by wresting weapons from their hands. One of the many crimes this (British) rule has committed is that of disarming our people and it has done it not to make us non-violent but to make us powerless. And what I want is to make India powerful.

“I like this gymnasium, but no gymnasium that is conducted in order to destroy any community—Musalman, Christian, Hindu or any other can't have my good wishes and blessings. But that gymnasium has always my blessings which is for knitting together all communities and all religions and for understanding the real meaning of non-violence. I was assured that this gymnasium had been established with those objects and I have come here on the basis of that assurance.

“I congratulate you all and wish you success. May you students be truthful, observe brahmacharya, defend religion and make India glorious and powerful. That is my prayer to God.”



23.12.1926

Reached Calcutta this morning. Lalaji (Lala Lajpatrai) met Gandhiji in the morning and said “I am not attending the Congress at Gauhati, in order to avoid a duel with friends.” Gandhiji did not insist that he should go, but reaffirmed his faith in the programme he had given to the country in 1920 (i.e. boycotts of councils, courts etc.) and said: “If God wills it, I have the faith that the same wonderful performance may be repeated here as in South Africa. If only 16 colleagues stick faithfully to the programme here, they also would grow into 16,000.”

Left Calcutta at 4 p.m. The President of the coming Congress, Sri. S. Srinivas Iyengar, Mrs. Naidu, Gandhiji, Malaviyaji, Ali Brothers, Sri. Vithalbhai Patel (first Indian President of the Central Legislature) and others were all in the same train. As usual, Gandhiji begged for funds for Khadi from the crowds which gathered at every station—specially big stations and the khadi fund continued to grow as we proceeded.



24.12.1926

Reached Shorebhog station in the morning. The train was due at 8.30 a.m., but it reached there at 10.30 a.m. There were of course the usual crowds never-the-less. But the moment Gandhiji stood up to beg for the Khadi fund, a telegram was handed to him. The news it gave fell like a thunderbolt on all of us. Lala Lajpatrai had worded that telegram in clear terms and it was despatched from Calcutta the previous night. Gandhiji said: “Swami Shraddhanand (a brave Hindu leader) has been shot dead. Now tell me whether I should go to Delhi or Gauhati.” The words were perfectly clear and yet many people wondered, if some mistake had not crept into the message, if some new word was not put in for the original. Everyone made his own conjecture. Gandhiji was listening to all of them with a shocked air. He sent the news of the telegram immediately to Malaviyaji, Mrs. Naidu, Ali Brothers, and Srinivas Iyengar. In a moment Mrs. Naidu, Ali Brothers and Sri. Srinivas Iyengar gathered around Gandhiji. Panditji (Malaviyaji) sent the message: “My heart is overwhelmed. I shall see you at the next station.” Though he was stunned, Gandhiji soon recovered his composure. Six months ago Swami Shraddhanandji had visited the Ashram. “I receive many letters from Musalmans threatening to kill me’, he had then said, and laughed. Is there any wonder if the threat was carried out? Gandhiji immediately wired to Sri. Indra (son of the Swamiji):

**“Received Shocking News. Keep Calm.
Father met Hero’s Death.”**

He sent another wire to Lala Lajpatrai, in which he advised Lalaji to go at once to Delhi. M. Mohammad Ali also sent telegrams to Sri. Indra, Dr. Ansari, and to the journalists of his own paper ‘Comrade’. The news spread immediately through the whole train. Everyone indulged in surmises of any and every sort. At the next and the third stations we were given details brought by press representatives from Gauhati. And at Amingaon the Associated Press representative himself was waiting for Gandhiji’s arrival to read to him the whole detailed telegram he had with him. As the Congress President had already sent a wire cancelling the reception procession, we went to our respective stays on the bank of the Brahmaputra quietly. The Working Committee meeting was held at once and even the All India Congress Committee meeting was called immediately thereafter. All over the town there was only one talk that of the murder. The management of the Congress session, the boarding and lodging arrangements, the beautiful scenery that the Brahmaputra presented—all that



was forgotten and only the murder was on every body's lips. Mrs. Naidu opened the All India Congress Committee's session with the reference to this gruesome incident in a language surcharged with the deepest feelings. She reminded the audience that this single-minded patriot, this champion of the poor, this brave warrior had bared his chest against the advancing bayonets and rifle-shots of Gurkha soldiers in the year 1919.¹ She recalled the fact that it was this same Swami Shraddhanandji who was given the honour of addressing the public from the Jumma Masjid itself. She then called the manner of his death as unique and glorious. She said that the black deed was not the act of any community, but one sinful, mad individual. "Don't get enraged against any community. It was the clear duty of Muslim leaders to condemn the act in no uncertain terms", she added and then requested Gandhiji to say a few words.

Let me give Gandhiji's speech verbatim. He spoke in Hindi as follows:

"Press representatives came to me and twice requested me to say something for publication. Mrs. Naidu also appealed to me to give a message, but I refused even her request. But now again from the Chair, she orders me to say something. I am therefore trying to give expression to my feelings, but I can't. I can however say what my immediate reactions were. As soon as I got Lalaji's telegram, I conveyed the news to Malaviyaji and others, sent a wire to Lalaji in reply and another to Swamiji's worthy son, Indra. Instead of expressing grief or giving condolences, I simply stated in the last wire that Shraddhanandji's was not an ordinary, but a hero's demise. Such an end cannot draw tears from my eyes. Though this death is unbearable in a sense, my heart refuses to grieve over it and says, "How fine if we all met with such a death!" Looked at from Swami Shraddhanand's angle, what a sacred event it was for him. He was ill. I did not know anything, but when I was in Wardha a friend informed me that Swamiji was dangerously ill and hardly likely to live. Later on, I got the news from his son's wire in reply to mine that he was slowly recovering. I came to know, moreover, that he was under the excellent care of Dr. Ansari. He was thus lying in bed with serious illness and in that sick-bed he was shot dead. Death is certain for everybody, but rare is the man who is blessed with a death like this. On the whole of India and on the world wherever Indians live, this glorious death will create a far deeper effect than his death from ordinary illness may. I have not sent a single wire or letter of condolence to Sri. Indra. I could not tell him anything but this: "The death your father has met with is one of supernal bliss."



‘But this is from Swamiji’s angle and mine. But I have often said that I look upon Hindus and Muslims with an equal eye. I am by birth a Hindu and I get solace and satisfaction from Hindu dharma. Whenever disturbing events have happened, I have gained tranquility from only my religion. I have studied and observed other religions and the result has been that I have always felt that Hinduism is for me the best religion. And that is why I call myself a Sanatani (staunch orthodox) Hindu. Many Sanatani Hindus feel aggrieved and protest: “How could this England-returned man of reformed views be a Sanatani?” But that does not detract anything from my claim. That same Hindu religion commands me to live on friendly terms with everybody. Hence I must look at this incident from the Muslim standpoint.

“When I think of this event from that angle, a quite different feeling possesses me. This deed was perpetrated by a Muslim and that too under the excuse of a religious discussion, which gave him the permission to enter the room! The servant had even told him, “Swamiji is ill. He can’t be seen today.” Then followed an altercation at the door which Swamiji heard. He said, “Let him come in just for a while.” Swamiji too had not called him for a discussion-in fact he had no energy at all for it. He wanted to only soothe the man’s feelings and send him back satisfied. So he called him inside and said: “Friend, I shall discuss with you as long as you like, but today, you see, I am bed-ridden.” Then that man asks for drinking water. Swamiji orders Dharmasingh (the attendant), “Bring him a glass of water.” Immediately after the obedient servant goes out to fetch water, that man draws out his revolver. Not satisfied with one shot, he fired two. Swamiji lost his life that very moment. Dharmasingh heard the shots and ran back to save his master’s life. But who could save him, when God Himself had ordained otherwise? Dharmasingh also was fired at, was wounded and is now in hospital, while the murderer, Abdul Rashid, is now in jail. I feel aggrieved at the feelings that will arise in the Hindu community from this murder committed under such circumstances. I have no doubt that Hindus will be enraged against the Muslims, because at present there is no mutual love, no mutual trust, between them. Both of them know that they have to live together one day. But as they are weak at present, they both hope to unite after getting strong by fighting with each other. In view therefore of the stench that articles in the press emit and of the feelings of venom and vengeance that have spread today, it is difficult to say what dire results may accrue from such acts. That was why I wanted to keep quiet. The storm that is raging in my heart today I can neither quell, nor forcibly suppress, nor give vent to in language before you.



“The fact that Swamiji’s murder should take place at the hands of Abdul Rashid should provide a lesson for us. How good would it be if we understood each other, if we realized that we could not live together by thus fighting among ourselves. But the present stormy climate cannot create in me the confidence that we shall be able to save ourselves by this one single murder.

“I shall not tell you today how cordial were the relations that subsisted between Shraddhanandji and myself. When he visited the Ashram about 6 months ago for the last time, he told me, ‘I receive numerous letters threatening my life, but I am not worried.’ He had a lion’s heart. I have not seen a braver man than he in this world. He was never afraid of death because he was a real theist, a sincere believer in God. That was what impelled him to say to me, “What does it matter if I am murdered?” And now when he actually is, we have no reason to wonder why should we be surprised if even more murders are committed? Today it is a Muslim who has killed a Hindu, but I should not wonder if a Hindu kills a Muslim tomorrow. God save us from such orgies, but what else could be the result when we cannot control our tongue and pen? All the same let me tell you, ‘If any Hindu murders a Muslim in retaliation he will cast a slur upon Hindu dharma.’ I have often said that the leaders who regard themselves as enemies of one another had better take up the cudgels themselves and fight it out rather than the ignorant masses, one of whom did a very improper thing.

“Let us pray to God to give us the wisdom to understand this murder in the right sense. This is a time of test for both Muslims and Hindus. Hindus should not get excited and have an urge to avenge this murder. They need not jump to the conclusion that this murder has further alienated Muslims from them and Hindu-Muslim unity is now impossible. If Hindus hold that view, they commit a crime and tarnish their religion. In my view a Muslim also who thinks that Abdul Rashid has but followed his faith and done the right thing casts a slur on his religion. That view is anything but Islamic. It is now that Musalmans have got an opportunity to show the real beauty of Islam. As for Shraddhanandji and Hindus, they got what they wanted. But as a man and friend and brother of Musalmans, I say that it will do good to both of us, Hindus and Muslims, if we interpret this murder in the right sense. May God give to both of us the wisdom and power to pass through this test and to behave as a result of this deed in a way that will please God to say, ‘Both of them have done what they should.’”

Mrs. Naidu then called upon Mohammad Ali to say something on behalf of his community. He said:



“I was stunned at the news. Immediately I wired to Indra, ‘Your sorrow is our sorrow.’ But do such telegrams mean anything? I will therefore say on behalf of all right-thinking Musalmans—there are others who think wrongly and I cannot speak on their behalf—that this is a despicable outrage. The man has not only murdered Swamiji, but also done great disservice to community and country. To murder an aged man like Swamiji who was almost on his death-bed, what can be more atrocious than that? And the fact that it was perpetrated in the name of a religious discussion makes it so heinous that it is difficult to imagine a blacker deed. I have wired to Dr. Ansari and my staff for greater details. We do not know from the murderer the motive of his crime. Whatever it be, there is no defence for it.

“I had come to the Congress in the fond hope of getting some programme chalked out for giving a more aggressive fight to the Government. I wanted that instead of fighting with each other we might purify ourselves and fix some such programme, but in place of that atmosphere we have now gathered under the shadows of this terrible misdeed. Let me say that I shall be very sorry, if we go back from here without taking any lesson at all from it. The murderer will of course be hanged—he will get the punishment he deserves for his crime. But if the penance of a single man like myself can atone for his sin, I say, I shall feel at ease with myself, be happy, if some Hindu takes my life and makes me a martyr.”

It may be said that one or two unexpected events turned into a momentous session what was going to be a dull, uninteresting affair and another copy of ‘The House of Lords’, as I called it last year. In view of the fact that the Swaraj Party merged into the Congress—rather only effaced its own name by making the Congress merge into it; hardly anybody would have hoped that Congress politics would be any different from the council-programme. And on the first day people like myself who were not interested in that programme were simply yawning. There was one resolution about the council-programme, as many as 21 amendments on it, and interminable speeches on everyone of them! How could one help feeling fed up? But some things turned the tables. The most important and extraordinary of them was the gruesome murder of Rishi Shraddhanandji. Every one’s mind was riveted upon it. Mrs. Naidu first referred to it in the A.I.C.C. (All India Congress Committee) and then Gandhiji and M. Mohammad Ali expressed their reactions, which have been reproduced already. The Congress Resolution on Shraddhanandji was then framed. Condolence resolutions are generally proposed by the President himself and passed without any speeches. But



this was a very unusual event. In order to impress upon the country the gravity of the occasion and give some solace and direction to the country, this resolution was proposed by Gandhiji from the congress platform and seconded and supported by M. Mohammad Ali and Motilalji (Nehru).

1. Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts—nicknamed the Black Acts—was started in the whole of India on 6.4.1918, but in Delhi through an error on 30.3.1918. The police used rifles and even machine-guns to stop the people from gathering, starting in a procession and holding a meeting. When the procession formed nevertheless, was stopped by Gurkha soldiers, Swami Shranddhanandji bared his chest and asked the Gurkha opposite to shoot him. He was however left unscathed but the people were fired upon more than once.



26.12.1926

The following resolution on the death of Swami Shraddhanandji was put before the Congress:

“This Congress expresses its deep indignation at the dastardly and treacherous murder of Swami Shraddhanandji and its sorrow at the irreparable loss the country has suffered from the tragic death of that brave and noble patriot, who had dedicated his life and his great powers to the service of his country and his religion, and, with faith indomitable, had always rushed to the help of the untouchable, the fallen, and the weak”-(re-translated).

It was at first decided that M. Mohammad Ali should propose this resolution, but, at the last moment, the President asked Gandhiji to do so. Gandhiji did not want it, but unexpectedly, against his will—or say, in submission to God’s will—he had to deliver what turned out to be a thrilling speech. Many of the sentiments were the same as those in his speech before the A.I.C.C. but he dwelt at length upon one or two points which were only implicit in the former.

At the A.I.C.C, he had stated: ‘This is not a murder that deserves to be mourned. A death like his is the cherished desire of every brave man.’ Correcting it slightly he said: When a death of this type approaches a fearless man, he hails it, embraces it as a friend. But that should not induce anybody to wish that somebody may murder him, do him injustice and thus become a culprit in the eyes of God. It is wrong to wish that somebody may commit a heinous crime.”

Gandhiji then referred to the service and greatness of Swamiji:

“Swamiji was a hero of the first rank. He had fascinated India with his deeds of bravery. I can attest that he had vowed to sacrifice his life for the country. I don’t wish to take your time in saying much about Swamiji today, as I am going to write about the sacred relationship that existed between us.* If you find anything wanting here today in my speech, you may read my article to fill up the gap. But is it really necessary to say something about the Swamiji’s services? He was a friend of the weak, a help of the helpless. Nobody in India has done more for untouchables than he. He had such deep love for them that he once told me, ‘Let the Congress do anything for untouchables, but so long as every member of the A.I.C.C. does not take a pledge to have at least one untouchable servant in his home, its services are of no avail.’ A practical-minded man may regard his suggestion as fanciful, but it undoubtedly shows how deeply he loved



untouchables. I don't wish to describe here his other services. But the murder of a man like him—a hero, a patriot, a single-minded devotee of God and a servant of the people—is assuredly as beneficial to the country as it is natural for us—imperfect human beings—to mourn over it.”

Describing how the murder was committed, Gandhiji said:

“And what were the circumstances under which the deed was perpetrated? The assassin went there in order to enter into a religious discussion about Islam. The brave Dharmasingh, under the order of Dr. Ansari, refused him entry. But what can anybody do, when God wills otherwise? Swamiji asked Dharmasingh to let him get in. Dharmasingh allowed brother Rashid go inside. I say ‘brother Rashid’ purposely. If we are true Hindus we shall understand why I do so. Swamiji called brother Rashid inside, as God wanted to prove the greatness of Swamiji and Hindu Dharma.

“Swamiji stated that as he was too weak, he could not hold a talk and promised to discuss the question on some future date. But then Rashid said, ‘I am thirsty.’ Swamiji asked Dharmasingh to bring him water. While Dharmasingh had gone to fetch water, this Rashid shot Swamiji in the chest. (The fact is a little different, as stated in the wire Sri. Indra sent to me. It states that water was brought for Rashid, he drank it and then coolly fired four shots. As Swamiji was weak, the very first shot finished him. Dharmasingh caught the culprit, but was shot at and is now in a Hospital. A man who rushed in from outside caught the murderer who is now under police custody.—M.D.)

“Such a thing should never have happened in India, as both Hindus and Muslims are proud of their respective religions. I have studied Quran-e-Shareef and I am in a position to tell Musalmans—and if Hindus don't feel hurt, I can tell them also—that I have read the Quran with the same reverence with which I read the Gita daily. Nowhere does the Quran sanction a murder committed in this manner. Two communities live in India, which unfortunately, frown at each other, nay, regard each other as enemies. That was the reason why this murder could take place. Musalmans regard Swamiji, Lalaji (Lala Lajpatrai) and Pandit Malaviyaji as enemies of Islam. Hindus look upon Sir Abdur Rahim and other Musalmans as their enemies. Both of them are wrong. Swamiji was not an enemy of Islam, nor are Lalaji and Malaviyaji. They both have every right to express their views. Even if those views appear to be wrong, nobody has the right to abuse them. That is my opinion as an humble servant of India. When we read newspapers, we find that there is hardly any Muslim paper which does not use abusive language for these patriots. And what is the crime they have



committed? We may not agree with them in the way they wish to do their work, but it is his services which have given Malaviyaji the popular title 'Bharatbhusan' (Jewel of Bharat) (cheers). You can't serve your country by cheers. You can't, by mere claps, create love in the Muslim mind for Hindu dharma. With God as my witness I say that my heart is burning like fire today. I give you only a few sparks from it, in order that we may reap the fullest benefit from the sacrifice of Shraddhanandji—and wash our hearts in that sacred blood. The "Shuddhi" (purification) that Shraddhanandji wanted was really the same as the Shuddhi that I want. And I have already pointed out that Malaviyaji is 'Bharatbhusan'. Lalaji also speaks out what he feels. His service to the country is by no means mean. Sir Abdur Rahim holds the view that while Hindus are in advance in every way, are rich and educated, Musalmans are backward in all respects—are poor and illiterate. He wants that more Musalmans should be employed in Bengal. We may not agree with his view, but why should we heap abuses on him on that account? If M. Mohammad Ali says: "I respect, I honour, Gandhi. But the faith of the Musalman who believes in Quran-e-Shareef is superior to Gandhi's," why should we lose our temper? If Christian missionaries also say, 'A Christian who goes regularly to church and prays to Jesus is superior to Gandhi', what do you lose thereby? Hence, I say, if we love Shraddhanandji, let us try to create an atmosphere which may stop this recrimination and hatred from spreading and boycott newspapers that publish calumnies and lies. Though a journalist myself, I am impelled to say that India would lose nothing if 90% of the present papers go out of circulation. As matters stand today, if a Muslim paper praises a Hindu, Musalmans will throw away the paper and so will a Hindu discard a paper that does not abuse Musalmans. By his sacrifice Swamiji has shown quite a different dharma. He once faced me with the question 'Is not Aryasamaj a broad-minded, forgiving cult? For instance, how did Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati (the founder) treat the man who poisoned him¹?' I told him I knew how forgiving the Maharshi² was. But Swamiji adored the Maharshi. He narrated the incident in detail. Maharshi was a man of a forgiving nature, as he always held before his eyes the glorious example of Udhishthira.³ He was besides a devout believer in the Upanishads. And of the same forgiving nature was Swami Shraddhanandji. During a talk with me on Shuddhi, he once told me, "I do not regard Musalmans as enemies." How can Shraddhanandji who believed in the Gita-principle of आत्मवत्सर्वभूतेषु (One should look upon every creature as his very self) regard anybody as his enemy? He told me: 'I consider Musalmans as my brothers, my friends. But I regard Hindus also as friends and wish to serve them.'



“My religion teaches me that even if Musalmans spit upon me, I should regard them as brothers and friends. I submit that none of these three is an enemy of Musalmans, nor, is Sir Abdur Rahim or Miya Fazli Husain an enemy of Hindus. The latter once told me “I am a Congressman, I love Hindus. But may I not do anything for Musalmans?” When I regard Pandit Malaviyaji as my elder brother, though sweet differences in views exist between us, why should I not respect Fazli Husain too in spite of his different views? You may say, ‘We are not going to give a single seat’ in answer to Fazli Husain’s demand for 60% of seats to Musalmans, but why should you call him an enemy of Hindus because of his demand? Why should we create imaginary enemies by giving free reins to fancy? Let me repeat as often as I can that Sir Abdur Rahim, Miya Fazli Husain, Ali Brothers are not enemies of Hindus, nor are Malaviyaji and Lalaji those of Musalmans.

“But this is not the occasion to even discuss this matter, I am only pointing out the lesson we should draw from Shradhdhanandji’s death. Today while riots are going on in Delhi, we are passing this resolution. To those who will vote in favour of it, I say, ‘If you accept my submission whole-heartedly, I can even begin promising the advent of Swaraj.’ I don’t mind somebody branding me a madcap, and saying ‘Gandhi is mad in talking of bringing Swaraj in a year.’ But I am not mad. Even now I stand by my statement of 1920. (Gandhiji promised ‘Swaraj in a year’ then), but those who supported me have not stuck to their pledges. To them all I say, ‘We all are children of one God.’ Hindus, Musalmans, Christians give different names to God, but He is one. Shankaracharya expounded ‘Adwaita’⁴ and Ramanuja ‘Dwaita.’⁵ Like Shankara the Prophet spoke of only one Allah. But taking everything into consideration, the essence of all these precepts is one and the same. We all are brothers, not enemies, of one another. If, I say, we only wish to cleanse our hearts, we all can wash our sins with the blood of that man who served his country and his religion by his life and by his death. And then if we quarrel with each other, we would do so in a peaceful manner. Let Musalmans also state that there was no malevolence, no nursing of hatred in Shradhdhanandji’s heart, and that he was not their enemy.

“You may now have understood why I called Rashid my brother. For myself, I do not consider him even an offender. The real culprits are myself, Lalaji; Malaviyaji, Ali Brothers. The Gita says ‘समत्वं योग उच्यते’ (Equal-mindedness is Yoga.—Gita II—48). It says “Don’t differentiate between man and man, between a Brahman and a chandala (lowest in the social scale), between an elephant and a cow’ (Gita V—18). That is why



I said that Rashid was my brother and that he was not even a culprit. This is the time to show the Kshatriya spirit. The warrior spirit may be the special trait of the Kshatriya, but everyone—Brahman, Vaishya, Shudra, everyone—can show that spirit. The present age of Swaraj is especially the age of the Kshatriya spirit for everybody. Let us therefore give up the idea of bemoaning our loss and imbibe in our hearts the lesson which the immolation of Shradhdhanandji and the murder committed by Rashid teaches us. God bless us all.”

Maulana Mohammad Ali said:

“Five years ago, I was travelling with Gandhiji in 1921, I was arrested at Vellore and tried at Karachi. I was made a State Prisoner under Regulation III of 1818. I cannot claim to have changed India for better in 1920, nor for worse in 1925. The real condition of affairs should be faced. I felt that I must go to Gauhati as I wanted to revive old associations.

“Nothing has been said about the motive of the crime, but the report shows two things. An old gentleman is on his sick-bed and Rashid goes and invites a religious discussion with him. The very request was an outrage. Swamiji asked him to be shown in. It shows his great missionary zeal. This combination of circumstances is sickening. The deed shows the height of treachery, cowardliness and dastardliness.

“Whilst I thus wholeheartedly associate myself with the resolution, I should not be true to my faith, if I do not say that the same thing cannot be said of every part of Swamiji’s work. His main work was dedicated to his faith and though there may be a doubt about his course of action, he worked with remarkable zeal for what he regarded as his faith. There was no question of his courage. There is a community of the courageous and brave. I always like to picture Swamiji as the stalwart patriot, who bared his bosom to the bayonet of the Gurkha. He would not have minded so noble a death as that, but it would have been a matter of great sorrow, as a composite nation it is a matter of great sorrow, that Swamiji’s assailant is his countryman. M. Husain Ahmed—a great divine—says that Islam cannot justify a dastardly murder such as this.”

Pandit Motilalji (Nehru) said:

“I was Swamiji’s fellow-student and knew him as Munshiramji. Relations of the most cordial character existed between us. His talk was most carefully worded. He was not afraid of anything. Through good report and bad, he did service of this country and



took grave risks. He was an advocate of widow-remarriage. His death and brutal murder have come as a great shock. Revenge is out of order, but the punishment of the assailant can be no satisfaction. His death should be a lesson to the militant section who must now forget their antipathies and join and thus avenge the murder.

Pandit Malaviyaji (in Hindi):

“Let me offer my gift of love to Swamiji. He gave up his legal practice 30 years ago and dedicated his life to the country. He was a hero in its real sense. He knew not fear. Some people may differ from him as regards his work, but this is not the occasion to put the blame on Swamiji’s method of work. He did everything with perfect impartiality and fairness. He was never afraid of anybody. He did nothing underhand. What is it that roused this wicked passion in the fellow? Brothers, hold your grief and search your hearts. That urge to kill was not due to a grave and sudden provocation. Those who always wrote in papers that Swamiji was an enemy, those who called him an enemy of Musalmans in their speeches and talks—on them lies the responsibility for this murder. This murder makes us feel ashamed. Everybody must bow his head down for such a vile deed. With deep sorrow I am constrained to point out the cause of this murder. It was speeches and writings that had inflamed Rashid’s feelings. At the Unity Conference⁶ it was agreed that no objection should be raised against the Shuddhi done in a proper and legitimate manner. Who are the people that love this agreement? Who are the people that denounce such assassination? With God as the witness let everybody say on the altar of the Congress platform that he will not speak anything, write anything, that can be called ‘religious fanaticism.’ The lesson that one must never commit murder in the name of religion should be taught in our schools. We must never censure anybody in a way that would be an instigation to murder. Let every Congressman resolve that if he reads anything in a paper that rouses Hindu feelings against Musalmans or vice versa, he would report it at once to the Congress authorities. It pains me to think what great service Swamiji would have rendered, had he lived a few years longer. Let every Indian take the lesson to heart that he would do his duty without any fear.”

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The Maulana’s speech at the Congress was in essence the same as his speech at the A.I.C.C., but inferior in quality for a well-known reason. He was rather uneasy, as he had to address under very serious circumstances the very large assembly of the



Congress. His speech somewhat failed to reach its mark, as he referred at length to incidents of his own life in his peculiar style. But one thing that he said deserves to be treasured by the whole Muslim world. Not only did he characterize the murder as dastardly and mean but, quoting the words of Maulana Husain Ahmad, pointed out that ‘there was no defence for the murder in the tenets of Islam.’

There were one or two things in Malaviyaji’s and Maulana’s speeches that had better been left unsaid. But by and large it is good to let our speeches show us as we are and reflect our hearts’ sincere feelings. How helpful would it be, if we use the powerful light shed by the tremendous sacrifice of Shraddhanandji as a searchlight, turn it towards our hearts and thus enlighten them. But maybe, the time for that happy event has not come yet. Who knows, it may be God’s will that for that consummation, for watering the tree of Hindu-Muslim unity, some more blood of pure souls has yet to be sprinkled!

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The Maharashtra Block wanted to take the Congress back to the days of 1915. On the first day it seemed as if they might succeed. In 1915 (and earlier) the Congress used to pass resolutions and immediately thereafter go on a year’s sleep. It never had any solid programme to implement its resolutions. How could a man of action like Gandhiji figure in such a Congress?

But as there was general ignorance on questions like the South African situation, they had to request Gandhiji to speak on them. Hence resolutions of this sort were specially reserved for him. At this Congress also the same thing happened. Gandhiji first gave an idea of the resolution on South Africa and then said:

“I wish to draw your attention to one or two things. The resolution prays that God may grant wisdom to the statesmen there. Why does it pray like that? The odds are so much against us that justice cannot be done to our people, if decisions are based upon human intellect only. The Government of India also is unable to secure justice for our brothers there. At others’ places (Canada etc?), such institutions (like Inquiry Commissions) have been effective means in granting freedom. But all we can do is to pray to God, as the Help of the helpless, just as Draupadi prayed in ancient times.

“And we have untouchability in Hinduism here. Nemesis has overtaken us in South Africa, inasmuch as our people have become untouchables there and our fellow-brothers there receive a heavy punishment for our sins. If here we do not allow



untouchables to draw water from public wells and their children to attend our schools, we are debarred from public institutions there. The resolution also requests the Europeans there not to misuse their power. It states that Indians do not ask for any favour, all they demand is justice and that the Europeans must give. It also points out that no free nation has a right to destroy the freedom of any other.

“O Lord, Grant these people wisdom and humility, so that recognising Thy supreme power, they may decide to give us justice!”

But this was not enough. As I have stated before, owing to the unparalleled sacrifice of Shradhdhanandji, the most important work of this year’s Congress fell into Gandhiji’s hands. And is it possible for Khadi to ignore Gandhiji? The Congress may, but how can Khadi do so? Who except Gandhiji could then be requested to open the Exhibition?

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It was a good thing the Reception Committee did in taking advantage of Gandhiji’s presence in the Congress and asking him to open the Swadeshi (one’s own country’s) Exhibition. There was nothing extra-ordinary in the Exhibition itself. Owing either to ignorance or to indifference, many things that should never have been allowed entry had got into the Exhibition, though a promise was given that nothing but Khadi would be exhibited in the stalls. Gandhiji opened the Exhibition never-the-less and though the sun was in front of him all the while, he delivered a very impressive speech lasting for half an hour. Here is the substance:

“What tangible work can you do to promote Hindu-Muslim Unity or remove untouchability? Both these programmes require a change of heart. But the programme of action before you is that of the spinning wheel and no other. Its progress during the last two or three years, has proved that the spinning wheel possesses a power that cannot be surpassed.”

And then Gandhiji stated: “Whenever millionaires living in cities earn 5 millions, they earn them by sending 95 millions to foreign countries. These cities feed upon the millions living in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. The Government figures themselves show that small villages are increasingly destroyed. Thirty million families get hardly roti (bread) and some dirty salt. The thing that provides them milk and some little ghee (clarified butter) to spread over their bread is the spinning wheel. While Khadi is a sentient thing,-every fibre in it is produced from the labour of the poor man’s



hand and it possesses the power of appeasing the hunger of our starving masses-, foreign cloth, mill cloth, ate insentient. Will you cover your body with a living or a lifeless thing? Congress has done much work, tremendous work so far, but has the Congress flag penetrated the seven hundred thousand villages of India? In 1920 I had said, 'We can claim to have achieved something, only when we can place a national worker wherever the Government's representative-the patel-is stationed. And in what other way, by what other means, except that of Khadi, you will be able to reach these countless villages? The Congress has given Swaraj to the All-India Spinners' Association and through it the spinning wheel has shown what wonderful power it possesses. Read the Association's report. It is providing work to 50,000 women. That is why I wish to see that all the three hundred millions of India are clad in Khadi. But I don't see it today. I am plying my boat alone on the strength of my unshakable faith. The author of the Mahabharata has reached a spectacular height both in spiritual knowledge and literary art by presenting before the world the picture of Draupadi. He has shown her being disrobed and her husbands and elders looking on without any power to help her. And then, in response to the lacerating cry of her helplessness, God rushes to her rescue at that moment of her agony. When I gain the power of Draupadi's devotion, everybody will listen to me, wear Khadi and Swaraj will come.'

But the Congress, far from discarding Khadi wore Khadi still more and took the step of descending from its Olympian heights of 'the House of Lords', to the plain of the House of Commons. One of the utterances of Panditji (Motilal Nehru) had made me a little uneasy. At the Subjects Committee held after the opening of the Exhibition, he had stated, "What work have you done outside (the council halls)? You have done nothing in all these years." That meant that he was not at all impressed with the history of khadi activity given in Gandhiji's speech at the Exhibition. But on the last day Panditji and his party took an unexpected step. He himself proposed a resolution to replace the one in force. The latter required Congressmen to wear Khadi on Congress functions only. Motilalji proposed reversion to the earlier resolution that had made only those entitled to take part in Congress work who wore Khadi 'habitually.' That resolution was passed almost unanimously. Those who opposed it were only two members from Maharashtra and two or three others from scattered places. Through this resolution, the Swarajists gave a meaning to another resolution of theirs which asked them to give an impetus to the constructive programme.



The resolution in effect confers suffrage only on that Congressman who wears Khadi normally. Sri. Satyamurti (a Swarajist from Madras) had made it quite clear at the All-India Congress Committee that Gandhiji had taken no initiative in the matter. The idea of reimposing this qualification for voting came from some Swarajist members of the Working Committee themselves. They had seen at the All-India Congress Committee session that the resolution of Khadi-wearing on only official functions was reduced to a farce by several members. They had indeed consulted Gandhiji before proposing it. He had then stated: “I wish to remain aloof, but the present situation is impossible. Either drop Khadi altogether or pass a resolution under which Khadi would be worn habitually. But take it that I have no advice to give you.” When the amended resolution came before the Subjects Committee, he delivered a short speech also owing to the President’s summons:

“I did not want to be present at this session, but the President insisted and I have come. One member said, “This resolution inflicts an injustice. Will Gandhiji allow injustice to be perpetrated?” If you talk of my sense of justice, I say, I had no hand in mooting this resolution. Let me say however that personally I would wish that the Belgaum resolution on the spinning franchise were wholly revived.⁷ As for my sense of justice, it will be satisfied to the extent that you make the spinning franchise more rigorous. There is no doubt in my mind that it is a *sine qua non* of our progress. And if it is so, why should I not stiffen the conditions of franchise and ask for your co-operation in their implementation? When ulterior motives are attributed to the proposal of the resolution, I feel deeply hurt. I am tempted to say that the charge is an insult to me. Why should the decline in our numerical strength frighten us? It is the power of quality, not of numbers, that the resolution aims at. And if you want to raise the power of quality, you have got to impose stricter qualifications which can raise it. It is all right, if the Congress contains all political parties, but does that justify keeping them all in the Congress, no matter what the cost? The Independence Resolution is going to be proposed here. Suppose it is passed. Will you then charge the sponsors with the motive of ousting other parties? I at least would never allege that the Independence Resolution was passed in order to get rid of this or that party. There have got to be at least some definite rules for the attainment of national uplift. If you want to make the Congress ‘national’, if you want to make it a people’s institution, you have but to forge and maintain a link that joins you with the people. And what could that link be except Khadi? I know that our people do not possess the means to give even 4 annas, but I know also that their capacity to understand what Congress stands



for is still less. How will you show them its usefulness? And go to Travancore. There are untouchables whose very shadow is regarded as a pollution and who have to keep themselves far apart from the public. How will you induce such people to take any interest in the Congress? For all that, there is no other means except Khadi. Do you know that there are 50,000 women on the roll of the spinners' Association? What is it that can establish contact with them? Nothing but the provision of food in their hungry stomachs. That contact is thus that of love—the strongest tie.

“Then there is another aspect. Do you want to take Swaraj or sit idle in the hope that Swaraj will fall into your hands from Downing Street? And do you wish to take it by procuring hired voters, by having men who come clad in Khadi for just the particular occasion? I tell you, the people are poor, are voiceless. Don't insult those dumb poor people. There is nothing left undone already in inflicting insults upon them.

“When this matter was discussed, the President had remarked, ‘Our numerical strength will be reduced materially.’ Let it. If some people have to leave the Congress, let them. It may be helpful even to their (moral) uplift. Let me tell you frankly that if you want to nullify this resolution the next moment after it is passed, you had better remove completely the disgraceful rule that stands at present. Let Khadi stand on its own independent foundation, but it should never lean on a weak support. I love the reputation of the Congress the most, and I tell you, however great the success you have gained in elections (of the Councils), that success will go fruitless, so long as you do not keep the source pure. Yesterday, giving reason for increasing the fee of Delegates, it was stated that the Congress was short of money. Is that any small disgrace? Why was our treasury full in 1921 and how has it come to the bottom now? Hence, if you hold dear the name, the prestige, of the Congress, I ask you to pass this resolution after full consideration of its implications.

“And set aside altogether any consideration about me. It would be right if, bearing in mind all that I said, you pass this resolution. It would be good if you implement it with perfect honesty and diligence. But if you are on the look-out for those who vote for it only in name, you are certain to regret it in the end. I want nobody's favour. I don't want this resolution, if you pass it as a sop or a concession to me, I love freedom myself and don't want to rob anybody of his. All I want is to please my conscience and conscience is God. You too may vote according to your conscience.”



On the next day the resolution declaring the goal of the Congress to be complete independence outside the British Empire was proposed. Every year this drama is staged as the last item and every year it comes to a tragic end. This year also the same thing happened. Sri. Sambamurti would not yield to the request to withdraw it. And some Bengali youths gave him support. Gandhiji pleaded very earnestly that the resolution might be withdrawn. The President also appealed to the sponsors to drop it. But one young man who had returned from the notorious penal colony of the Andamans, said: “Why do you take the Mahatma’s name everywhere? We have our own independent view and it stands.”

Opposing the resolution Gandhiji said: ‘This resolution is an annual recurrence. When it came to me⁸ I ruled it out. This year you have an amiable President and so you are allowed to discuss it so far. Before whom are you talking of freedom? How can you hope for the harmony that Swaraj requires, when there is discord everywhere? The wise man understands his limitations, does not eat more than he can digest. Suppose independence outside the Empire is a much greater thing than Swaraj⁹, even then I suggest, “Have patience, achieve whatever is feasible now, and then march forward”, For myself, ‘One step enough for me.’ Don’t you realize that at present your ‘complete independence outside the Empire’ is likely to be misconstrued? And, as Hindus and Muslims are just now at daggers drawn, may not your ‘complete independence’ turn out to be a Hindu or a Musalman Raj?

“But the truth is that complete independence is contained in Swaraj. ‘Swaraj’ means “Within the Empire if possible, without it if necessary.” Do you know that Pandit Malaviyaji opposed the ‘Swaraj’ resolution and Jinnah quitted the Congress, just because ‘Swaraj’ included freedom from the Empire? Why do you lose your faith in human nature and in yourselves? Why do you take it for granted that you will never succeed in making the haughty Englishman forget his pride and in winning him over to your side to serve you? Have you an aversion to the white skin itself? Don’t you want some Englishmen to remain in India to teach you English? Take the example of South Africa. A proud nation like the Dutch (Boer) lives there. But even they do not bring into their Parliament a bill to quit the Empire. General Hertzog has returned from England only just now—with views changed altogether. He doesn’t talk of going out of the Empire. He knows that he can very easily declare his state’s freedom from the Empire, but he sees wisdom in not doing so. Unless it includes the freedom of secession, no constitution given us by the British Parliament will ever satisfy me. Please don’t make



the deep meaning of Swaraj superficial, don't narrow down its broad concept. If we wait, we may gain a more potent Swaraj than what we even aim at today. As each individual Indian grows in strength, the power that lies in that word—Swaraj—will also grow.”

* * * *

On the Nabha resolution Gandhiji said: “I have read the correspondence about the deposed King of Nabha; neither the Congress nor the King will gain anything by passing a resolution on his deposition.” His suggestion that, in view of its policy of non-interference in Indian States, the Nabha resolution should be reconsidered and the Working Committee asked to deal with the question was accepted with one or two dissenting votes.

Gandhiji advised the Congress not to remain passive witness on the foreign exchange policy of the Government. He stated that the Congress ought to pass a resolution of some kind, as the exchange question was of great importance from the common people's point of view. Motilalji's resolution that after consultation with economic experts the Working Committee should advise the Congress members in the Councils to do something to protect the interests of the people was passed.

The Independence Resolution was again discussed in the open session. The President said that it would be wise to postpone its consideration at least in view of Gandhiji's re-entry into politics. Sri. Upendra Nath Banerji got up here to say that as the resolution had nothing to do with personal views of Gandhiji, it should be considered independently of them. Gandhiji congratulated him for holding that view and said:

“You must not give up your independent view, even if big Mahatmas came and opposed you. God save us from the spell of Mahatmas. But I am not a Mahatma, I am an humble servant of the people. You will not therefore easily free yourselves from my spell as, in self-sacrifice, I am not inferior to the most desperate Anarchist. You may plan the most ambitious project you like, but I ask you to consider carefully the advice of the man who has fought many a battle in his life and knows how and how much to advance. If today you define ‘Swaraj’ in exact terms, you only bind down its power to definite limits. Complete independence is definitely included in ‘Swaraj.’ If it is not, you may not find me in the Congress. But it also contains something that hurts your self-respect. Even then I must let you know that ‘Swaraj’ can also mean the closest contact



with British on terms of perfect equality. My sympathies go with those to whom this contact has become unbearable owing to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, but I must tell them that they are impatient and it is my advice to march a little less hastily.

“But don’t do anything under the deluded hope that I shall help you in your council-programme. It is not necessary to make that condition with me just at present. When I feel from within that I should enter the arena of the Councils, I shall request Panditji on bended knees to take me into his fold and appoint me his Secretary. But yet that time has not come. At the same time, don’t rule out the possibility of my accepting the council-programme. I have not completely erased it out of my mind. Those who can recollect the past, will remember that I said at the Calcutta Congress that it was not true that we would never think of the council-programme. When Lord Reading¹⁰ told me, ‘You must come into my Central Assembly’ I replied ‘Take these many steps and I come.’”

“Just as I had agreed to be a member of the Champaran Inquiry Committee,¹¹ I can enter the Assembly quite as well. Why, I am prepared to be even an Executive Councillor. But be sure, we shall have gained Swaraj, and even the complete independence of Sambamurti, when I become a member of the Executive Council.

“Individually, I have gained my Swaraj and independence. Now let every Indian gain that independence for himself. Then everybody’s independence becomes the whole country’s independence. I can give you only one condition: When the All India Congress Committee becomes an active institution working all the year round, when it buckles up independence, when India is able to implement its one resolve—that of boycott of foreign cloth—, I shall approach pandit Motilalji and tell him, ‘Make me a legislative councillor.’ But such boycott cannot be successful, so long as you are not bent upon carrying it out.

“In the meanwhile, if you are in earnest about doing some national work, why don’t you join the All India Spinners’ Association? I will give you 30 rupees (monthly) and the necessary training. But you will have to go from village to village to propagate the cloth boycott. At present, there is no discipline, no readiness to obey rules, no desire to accept the President’s order cheerfully. You must rather support him enthusiastically and tell him, ‘We will follow your command, go with you wherever you lead us to.’ Do you know that I receive queer letters now? Swamiji gave up his life and now some Musalman will have to give up his. An anonymous letter which the President



has received gives that same threat. That is a hollow threat, but it shows where the wind blows. When the atmosphere has thus become a power magazine, how can I think of the councils? If we all join hands and are able to clear the atmosphere, you will find me engaged in council work. But at present you must dismiss me from your mind. If you want to throw out the resolution, do it on your own. But in doing so, let there be no bargaining spirit or mental reservation behind your vote.”

The resolution was ultimately lost by a large majority.

On the Congress President’s speech last year, I had remarked that it was a speech that would have become a patrician audience—I called that Congress, a session of the House of Lords—and added that the speech was far beyond the comprehension of the masses, since it was delivered in English and that too in a high-flown poetic language. This year’s Presidential address was quite different. It was definitely straight, simple and short, with every page revealing the President’s kindheartedness. The President had brought with him moreover printed copies of its translation into good Hindi. But that was all that could be said in its favour. More than half of it is filled with references to the Council-programme naturally. So, there is nothing new in the programme itself, but the President explains it in his excellent style. One is happy to note, however, that the President has not forgotten the constructive programme. He says (in effect): “Not less important than our work in Councils and Municipalities is the constructive programme. You may think it essential to attend to other things, think them to be of greater importance, but the fact undoubtedly stands that activities like Khadi, prohibition, removal of untouchability are like the life-breath of the national movement.”

As regards Khadi he stated: “Thanks to the foresight and determination of Mahatma Gandhi, the spinning wheel was resuscitated and it has now resumed its old true place in society.... It has increased our faith in ourselves, changed the attitude of the nation, and invested us with a new dignity. It was furiously opposed at first, then ignored, and now it has got a permanent place in our hearts. It is Khadi which gives us a measure of our organising capacity as well as our power of removing unemployment,—unemployment which the Government does nothing to relieve. The Congress saw that Khadi was outstripping it and now it has given it a permanent place in the Congress by entrusting it to an Association free from the wrangles and ups and downs of politics.”



Referring to prohibition the President said: “You do not pay much attention to total prohibition, but if you can rouse the conscience of the nation, the moral power of our movement could undoubtedly increase. We realized our dignity and power of self-sacrifice when the non-co-operation movement was at its height, but that has not brought about any permanent change in the position of our country. One of the greatest causes of poverty in many provinces is drink. We shall have to find out effective means to destroy the evil. There is no substance in the cry that prohibition means a great loss to the national revenue. It will only increase the earning capacity and wealth of the people. I think the national conscience is not sufficiently aroused in the matter and yet, if they only will it, both the religions—Hindu and Muslim—can do much about it.”

On untouchability he remarked: “The removal of untouchability remained for long in the hands of social and religious reformers and much progress could not be made. But thanks again to Mahatmaji, it was made a very part of Congress work and that has transformed the whole attitude of the people on questions relating to it. All the same the solution of that problem depends upon the economic uplift of untouchables. Like the Khadi work, the different organisations of social and religious reformers should be welded into one organisation.

“But it is wrong to think that there is no Swaraj without the solution of this problem or that immediately the problem was solved, Swaraj would fall into our hands like a ripe fruit. Let us not allow domestic troubles to shut out our vision of Swaraj.”

One wonders why the President suggested other means—the establishment of a navy etc. for removing unemployment, even though in his reference to Khadi he had pointed out its efficacy for the same purpose. But in fact there is nothing surprising in these suggestions, as they come from the President who wants for India a replica or even a superior type of Western civilization.

There is nothing new about the views on Hindu-Muslim unity, tolerance of other faiths etc., which then follow.

The conclusion is excellent. The President advises the people not to mind ridicule, dissuasion of friends or wrath of enemies, praise or blame, and pursue steadfastly their goal of Swaraj and then ends his speech with the following verse from the Bhagwadgita:



तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचार |

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पुरुषः || (३—१९)

(Hence, O Arjuna, do your work incessantly and in a detached spirit. He who does his duty for the sake of duty without any hankering after its reward attains the Sublime).

* * * *

This is not the place to comment upon other things about the Congress. Owing to the mis-management of the Reception Committee, the Delegate's fee was raised to rupees five from one. The Congress had no fund on hand and could render no help to the Reception Committee. This is but natural, as the Congress has forfeited the faith of the people. Hence the passage of the unconstitutional resolution of raising the Delegate's fee. This shows the plight to which we have fallen. One is tempted to point out some other drawbacks in organisational work, but where love exists one does not like to do so. Here also we met with the same warmth of heart as we did at Coconada and Belgaum Congress sessions. The volunteers may be lacking in discipline, but no amount of praise for their loving service is too much.

* * * *

And shall I write a few words about the speech of the Reception Committee? It was unique—as a speech coming from a President of the Reception Committee. I have heard many speeches from Presidents of Reception Committees, but none can approach this one. I would have been glad if I could have reproduced that speech verbatim. It was very short and sweet, very polite and becoming, full of facts and sincere expression of the heart. We would all like to join the speaker in his praise of Assam—the land of bravery, the land of the Pandavas and the Kaurvas of the Mahabharat fame, the land where even Gods would wish to die. I omit that but I cannot desist from giving here his views on Khadi:

“Production of Khadi was an ancestral occupation with us. Let every family chant the *mantra* of Khadi in order to make Khadi a universal vogue and spinning a living institution. That was the condition that formerly prevailed in Assam. Women of the highest families in Assam used to spin and weave. We are even now in the position of humbly accepting Gandhiji's appreciation of creating frozen poetry in our designs on cloth. We are here more in need of an institution to provide us cotton at cheap rates and a depot of spinning implements than of propaganda for Khadi. It is only because



we have not yet lost our spinning and weaving practices that we are saved from being utterly impoverished. There are 12 lakh (hundred thousand) labourers in Assam, none of whom is an Assamese. Khadi may not make you rich, cannot become an article of extensive business, but there is no doubt that it provides bread to the poorest of the poor.”

I refrain from giving his loving reference to Gandhiji, but I must state what he said about the spinning wheel: “That spinning wheel, which the frail figure of Gandhiji spins with unfailing regularity, spins yarn not only to clothe millions but also to pave the straight and so the shortest road to the economic uplift of the country. And it is through the spinning wheel that the irresistible power of nonviolent non-co-operation which destroys the violence of imperialism grows steadily.”

* * * *

The Chairman of the Reception Committee began his speech with the prayer:

यं ब्रह्मा वरुणेन्द्र¹² etc.

and the President of the Congress ended his speech with a quotation from the Bhagwadgita enjoining action with detachment. If the spiritual atmosphere, with which the Congress function was thus filled, spreads all over the country and we too are infected with it and form the habit of doing all our actions in a religious spirit, there could be nothing better to wish.

* See Appendix. I.

1. Instead of getting angry with the man Swamiji not only forgave him but gave him money to escape, so that the infuriated king or some one else might not take his life.
2. Maharshi—great sage.
3. He was the eldest of the Pandava brothers. His cousin Duryodhan tried to kill them more than once, but Udhishthira not only always forgave him, but even saved him from death. Only after Duryodhan refused to give the brothers even five villages of the kingdom that was rightly theirs, it was decided that a war should be waged. That was the Mahabharat—the Grear War.
4. Non-duality.
5. Duality. Ramanuja’s philosophy is better stated as ‘Vishistaadwaita’—non-duality with attributes. Ramanuja thus accepts the non-duality of ‘Brahma’ but of a special kind, which comes very near to duality.



6. Gandhiji went on a fast for 21 days in 1924 to expiate for the sins of communal riots. A Unity Conference was held to try to dissolve the communal tension at that time.
7. In 1924 at Belgaum the Congress passed a resolution conferring suffrage on only those who contributed monthly 2000 yards of yarn—self-spun or bought-and wore Khadi always. That resolution was gradually watered down and before the 1926 sessions, suffrage was granted to those who wore Khadi on official functions only.
8. In 1924, when Gandhiji was the President.
9. The goal of the Congress was changed in 1921 into the attainment of Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means. 'Swaraj' was not closely defined. It meant freedom within or without the Empire.
10. In 1921 Lord Reading, soon after he came to India as the Viceroy, invited Gandhiji to know from him personally what non-co-operation stood for. The interview came to nothing in the end.
11. This district in Bihar was the scene of Gandhiji's first Satyagraha in India against the oppressive law which required every tenant to grow opium on 3/20th part of his farm. Gandhiji was served with an externment order, which he refused to obey. The Government ultimately appointed an Inquiry Committee to find out the grievances of the tenants and then allayed them.
12. Obeisance to that God whom Brahma and other gods extol etc.



28.12.1926

A special session of the Hindu Mahasabha had been called on account of the murder of Swami Shraddhanandji.

Pandit Malaviyaji was the President. It struck me that it would have been excellent if many Musalmans had heard his speech, since full of deep grief as it was, there was in it not only no expression of hatred against the Musalmans but none even against the murderer. The speech was nothing more than an exhortation to push forward the work of Swamiji with unflinching determination. Had Muslims heard that speech, they would have been convinced that Gandhiji was right in stating at the Congress session on the preceding day that Malaviyaji was not an enemy either of Musalmans or of Islam.

Malaviyaji said: 'This session meets under the shadow of a deep sorrow. You all know that the death of Shraddhanandji, our great patriot and great servant of the Hindu community, has taken place at the hands of a fallen man. Swamiji was a brilliant star of this country. The Government knows how fervent his patriotism was for the last 40 years. He started his career as a lawyer, founded a *gurukula*¹ 20 years ago and dedicated his all to this institution. It is unnecessary to remind you how patriotic he was. You must be aware that on one occasion he even bared his chest before the British rifle at Delhi. He used to take a leading part in the work of the Hindu Mahasabha and was the very head of the 'shuddhi' movement. He converted thousands of Malkanas² to Hinduism. Swamiji was always concerned about the 'shuddhi' and 'sangathan' (— knitting together i.e, organisation) movements and specially about the untouchables. The cold—blooded murder of an aged man of 71 years like him is a matter of shame and grief.

"To Swamiji personally it was a glorious event, since his death in this manner was good as breathing new life into the dead bones of Hindu dharma. It reminds me of Guru Tegbahadur who gave up his life in Delhi for the same purpose of defending Hinduism. During Aurangzeb's³ regime Brahmins sought the Guru's help. Then they went to the Emperor and said, 'We shall become Musalmans, if you first convert our Guru.' Aurangzeb asked them, 'How is it that Hindu dharma is so dear to you that you cannot renounce it?' The Guru replied, 'Religion is dearer than life itself'. "Hail Guru Tegbahadur. Give up your head but never your Faith"⁴—that was the popular cry. One of our great leaders thus gave up his life in Delhi for the cause of religion. Swami



Shraddhanand was the second martyr of the very same kind. He had no hatred for any religion and served Hindus. A fallen Musalman killed a man of such sterling worth.

“What does it teach us? Just as the death of Tegbahadur brought about an awakening in the Hindu community, so this thing teaches us that every man belonging to the Hindu community must begin to devote himself to the work of ‘shuddhi’ and ‘sangathan’.

“The second precept of the Swami is that fear must never deter us from doing that work. Swamiji not only was not afraid to do this work, but did it without doing injustice to anybody. He used to say that the Hindu has every right to convert a Muslim into Hinduism. I for one say that all this ‘tabligh’ (conversion) business should entirely stop. Christians also must give it up. But when thousands of Musalmans and Christians are converting Hindus, nobody has the right to tell us that Hindus should desist from the shuddhi movement. Of course Swamiji always insisted that we should never do any injustice to anybody and that this activity should not be carried in a way that would be detrimental to national unity. Even if a heinous sin is committed in his presence, the Hindu must remain firm on his religious doctrine and never commit the sin of retaliation. No follower of the Hindu faith should do anything that would make him the object of public condemnation.

“How shall we commemorate the grievous death of Swamiji? Let a day be fixed when all Hindus may meet and start collecting a fund to perpetuate his memory. His departure from our midst has not cut off our connection with him. He is still alive. Why was it that Swamiji loved the Hindu Mahasabha? He was definitely a nationalist, but he joined the Mahasabha when he saw the need of reforms among Hindus. We must not do a single thing that could make it difficult for all Hindus to be welded into one compact community. But we are doing many things that hinder that unity. We must never say a single word, write a single article which would retard our work. Do you know how a man becomes a Christian? The Christian missionary brings enormous wealth with him and tries to convert Hindus with the money.

“Can any other community protect Hindu dharma? No, we Hindus alone must protect our faith. Our Hindu dharma is the most sacred religion. Gandhiji has stated that though he has studied the other religions of the world, he cannot get that peace, that happiness, that light, from others which he does from Hindu Dharma. But we are not yet fully awakened. The Bible has been translated into 600 languages. And we



don't find our religious books even in our Indian languages. Christians regularly go to their church every week, but all of us do not follow our religious practices, because our faith in our religion has waned. We should organise '*kathas*' (stories told by special religious instructors) everywhere, discuss the principles of our religion, propagate the use of our religious books. And that is what we ourselves alone, Hindus alone, can do.

“A question may be raised ‘Why should Assam be selected as the venue of the Hindu Sabha?’ The answer is, ‘This is Kaamroopa, celebrated for the Kaamaakhya Devi installed here. There are gigantic mountains here and the river Brahmaputra flows in deep serenity. That means Power and Prosperity. It is here that Englishmen have come, planted tea gardens, and, importing labourers from outside, created gardens of ‘golden flowers’. But the state of Hindus in this province is miserable. Of the 8,000,000 labourers working here, only 1,700,000 are Assamese. Let us hope their number increases. My love flows out more at the sight of Assamese than at that of other people. How woeful is our plight though Hindus are so many in numbers! What a large number of Christian Missions there are on Naga Hills and other places! Not to speak of others, there are as many as 16 of them from America alone! These people come from far-off countries and unmindful of malaria or monsoon go on doing their work, which is to convert people into Christianity. But how deeply grieved I would be, if somebody made my sister or son a Musalman or a Christian? If you believe that Hindu Dharma is the most sacred faith, try to retain these brothers in Hinduism.

“Just think of the many faults the Assamese have. Opium is very extensively used here but it is a poison and opium-addicts are more dead than alive. It is our business to make such sluggards energetic.... If we but form a strong organisation, Assamese can be rulers in our country even tomorrow. This can be done, if even one gentleman decides to spend his life in the propagation of Hinduism among the Assamese. It is a matter of great joy that Guru More Swamiji has resolved to propagate Hindu Dharma everywhere.

“How many things shall, I draw your attention to? You must be knowing the Gita meetings of the Hindu Mahasabha. Hold meetings and kathas in every village. You are absorbed in your work till 8 p.m. in the evening. Well then, hold katha congregations and sing hymns to God after 8 p.m. The Hindu gains a hundred times more through kathas than does a Christian through a sermon or a Musalman through a bang (call of prayer). What a shameful thing it is that that country in which there are invaluable treasures like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Bhagwat, the Upanishads, the



Gita etc., and the air of which is permeated with profound metaphysical truths is so poor, so miserable. What should that country be lacking in, which possesses such an inexhaustible store of dharma! What need could it ever have for any other religion? And if it has, it is a matter of shame, of tears.

“There are many schools here, but that is not enough. We want gymnasiums also to make our bodies strong.

सर्वैगुणैर्विशिष्टोऽपि निर्वीर्यः किं करिष्यति?

(What can a weak man do even though he has all other qualities?)

“This means our body must be strong and healthy, but we have fallen into the evil custom of child marriages. At first 25 was the age of marriage, then it came down to 20 and then to 18. It is a sin to marry a son before this age.

“The true Hindu will protect the orphan, the widow etc.:

अनाथा विधवा रक्षया मन्दिराणि तथा च गौः|

धर्म्य संगठनं कृत्वा देयं दानं च तद्धितम् ||

(Orphans and widows, temples and cows must be protected. Forming a religious organisation donations must be given to help it.)

“He will protect Mother Cow, who is greater than even our own mother. Mother gives us milk in our infancy only, but the cow provides us milk in our childhood, youth and old age.

स्त्रीणां समादरः कार्यः दुखितेषु दया तथा|

(The true Hindu will honour women and pity the sinful.)

“How highly was Draupadi respected! Kunti’s power of patience and endurance is well-known. And see how Sitaji is adored!

अहिंसका न हन्तव्याः आततायी वधार्हणः|

(Non-violent people should not be killed but the wicked man who harms society deserves to be killed.)



“Macaulay has clearly stated that everyone has the right of private defence. Everybody has the right to defend himself when attacked. You must show your valour against enemies.

भवेत्पुनर्जन्ममोक्षः शोकापापहरः शिवः।
स्मर्तव्यः सततं विष्णुः सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितः॥

(In that way one gains liberation from births and re-births. Lord Shiva removes all sin and sorrow. Always remember Lord Vishnu who is immanent in all creatures.)

स्थानधर्मः सुखप्रदः।

(One must follow the dharma one’s situation demands. In that lies true happiness.)

सनातनीयाः सामाजिकाः जैनाः शिखाश्च बौद्धाश्च ।
स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः भावयन्तु परस्परम् ॥

(May Sanatanis (orthodox Hindus), Aryasamajists (reformist Hindus), Jains, Sikhs, Buddha’s followers remain engaged in performing their respective religious dharmas (duties and rites) but love one another also.)

“There are countless masjids (mosques) in India and countless bands used to play music before them formerly, but nobody ever raised any objection. It is only now that objection is raised against the practice. 500 men are now in jail for offering satyagraha at Patwakhali⁵. Defence of Hindus against the attacks of Musalmans is thus necessary. If there is no Hindu Sabha who will protect these people?”

In conclusion Malaviyaji appealed for a fund of five hundred thousand rupees to perpetuate the memory of Shraddhanandji.

Other speeches also were delivered at this Special Session and they too were models of self-restraint and peaceful language. A revered individual named Goswamiji (a spiritual leader of the Vaishnva sect) stated: “In our Assam there has never been a quarrel between Hindus and Musalmans. We request Musalmans to help us in becoming strong and we too will help them in their fight for rights.”

A Maulvi (a Muslim divine) of the Maimansing District (in Bengal) was present at this meeting. He requested Malaviyaji to let him deliver a speech. Malaviyaji agreed. He said, “The murder of Swamiji was despicable in the eyes of Islam and the Quran. Islam permits no killing except in a battle or in self-defence against the assault of an



oppressor. This murder casts a slur on Islam”. (Some people here shouted out in Bengali: ‘Do you speak these words from your heart or lips?’) without getting angry or hurt in the least the Maulvi replied, “I speak from my heart, from the depth of my heart.”

The Hindu Mahasabha in its resolutions condemned ‘the cowardly, cold-blooded and treacherous murder’ of Swami Shraddhanandji who, the Sabha recalled with pride, became ‘a victim to an assassin’s attack for the cause of ‘Shuddhi’ and ‘Sangathan.’

Malaviyaji was delighted at the fact that the very first response to his appeal for the Shraddhanand Memorial Fund came from a Musalman. Dr. Rajabali, a well-known Khadi-lover of Bombay immediately requested that Rs. 600/- be accepted from him as his donation for the removal of untouchability. That amount was accepted with thanks. If there are many Musalmans and Hindus with hearts as pure as Dr. Rajabali’s, we can cover half of our journey to Swaraj in a moment.

On his return from Gauhati Gandhiji halted for 2-3 days at Calcutta. These days were filled up with the sacred remembrances of Swami Shraddhanandji. Pandit Malaviyaji convened a mammoth meeting for collecting contributions to the Shraddhanand Memorial Fund and untouchables earnestly pleaded that Gandhiji should address their meeting. As the depressed classes are not treated as untouchables in Bengal (as regards public meetings), there was no wonder that thousands of high-caste and hundreds of depressed class Hindus were present at the meeting. All the big meetings of the depressed classes in particular were tragic reminders of the late Swamiji. The one thing that Gandhiji asks at every place is this: ‘Swamiji sacrificed his life in his service for the uplift of the depressed classes and for Hindu dharma. How long even still will Hindu society continue to ostracize the depressed classes?’

1. The family of the teacher. Shraddhanandji revived this ancient system, in which the Guru was both teacher and father of the boys who lived with him in his house.

2. They were formerly Hindu Rajputs living in Agra and U.P. districts. Shraddhanandji re-converted them to Hinduism by performing a ceremony called ‘shuddhi’ (Purification). Thousands were thus converted in 1923.

3. The last of the Great Mogul Emperors of India. He departed from his predecessors’ practice of tolerance of Hindu faith, persecuted Hindus and destroyed Hindu temples. The result was rebellion all over India from North to South, the end of Mogul paramourty and the rise of Sikhs, Rajputs, and Maharastrians.



4. Aurangzeb's order to convert Hindus of Kashmir into Muslims frightened Brahmins who took shelter under the 9th Guru of the Sikhs named Tegbahadur. The Guru told them "Ask Aurangzeb to first convert me." He was called and asked to embrace Islam. He refused and said, "Everyone should have the freedom to follow his own faith". Aurangzeb then imprisoned him and after putting him to torture for 5 days, beheaded him.

5. Musalmans at Patwakhali in Bengal slaughtered a cow publicly. Hindus therefore started a procession which sang music before Muslim mosques. The British Government banned the procession. Hindus disobeyed the order and started this Satyagraha.



2. 1.1927

In reply to the address of students of the depressed classes in Howrah and Calcutta Gandhiji said: “I had no idea that an address would be presented to me at this meeting. I had only hoped that I would say something about the late Swamiji. I wanted to tell you how great were the services, Swamiji rendered, but since you have given me an Address, I shall say a few words about it first.

“The sight of the afflictions of the suppressed classes touches me deeply. I wish I could transform myself into a member of the suppressed classes, so that I could fully realize the hardships they undergo. But being a Hindu I have come to understand something about this sin and the heavy debt that the Hindu Dharma has incurred thereby. I shall neither rest myself nor let any Hindu rest, so long as that sin is not destroyed. Hindu Dharma affirms that there is no essential difference between the Brahmin and the Bhangi. It commands the aspirant for salvation, the devotee of God, not to feel any distinction between the two. Why does the Gitaji thus lay down that no distinction should be held between the Brahmin and the Bhangi, even though the Brahmin observes and makes people observe the rules of outer cleanliness etc., while the Bhangi is indifferent about even his own cleanliness? That same Gitaji has also shown how that distinction can be overlooked. We must have the same attitude towards others as we have towards our own selves. We must cherish the spirit of service to all creatures, as well as to our own selves. But Hindus do not serve the suppressed classes. That sin will destroy the Hindu race.

“When I am thus your colleague, why should you give and I accept an address? But I want from you, not an address but one other thing. You may be knowing and if you are not, do it now what Swamiji has done for the suppressed classes. He went to the length of saying that the service of the suppressed people cannot be complete, so long as there is not at least one untouchable servant in every Hindu home. He said also that every public well, temple and school must be thrown open to the use of untouchables. And he made this demand with such grim earnestness that—but what he said concerns not you, but caste Hindus. What Swamiji wanted from you was freeing yourselves from certain grave evils, in order that it could be asserted that out of the seventy millions, not a single member of the suppressed classes drinks or eats putrid flesh. Personally he wished everybody to give up flesh-eating. Let others do what they may, but you must abstain from these things: putrid flesh, gambling and prostitution. Let the other man be either a drunkard or a man of great spiritual



wisdom, but you should not mentally differentiate between them in your mind—though there is this difference, that the true Brahmin recognises God as the Lord of his heart, whereas a profligate does not. In conclusion I want to tell you, ‘Observe the rules of cleanliness etc. very well’.”

The two other sacred functions were the opening of two extension buildings for Lying-in-Hospital and an X-Ray Department of the Sevasadan and laying the foundation of Ashwinikumar Dutta Memorial. Everybody knows the history of the Sevasadan.

The seven or eight hundred thousand rupees which Gandhiji collected last year—rather in 1925 —have been utilized for this Chittaranjan Sevasadan.¹ About three hundred thousand rupees are still on hand, after incurring expenses for renovating the building and furnishing the hospital. The cases treated in 9 months were: outdoor patients 17,000, indoor patients (all women) 350, maternity cases 150, operations 145 and radium-treatment 97. Patients treated included not only Bengali women, but those of Marwar, Gujarat and other provinces also.

After opening the two Extension Buildings of the Sevasadan Gandhiji delivered a short speech, one or two extracts from which I give here: “Deshbandhu had a natural aptitude for the service of *Daridra-Narayana* (Lord God in the form of the poor and helpless) and propagation of religion. Had he not been born in our country, he would have devoted himself entirely to those two activities. But in our country you see nothing but a picture of abject slavery all over the land. So the whole life-time of all of us has been spent in political work. Even Tilak Maharaj, who could have otherwise given to the country the benefit of his deep scholarship, had to spend his whole life in politics.² But politics and that alone was the ‘swadharma’ (swadharma—dharma marked out for one’s self) of Tilak Maharaj as well as of Deshbandhu (friend of the country C. R. Das). And the Gitaji affirms that ‘swadharma’ must be performed even if it leads to death. Don’t think I am opening today simply a Lying-in-hospital. I am opening it as but one step forward towards Swaraj.”

When Gandhiji was collecting funds for it, it was alleged that the institution would become an out-and-out Bengali one and that it would be of no help to the women of other provinces. Referring to this charge Gandhiji said: “Some friends told me that Bengalis had an obsession for Bengal and regarded the whole of India as but a part of it. Were it really so, it would be a good thing, it would save the aged Panditji (Motilal Nehru?) and a bania (a member of the merchant-class) like myself from



working for the country. It is a matter of no regret if the whole of India is contained in Bengal—the land which has produced Rabindranath and Rammohan Rai, Keshavachandra Sen, Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda (modern luminaries of India), the land which has been sanctified by the birth of Chaitanya (a mediaeval saint and social reformer) and watered by the holy rivers, Ganga and Brahmaputra. Those who complain of the narrow regionalism of Bengal should know the pledge of Dr. Bidhan Roy.

“The Trustees are determined to see that this Sevasadan, named after Deshbandhu, is, and will be, conducted in the same liberal spirit in which Deshbandhu served India. This institution is not the private property of one of two trustees. It is a public institution for the benefit of the whole country. Woman is looked down upon in our country. She is regarded as the object of man’s lust. To resist this trend and re-instate woman to the position of respected motherhood, the late Deshbandhu desired to establish institutions for the service of women. It is hoped that the trustees will conduct the institution in a way that will make Deshbandhu’s name immortal throughout the country and serve, not Bengal alone but all the provinces of India.”

1. Home of service in memory of the great Bengali leader Chittaranjan Das.

2. “Lokamanya” (People’s Beloved) B.G.Tilak was not only a fearless champion of Indian freedom—he was jailed as early as in 1897—but a great research scholar. His best known work is ‘Gita Rahasya’ an exposition of the Gita.



2.1.1927

From Calcutta Gandhiji proceeded to Sodepur, where Sri Satishbabu has established a *Kalashala* (an art section) of his institution Khadi Pratishthan. Gandhiji was invited to open this Kalashala. All the Khadi produced by the Khadi Pratishthan is bleached, dyed and printed and different qualities of yarn and Khadi tested in Kalashala. It was working in full swing on the day we visited it. There was a small exhibition attached to it. The Pratishthan has spent 70,000 rupees after the Kalashala—30,000 after land and the remaining after the structure. Satishbabu has raised the whole building in nine months. But Kalashala is not mere industrial institution, it is an Ashram. Satishbabu has settled all the workers of the Pratishthan in this Kalashala and he himself lives with his family in their midst, All the inmates get up at 4 a.m. join in a congregational prayer and do their respective duties right in the Ashram style.

Then there is a common prayer again in the evening at 7 p.m. and every inmate gets the quantity of yarn spun by him during the day registered. The Pratishthan has some paid servants on its staff, but all of them, inmates and servants, live like members of a big family.

The following table shows the progress of Khadi production by the Pratishthan:

	1924	1925	1926
Quantity in Maunds			
(1 maund = 80 lbs.)	55	300	823
Sale:	Rs. 17,687	57,194	1,04,811

Shri Satishbabu wants the production and sale figures to mount to 400,000 rupees next year and he is devoting every ounce of his energy to it. It was in order to encourage Satishbabu in his Herculean effort that Gandhiji went to Sodepur. A big gathering of about six thousand had collected at the Kalashala, when Gandhiji went there. Many of them had come from Calcutta. Pandit Motilalji, Srinivas Iyengar (Congress President) and many others were present. Dr. Roy also was present though he was suffering from a paralytic attack and had to come riding on the shoulders of Jamnalalji.

Three addresses, from Panihati Municipality, the Anti-Malaria Association and another institution, were given to Gandhiji. As Dr. Roy was suffering from pain on the waist, he took the support of Jamnalalji to stand and speak.



“Every particle of this ground will now be hallowed with the touch of Mahatmaji’s feet here. In the most pathetically beseeching tone he says: ‘Wear Khadi.’ And still we wonder, ‘How ever can we wear it!’ Don’t go back from this meeting, with the smug satisfaction of having had the *darshan* of the Mahatma. It is all the same whether we go to holy places like Gaya and Varanasi or stay at home, if after our return we lead the same sinful lives. We must adore the thing that helps us in the attainment of our cherished object, no matter how insignificant it be. Ramchandra had called such a hero as Hanumanji to save Sita, but He accepted the help of even a squirrel.¹ Our squirrel is our Sodepur and Panihati. It cannot grow into India’s Manchester, unless you all wear Khadi and take the sacred spinning pledge. Revered Gandhiji! You are fully aware of everything about this Pratishtan—its hope, its cherished goal, its halo and its worry.”

Gandhiji said: “The moment I got the invitation to open this Kalashala of Khadi Pratishtan, I accepted it, as I love Khadi and the spinning wheel very much. But let me first refer to the three addresses. I thank you for them. The heads of all these three institutions are residents of this district. The first is the Municipal address. I hope you (the Municipality) will help this institution. And it is an easy thing to help it. It is enough if you wear the Khadi produced here. What an injustice it is that you wear foreign or mill-made clothes. A Khadi Pratishtan cannot be created with the money of the rich. I ask you, the common people, to help it as best you can. I congratulate the Anti-Malaria Association for its work. May you gain even greater success than you have! I hope some Ayurvedic or Unani physician will discover a remedy that will give relief to our masses.² It is no use if somebody suggested a remedy that may cost a thousand rupees. The third address expresses the hope that everybody will spin and wear Khadi.”

“I cherish that same hope myself. The Khadi Pratishtan has been working for some years past. When I was in jail, I heard no other news except the fact that Roy³ had grown mad after Khadi. I was told that he had given up chemistry, given up manufacturing medicines and perfumed oils for just a few and become a new kind of chemist who provided nourishing food to the millions of India by accepting the *mantra* of Khadi and propagating it in his tours over India. I heard also that another gentleman, who had become his friend 30 years ago, had also begun to do that same work. I am referring to Satishbabu, Dr. Roy’s chief disciple. I say all this not to praise them, but to do something to help them. Salary of Rs. 1500 and a bungalow and a motor car and a



share in the profits! Renouncing all this, Satishbabu thought, ‘Why should I not join him when my Guru Mahashaya (a term of respect) has taken up that work?’ He has besides given away a large part of his wealth. None of the buildings which you see standing now existed only 9 months before. There are now the bleaching and yarn-testing departments in these Extension Buildings. You will see all that today.

“Rs, 70,000 have been spent over it. Somebody may say that Satishbabu has lost his balance of mind, that, proud of his past achievement, he is pouring money on the institution in crazy faith and not sober reason. But he is not mad. His faith is indeed extraordinary; but faith is a power that moves high mountains like the Himalayas, inspires mariners to sail over uncharted seas, sustains the relationship between husband, wife, and children, between father and son, between the rich and the poor. If everybody thinks that it is his vanity that has moved Satishbabu to set up all this equipment, the success of his undertaking will be jeopardised. It is easy to pull down a building, but it is not easy for all to erect extensions to it.

“But I wish you all to bless this activity after full deliberation. How awful is the poverty that prevails among us! The Calcutta market imports rupees ten lakhs worth of cloth daily, while we do not produce that much cloth even yearly! Can anything be more preposterous? We have somehow managed to reach the production figure of 15 to 18 lakhs of rupees for the whole country! Is it not a sign of our disgrace, our senselessness and imbecility, that we do not produce the cloth that Bengal needs in Bengal itself? Think of the poverty that stalks the land. At Atrai I heard that a family of four earns Rs. 80 per year. (Sir William) Hunter has shown that a majority of people get nothing but dry bread and salt. Can this be allowed to go on? I assure you, it is a hollow dream if we imagine we can get Swaraj merely by waving the National Flag and singing the National Song. If you want to make the dream of Swaraj come true, you must adopt Khadi. Without Khadi, you cannot protect your freedom and do your duty. The spinning wheel alone can be the centre of all other activities.

“India needs not one Roy, not one Satishbabu, not one (Khadi) Pratishtan, but hundreds and thousands of Roys, Satishbabus, Pratishtans. And you cannot hope to achieve this state without going mad after Khadi. Every man and woman can contribute his or her share to this great national sacrifice.

“After keeping aloof for a year I can no longer hold myself back and, I want to roam all over India. For one year now, I want to become a *bania* through and through.



This land has been sanctified by the feet of Chaitanya. The place from which Chaitanya gave his message is not far from here. He also worked for the helpless. I was taken today to Kalighat for the Ashwinibabu Memorial. I saw there a painful sight—a line of beggars. You people give them money and food. Does the man who gives them money perform a pious deed? I don't think. The beggars must be provided with work. If we don't do that and go on merely giving them some money, India will be destroyed. If you believe in the ideal of Chaitanya, if you have pity for the miserables of India, don't go away from here without taking out some money from your pockets for buying Khadi. Never in my life-time shall I forget that scene when many people took out from their torn clothes nothing but a small pie (the lowest coin= 1/192 rupee) and gave it to me. I hailed their gifts with joy. My heart was then weeping on the one hand and rejoicing on the other that there is still so much faith among the people.

“In conclusion, I have only one thing to say: ‘Develop the Khadi-work through Khadi Pratishthan’ for in its progress lies the progress of India.”

Nearly three thousand rupees were collected on the spot in response to Gandhiji's appeal.

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1. A legend has it that among those who were helping Rama in building a bridge to let his army cross over to Lanka (Ceylon), there was a squirrel. It would roll itself on sand and then shake itself free from it at the place where the bridge was being built. Pleased with its love and sense of duty, Shree Rama passed in love his fingers over its back. The strips on the squirrel's body are the marks left by His fingers. Tulsidas' Ramayana does not mention any such incident.
 2. Unlike allopathic medicines these Hindu and Muslim systems of medicine prescribe cheap but effective remedies. They are still in vogue in India mainly on account of their cheapness and comparatively more lasting cure, though they are slower in producing their effect.
 3. Sir P. C. Roy—a well-known Chemist and founder of the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works.



5.1.1927

Left Sodepur for Comilla, another pilgrim centre for Khadi. Is it possible to visit Bengal and not see the Khadi Pratishtan and Abhaya Ashram? Gandhiji therefore went to Comilla for no other object except of meeting the Ashramites. Sabarmati Ashram, Wardha Ashram, Pudupalayam Ashram and the Ashrams at Sodepur and Comilla will be recorded in the annals of non-cooperation. When I was covering Gandhiji's tour last year, I gave an account of the heroic sacrifices of the young men of Comilla. The Manager and the colleagues of that Ashram are all brahmacharis. Their motto is “अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धि” (Fearlessness and Self-purification). Their activity is not confined to Khadi. They conduct a dispensary and serve untouchables also. The Ashram is rightly called so, as you find there all signs of an Ashram life—simplicity, poverty, spinning, and morning and evening prayers. Spinning 200 yards of yarn daily is compulsory for all the Ashramites including those working in the hospital. The output in November was 1,46,200 yards and in December 2,02,140 yards. Here are the production and sale figures of Khadi:

	1924	1925	1926 (11 months)
Production:	Rs. 21,013	88,000	1,50,685
Sale:	” 21,822	74,620	1,26,850

It must be stated that Abhaya Ashram suffers no loss—not even of a pie—in its Khadi work.

Among its social services, uplift of the untouchables is the biggest. It conducts 7 schools and teaches 75 children, both boys and girls, who learn there happily. Sometimes they come to the Ashram and freely eat and drink water—just like the inmates. These schools of the Ashram have become useful channels in improving the mode of living of untouchables roundabout.

During his visit of one such Namashudra (an untouchable caste in Bengal) school, Gandhiji said: ‘I am very happy to be here. I am confident that the blot of untouchability is being erased. All life is one. It is the (high—caste) Hindus' dharma, to give up regarding the so-called ‘untouchables’ as untouchables. But you must understand that you too have a dharma to perform. It is your duty to give up drink. Not many among you may be drinking, but there may be many who take *ganja*. That too is a noxious habit. The ganja addict culls his intelligence and becomes a sluggard.



And a dull, slothful person becomes unfit in all respects. Give up adultery. You must not imitate the rich in their bad habits. You may be aware that there was a great sannyasi amongst us who struggled hard for the uplift of untouchables. He had very deep love for them. But for the existence of love in it, the world would be destroyed. That sannyasi used to say, “How could there be any distinction between man and man in serving anybody? How could a difference be made between a Brahmin and a Shudra?’ He rendered service of this noble type and on that same account he was murdered.”

From there we went to Moradpur, where also a meeting of the Namashudras was held. They stated that they had collected a purse and were going to start a (Khadi) Bhandar (store). Gandhiji told them:

“I congratulate you on your decision and hope you will adhere to the decision, inspite of difficulties that may come. Such resolves have been taken in my presence before, but people have broken them also. I hope you will always keep your promise. I ask you to remove the deep poverty of India by wearing Khaddar. When you make a resolve to sell Khaddar, I feel it is an excellent thing, and I would have been sorry if you had not made it,—with Abhaya Ashram so near you. It is more difficult to spin than to wear Khaddar, because you cannot get the same return from spinning as you get today. It is a work suitable for the poor and you are not so poor as that. But I want you to spin as an act of sacrifice. If you spin, a spinning atmosphere will spring up. Prostitution is a sin. It is committed even by those who don’t drink, but more often by drunkards, Adultery and wine-with gambling to complete the picture-destroyed the whole Yadava clan (of Lord Krishna).

“Indian villages suffer from horrible insanitation. We must keep our water supply pure. Not attending to sanitation makes our bodies diseased and impure. Mental sanitation too is necessary and in order to keep our minds pure, we must keep them engaged in some healthy activity.”

One thing is enough to show how deep is the influence the Ashram exercises over the surrounding people. During our two days’ stay, the Ashram had to bear no expense for hosting us and other visitors. We all were the guests of the lawyers of the place. Everyone of these lawyers moreover gives monetary help regularly to the Abhaya Ashram. The Gujarati reader will be glad to know that while in Gujarat the Public Prosecutors keep miles apart from us, it was the Public prosecutor who was our



host and consistent supporter of the Ashram. The progress of the Khadi Pratishtan and Abhaya Ashram has been unintermittent. In a speech after the prayers Gandhiji said to the heads of both these institutions: “My blessings go with your institutions with the prayer that they may preserve their purity. Khadi has a bright future, if both the institutions remain pure like the Ganga and Yamuna. I visualise your institutions as two strong horses that carry with terrific speed the great chariot of Khadi. Both of you have earned in the whole country the unique reputation of having no need of buyers from other parts for the sale of your Khadi. You have studied the tastes and aptitudes of your people so well, that all the Khadi you produce is bought up by your province itself. All honour to your women for insisting on wearing only those saris which you produce and all honour to you for successfully inducing them to do so. May the strength of each one of you be the strength of the other and may you help each other in times of difficulty. I pray to God that you both may pursue your activities in the confidence and faith that Bengal cannot do without either of you.”

Two excellent meetings were held in the town, the first of men. Gandhiji began his speech in Hindi and that created some disturbance. He persisted in speaking in Hindi, never-the-less and then the meeting grew quiet.

He said in Hindi: “You can get ‘Gitanjali’ (of the Poet Rabindranath) as well as all the works of Bankimbabu (a great Bengali novelist) in Hindi. Why then can you not speak in Hindi? If you try, you can pick up sufficient Hindi in a month. The Congress was held recently in Gauhati and passed several resolutions, some of them on work in the councils. But how many of you can go to any council? That apart. How many of you have the right even of voting for council-elections? A few hundred thousands. But millions of Indians possess no such right. What then should be done for these millions? How shall we teach them the *mantra* of Swaraj? The spinning wheel alone and nothing else can teach that mantra. Swaraj for our three hundred millions is impossible, so long as they are not taught the mantra of the spinning wheel. It is impossible to reach the villagers except through the medium of the spinning wheel.”

The people heard the Hindi speech quietly. This discipline delighted Gandhiji who then delivered a speech in English. That was his first speech after the Congress session and though fairly long it was full of deep import.

@ “I want to show my appreciation of your kindness in listening to me quietly. I propose to say a few words in English. Every time that I am obliged to speak in English before an audience of my own countrymen, I feel humiliated and ashamed. I have urged upon Bengali audiences several times not to put an undue strain upon my



loyalty, nor put an undue strain upon Bharat Mata herself. It is the easiest thing possible for every Indian north of the Vindhya Range to pick up Hindi within a month or two. Try and tell me if this is not true. Let us not say that our mother-tongue is only Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, as the case may be. These are provincial languages. When we sing the Ode to the mother-land, we sing that ode to the whole of India. When Bankim (Babu) wrote the inspired song ('Vande Mataram'—I bow to Mother, which became the national anthem), he said 'sapta koti' (seven crores i.e. seventy millions of Bengal. The song is a part of a historical novel that deals with a rebellion in Bengal), but you and others deliberately said: 'Trinshat koti' (thirty crores i.e. of the whole of India) and it was proper and dignified on your part to sing 'Trinshat koti' and it is proper and dignified for the whole of India to accept the magnificent ode. Shall we not live up to it and sing with all our hearts and say, 'We are sons of Mother India and not only of Bengal'? Next time I come, you will insist on my speaking in Hindi and Hindi alone.

"We have seen the last session of the Congress on the sacred banks of Brahmaputra in the midst of that magnificent foliage and scenery almost unrivalled in the world. There our leaders deliberated. They have cooked a council programme. But how many can take a direct part in working it? How many can enter the Central Assembly? How many are entitled to elect members to these legislative bodies? Are the millions of villagers enfranchised? Is India living in her ten or twenty cities or in her seven lakh (hundred thousand) villages? What then is the programme that can weld together the 30 crores of India scattered about on a surface 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad in 7 lakh villages? What is it that every villager, man, woman, child, Hindu or Muslim, can do with profit and at the same time uplift the whole of India? The one and unequivocal answer is the spinning wheel and Khaddar. The message of Khaddar can penetrate the most interior villages. If we will that, it can be so. The spinning wheel can be turned by millions of villagers who have been reduced to pauperism and ground to dust not only under foreign heels but your heels and my heels. We live on their labours, but not like Americans and Englishmen who live on exploitation of Arabic races and the so-called weaker races of the earth. Even they would be obliged to take the spinning wheel, if they were not able to exploit India, China, Africa and other parts of the earth. We do not exploit them because it is a virtue of necessity with us. But I hope the time is coming when out of fulfilment of heart, wider national outlook, we shall disdain to exploit any nation on earth, no matter how weak. I hope in my life-time we shall reach freedom and say to all nations, they need not fear us, as we have lived in perpetual fear of the so-called civilized races. You may call me a mad man now, but



the time is coming when you will say ‘What the old man was saying is true’. And if India will prosper in villages, the spinning wheel will be the instrument.

“And you have seen the phenomenon-I did not ask for it-the phenomenon of the Congress being improved on Khadi lines. I know the bickerings, but I also know that it was the pressure of the popular mind that extorted that improvement in franchise.¹ Leaders did it because Khadi alone was the only passport to the hearts of the villagers. Let me tell you that it was Khadi that won the elections for Swarajists. In Madras those who were opposed to Khadi were obliged to take it up for appealing to the electorate and as days roll on you will find Khaddar increasing in importance because it has intrinsic worth about it. And because no national organisation contains for its working so many able educated men, no organisation is capable of giving work to an unlimited number of patriotic youth who will be content to share the villager’s food, sorrows and joys. I invite you to produce before me a single organisation that has that capacity.

“Khaddar is not a dying cult. There is no rise and fall in the barometer of Khaddar. Five years of experience show it is a gradual but a steady hopeful rise. India wants it. India’s millions require full meals in order to sustain energy and that is why the Congress has made it necessary on members to wear it habitually. They may wear on rare occasions swadeshi or foreign cloth, but they dare not habitually wear anything but Khaddar.

“And so about untouchability. A great hero and patriot, Swami Shraddhanandji has died for the cause of untouchables. He loved them as he loved his life. And if he could have done it, he would have banished untouchability. It means universal love. It means translating the message of the Bhagwadgita to look upon the Brahmin and the Bhangi alike, if you would but know God. But how are they alike? Treat them as you would treat yourselves. ‘आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु’ (See every creature as they self). That is what that mantra taught him and he sealed that teaching with his blood. Let it purify us and let it remove the last taint of isolation and aloofness from untouchability. They are not untouchables. We are untouchables. Let them have every kindness. I saw two villages. Had I not been told that untouchables lived there, I would not have believed it. I saw no difference between them and us. They live like us, have the same feelings as we. If the sum total of our virtues and vices and privileges were taken, I am sure in God’s book we should find our debit side greater and credit side less than theirs. Let us take a lesson from South Africa. We find the working of a just nemesis, in that our kith and



kin are regarded as pariahs in South Africa. If we purge ourselves of untouchability here, you will find the shackles will be off our people in South Africa in no time.

“Then there is that other question of great importance. I dare not touch Hindu-Muslim unity. It has passed out of human hands and passed to God’s hands alone. Formerly, as Draupadi forsaken by man asked for God’s help and God came to her help, let us ask for the help of God, the All-powerful, and tell him how we have failed today and ask Him what to do now, as we hate, distrust one another, fly at each other’s throats and even become assassins. Let our hearts ascend to His throne. Let us wash His feet. We are disgracing His name and this mighty land. Although we are children of the same land, eat the same food, we have no room for one another. Let us pray to God in all humility to give us wisdom, to give us courage.

“I have given you an English speech-which I usually do not do. I now want my reward. I want you to denude Abhaya Ashram of all its cloth, if the message of the pauperism of India has gone home. They (Abhaya Ashramites) are the link between you and the people. They are trying to serve the people. I want you to put your hands in your pockets, not out of shame or pressure from anyone, not out of your patronage or affection for me. I want you to give me your mite, what you can and have, for the sake of the paupers whom you do not know, who do not get one meal a day. I say this on the testimony of an English historian. If you are satisfied that this organisation is worked well, and with self-sacrifice and ability, if you are convinced that it is not sinful to wear Khaddar, it can’t be wrong to wear Khaddar woven and spun by the paupers, shower your coppers and slivers. If you are not, restrain your hands. Let your heart be convinced one day. If you are convinced, I ask you to support this great-greatest—industry. There is no other way of industrialising the villages of India. No man has yet been able to produce a substitute equal to the spinning wheel for millions idle for 4 months a year, who are starving, whom one anna a meal is a fortune. May God help you to understand the message of the spinning wheel!

“Last time when I was in Bengal, I begged for the Bengal Deshbandhu Memorial. You see the ‘Sevasadan’ sprung up from the fund. You may not have forgotten that I told you then, the next time I come to Bengal, I would beg for the All India Deshbandhu Memorial. You know the object of the All India Memorial Fund is to spread the message of the spinning wheel. Whoever contributes to that fund contributes for Khadi.”

1. Khadi was made a habitual wear for all Congress officials.



6.1.1927

Addressing another meeting in Comilla convened by the ‘House of Labour’¹ Gandhiji said:

“I congratulate you for the good and great work you are doing. I was delighted when this meeting was fixed and was looking forward to making your acquaintance. You have heard me say that I detest the idea of any able-bodied man living on charity.

“Boycott is a weapon of the weak indeed. But there is boycott and boycott. I suppose you mean that boycott which betrays helplessness, but the boycott which follows as a consequence of production is a duty. I wish you success in this enterprise. I note that you are not dividing profits. You have created a trust. I would like you to give me a copy of your trust-deed. Seeing that you love to call yourselves poor men and labourers, I hope you will not forget the poorest of the poor. I hope you will add to your conception of life the programme of Khadi. May you complete the ambit of your work! The message of Khadi is the message of the poor of India. I expect to hear that you are all wearing Khaddar—material made by the sacred hands of your sisters and brothers who are just as much labourers as yourselves.”

1. An organisation which seems to have been formed by middle class people in order to uphold the dignity of labour—Translator.



6.1.1927

Weekly Letter

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

I am writing on my way back to Calcutta from Gauhati. Never before one went to the Congress with more reluctance and less hopeful of the Congress week than this time. And yet several happenings conspired to give the Gauhati Congress an unexpected importance and made the Congress week more eventful than one had expected. Gandhiji himself was not sure if he had any work at Gauhati and would not have gone but for Pandit Motilalji's and Sri. Aiyengar's urgent and imperative telegrams. The worst one expected to happen at Gauhati was miserable wrangles between the Responsivists and Swarajists and the best that could happen nothing more than a peaceful ending of the quarrels between the two contending sections. But Lalaji refused to disturb the atmosphere and did not proceed beyond Calcutta. Providence had meant him for another and far more urgent duty. Who knew the dark day that would dawn on India on the morning of the 24th?

The stunning news of Swamiji's assassination was received by Lalaji on the evening of the 23rd and he forwarded it to Gandhiji on the 24th. It was delivered at a wayside station—Sorbhog. According to his wont, Gandhiji was going to the carriage-door to appeal to the surging crowds crying "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*" to pay their mites for Gandhi's work rather than raise these empty cries, when the telegram bearing the terrible news was delivered to him, For a moment he could not believe his eyes as he read it, but he was soon sure that there could be no mistake about it. Friends, who were immediately informed, saw him, every one refusing to believe the contents and trying to read in the language something less terrible than it indicated. But Gandhiji had no doubt in his mind. He immediately wired to Lalaji asking him to proceed to Delhi to pacify the public, and to Indra, the Swamiji's son, to say that the death was a hero's death.

* * * *

And so the leaders who met at Gauhati found themselves faced with a catastrophe they were totally unprepared for. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu began the proceedings of the last A.I.C.C. (All-India Congress Committee) meeting of her regime with an appropriate reference to the event of the week and summoned Gandhiji to voice the Hindus' feeling in the matter and Maulana Mohammad Ali the Musalmans'.



At the open Congress too the resolution of the day was the one about the treacherous and cowardly murder of Swami Shraddhanandji. In his speeches on both the occasions Gandhiji described the death as a privilege and a portent, if I may summarize his sentiments in two words. A privilege inasmuch as for a fighter like Swamiji there could be no nobler consummation. His Guru-Swami Dayanand—was also treacherously murdered and the Arya Samaj lived all these years in his death. The disciple had now cemented the foundation of the religious organisation with his noble blood. But in Gandhiji's sense it was a greater privilege, privilege not for the Hindus to be proud of, but a privilege for both Hindus and Musalmans to chasten themselves and cement their unity with. And yet what could be a more terrible portent, looking to the surcharged atmosphere of today? To those who are living in that atmosphere and to those responsible for it he addressed words of warning. 'Repent, repent', he seemed to say:

'Though you have trod
Through paths of wickedness and woe
And though your sins be red as scarlet
They shall be white as snow'.

But I propose to give a full translation of the speech in a future issue.

* * * *

A unanimous manifesto by the Ulema and leaders present at Gauhati condemning the deed as not sanctioned by Islam was appropriate. At the Hindu Mahasabha Session, though every one spoke from a lacerated heart, no unguarded word escaped from the least of the speakers to say nothing of the greatest, i.e. Pandit Malaviyaji, whose speech was one of the most remarkable I have heard for restraint and sobriety. A Maulvi from Mymensing, it seems, specially attended the session and asked to be allowed to speak. Panditji allowed him and he said that from the point of view of Islam, the act was most reprehensible. 'Are you sincere?' cried someone from the audience. 'I am, if you please', said the Maulvi, 'I am voicing the feelings of my heart'. Towards the end of the proceedings Dr. Rajabali Patel, a Bombay Musalman, who happened to be present, was the first to subscribe to the fund started in memory of Swami Shraddhanandji. He earmarked his contribution of Rs. 100 for untouchability work and Panditji accepted it gratefully as a fine expression of good-will.



* * * *

The other work of Gandhiji was the opening of the Swadeshi Exhibition. There was nothing unusual in the Exhibition. Gandhiji formally declared it open with a speech which was a passionate utterance from beginning to end. The reference to the poverty in the land was touching. The illusory character of the wealth in the country he summed up in a sentence or two. 'Every 5 millions in the hands of a millionaire means 95 millions sent out of India. Like the old man of the sea we are a perpetual burden on the poor tax-payer. How could a return be made? Khadi was the only means. No programme had surer results. The Spinners' Association had today 50,000 women spinners who supplemented their daily earnings or earned a couple of annas each where formerly they earned nothing. But who would listen to their cry? Who would listen to his cry? 'Draupadi, when she found that not even her five husbands could help her, cried out in agony to Krishna, the only help of the helpless, and He heard her prayers. Even so shall I work away today and cry in the name of the dumb millions of India and I am sure my prayers will be heard one day'.

* * * *

When one whole day was being spent in discussing numberless amendments to the resolution on the Council's programme, one felt as though Gandhiji's cry was no more than a cry in the wilderness. But as though in response to that cry, came up before the Subjects Committee a resolution from the Working Committee making habitual wearing of Khaddar compulsory on every one who sought to exercise a vote as a Congressman, Mr. Aney stoutly opposed it. He opposed it as one who had no faith in Khaddar. Another member supported him and appealed to Gandhiji's sense of justice and fairplay. Gandhiji who was specially requested by the President to be present on the occasion dealt with this in a few sentences which should have gone home. 'Let, me say, my sense of justice will be reconciled only by the resolution of the spinning franchise. If a stiffening of the franchise is, as I think it certainly is, necessary for national growth, am I not justified in laying down conditions for it? If any member should charge me with motives to exclude any party, I should feel deeply sorry, if not insulted.' But more necessary than this answer to the objections was the warning to those who with eyes open wanted to pass the resolution, knowing that they themselves did not want it a year ago. 'This amendment is a plea for purification. If you feel that it is to be observed in its breach, if you are going to pass it here and defy it as soon as you leave the Congress, I ask you to reject it. As the rule at present stands



it is most humiliating and must be removed or radically changed. Khaddar must stand on its bottom..... If you carry the resolution I want you to do so with all the implications I have mentioned..... I do not want any patronage, as I do not give any. I am a lover of my own liberty and so I would do nothing to restrict yours. I simply want to please my own conscience which is God.' The resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority both in the Subjects Committee and at the open Congress. It was the only right and proper thing to do, as it followed as a necessary corollary to the resolution about 'work in the country', which, besides, would have remained a pious wish but for the change about habitual wearing of Khaddar.



8.1.1927

‘Malaviyaji and Ananda Shankar Bhai (‘ji’ and ‘bhai’—terms of respect) were already at the station (Varanasi) to escort Gandhiji to the Gandhi Ashram. He rested there for hardly half an hour, when he had to go to the Banaras Hindu University. It seems pandit Malaviyaji was very much struck with the Khadi Exhibition at Gauhati and had expressly desired that Gandhiji should give the message of Khaddar to the students of his University. Nearly 2000 students had gathered to listen to Gandhiji under a spacious *shamiana* specially erected for the viceregal visit which had preceded Gandhiji’s just by a week.¹

The proceedings began with the ‘Vande Mataram’ song. The singer was not particular about what cloth he used—he wore a coat of foreign cloth and a dhoti—and was much below the mark in singing also.

Welcoming Gandhiji, Malaviyaji said:

“Our respected brother² has kindly come here. I know how delighted you (students) are to hear his charming voice.”

Gandhiji addressed them last six years ago; he had then gone with a more difficult message. Just a few out of those many students who had then responded to his call and left their University are at present keeping aloft the non-co-operation flag through the “Gandhi Ashram”. This time he delivered the simple message of Khaddar and purity.

Gandhiji said:

@“Revered Malaviyaji, sisters and brothers, teachers and students.

“This is not my first contact with you. I have spoken before you twice or thrice already. I have therefore nothing new to say. I have made one single resolve for this year. I have decided to tour again all over India and tell the people everywhere what I consider to be the duty of Bharatvarsha. I wish therefore to speak on that subject first.

“You have had your say now. No one is listening to you. Why not stop talking of Khaddar?’ That was the advice being given me in some quarters, but I don’t think people are tired; besides I have full faith in my programme. Why should I stop reciting my favourite mantra, when I have before me the example of Prahlad³ of old refusing to give up Ramanama in the teeth of tortures worse than death? And I have not gone



through any troubles yet. Farhad never forgot Shirin though he had to die for his love. I am as mad in love for Khadi as was that pair of Farhad and Shirin. How can I give up the only message that the condition of my country has been whispering to me all my peregrination through India? You see these palatial buildings spread over an area of 2 miles in which you are being educated. Panditji has collected and has been still collecting lakhs and lakhs of rupees for you from Rajas and Maharajas. The money apparently comes from these wealthy princes, but in reality it comes from the millions of our poor. This is the only country in the world where for earning 5 millions the rich send away 95 millions to foreign lands and where they earn even these five millions at the expense of our villagers, the bulk of whom have to go without a square meal every day, the case with England as well as America (U.S. A.) is different. The rich people there have grown rich on our money. What are you going to do for these poor people? The education that you receive is thus paid by the starving villagers who will never have the chance of such an education. It is your duty to refuse to have an education that is not within the reach of the poor, but I do not ask that of you today. I ask you to render just a slight return to the poor by performing a little yagna for them. For he who eats food without doing his yagna steals his food, says the (Bhagwad) Gita.

“You heard a prayer to God here. But has it any meaning? Taking God’s name without having any feeling for India’s poor is as bad as denying Him. You must understand that if you want to give a share to the poor, perform a little yagna. But if you perform it without understanding its implications, the yagna ceases to have any meaning. The poor remain unemployed for 4 months in a year. They must therefore be provided with a supplementary occupation. I cannot see any other occupation of that kind save that of the spinning wheel. It is an established fact that agriculture alone does not provide them sufficient food. That makes a supplementary occupation an unavoidable necessity. That supplementary occupation is thus a national yagna but it has no meaning if we do not wear the sacred Khadi produced from that occupation. We have got to create a climate congenial to this national yagna, as we have at present lost our faith in it. That can be done only if the higher strata of society perform that yagna. I cannot go to villages and call upon the people there to perform it, unless I can tell them that the students of this University, as well as revered Malaviyaji and the professors perform it. The yagna that was required of the British civil population was for each household to grow potatoes in its yard and to do a little simple sewing. Had it not done so, the War would not have ended in the success of the British people. The kind of yagna changes with changing environments. The yagna of our age and for us is



the spinning wheel. I was sometimes tempted to stop my advocacy of Khadi. But I have now grown shameless. You must have heard of Khadi and read of it in papers, as day in and day out I have been talking about it, writing about it. I shall say no more today. If the message of the poor of India has touched your hearts, I want you to raid Kripalani's⁴ Khaddar Stores tomorrow and denude it of all their stock, and to empty your pockets tonight. Panditji has cultivated the art of beggary. I have learnt it from him, and if he specializes in laying the princes under tribute, I have learnt to be equally shameless in emptying the pockets of the poor, for the benefit of those who are poorer than they. Give me whatever you want to, whether it be a pice or a rupee. Remember that your one rupee (i.e. 16 annas) will provide one meal to 16 poor women."

Gandhiji then spoke on brahmacharya. Ever since the time his series of articles on brahmacharya began and frank letters and confessions from numerous students started coming to him, Gandhiji has never failed to touch this subject in any gathering of students. A letter of a collegian of the United Provinces had only recently reached him. Referring to it Gandhiji said:

"That student has narrated his own and his professor's experiences. Our environment and our way of living have become so tainted, that it is almost impossible to save ourselves from the evil. Effort attains everything, but if we don't make the effort, we invite disaster. However learned you grow, however many the degrees you acquire, all your learning is useless without fearlessness, vigour and 'shuddhi' (purification). Shraddhanandji sacrificed his life for chanting the mantra of shuddhi. The preservation of Hindu dharma or Hindustan (Bharat) is impossible without purity of character. The clan of Yadavas—Lord Sri Krishna's own clan—was destroyed by drink, adultery and gambling. Malaviyaji's one object in begging millions for you, in raising these palatial buildings is to send out to the country gems of the purest ray, citizens healthy and strong to serve their motherland. That purpose will be defeated if you allow yourselves to be swept with the wind of impurity that blows from the West. Not that the methods there have the general sanction of Europe. There are friends in Europe, a very few, who are fighting hard to counteract the poisonous tendency. But if you do not wake up, the immoral wave that is fast gathering strength might soon envelop and overwhelm you. I cry out to you, therefore, with all the strength at my command. Be warned and flee from the fire before it consumes you. Acquire that quality for which Malaviyaji lives, I live, and for which Shraddhanandji gave up his life—I mean purity of character. This land is not a 'bhoga-bhumi' (the land of gratifying



sensual pleasures), it is a ‘tapashcharya bhumi? (the land of penances). Listen to the precept of the Gita, the Bhagwat (a scripture teaching devotion) and Tulsidas and Save yourselves from the fire of impurity”.

Malaviyaji in a stirring speech associated himself with every part of Gandhiji’s appeal.

“I am disturbing for a while the profound peace which my brother’s discourse has given us. Let us reflect over his holy precept. Let me explain briefly my attitude towards the things Bhai has referred to. The Mahatma has done well in asking you to think over the purpose for which this University is founded. For attaining that goal you must respond to the best of your power to his fourfold demand:

1. Spinning religiously,
2. Wearing Khaddar,
3. Contributing to the fund and
4. Brahmacharya.

“India is at present in a helpless condition as regards its use of cloth. It is shameful to remain in it. To be under the thumb of a handful of people is no small disgrace to us who are millions in number. No foreigner would tolerate such dependence. That is why you demand Swaraj. There are two ways of winning it. One of them is that of the sword, the rifle, the aeroplane etc. Fortunately or unfortunately, an armed fight with the Englishman is impossible for us, I think. The second is the method of doing our work peacefully. A Mahabharata is going on in India. Foreign commerce and industry have attacked and overpowered us and against them we are fighting. Ladies of the highest rank-Duchesses and Countesses-immersed themselves in the work of saving England from defeat in the last war. Just a similar war is being fought here. We too must bind ourselves with a sacred pledge today to wear only hand-made cloth.

“Brother rightly calls this a (national) yagna. If we do not contribute our share to this sacrifice, we shall not succeed in our fight. This—spinning and weaving—is the one and only thing which everyone of the 320 millions of Indians can do. You also can do what a Maharanee (queen) in a palace as well as a Bhangi woman (sweeperess) in a hutment can do. I am in agreement—heart and soul—with Gandhiji in this matter of spinning. Were it possible for me, I too would eat nothing but the *prasad* (sacramental



food) of this great national yagna. But I cannot spin. I therefore regard it as my duty to wear only hand-spun cloth. We may talk glibly about our burning patriotism, but we must ask ourselves what practical work we are doing for our country. There are among us even those who are proud of wearing foreign cloth. The fault therefore lies only with ourselves. We must consider the use of foreign cloth as disgraceful. There was a time when we used to make the finest possible cloth and exported it. And now we have fallen into just the opposite state—we are importing cloth from foreign countries! I therefore appeal to you to spare as much time as you honestly can from your duties as householders or students and spend it in spinning.

“In 1878 I was studying in a High School. Harishchandra⁵ was then in Benaras. He used to wear swadeshi cloth. Even early in 1878 I did not wear foreign cloth. I have bought foreign cloth only twice in my life, but never worn any. I used to wear Indian mill cloth then. When the Government sent my brother (Gandhiji) to jail (in 1922), I took a vow to discard mill cloth. Since then I have not allowed any cloth but hand-spun hand-woven Khadi to touch my body. (Cheers). Cheers distress me. I only want that your heart must be charged with some real power. Who can do what my brother has done to rouse the country? That MAN took a vow to spin. He did not give up spinning even in jail. He does not give it up even now. Though engrossed in public work all day and night, he makes it a point to spin for a definite period. It is our misfortune that, with such a shining example before us, we do not give up foreign cloth. It is our dharma to wear Khadi not in order to show our hatred to the British, but to provide food to the starving and cloth to the naked and thus relieve the stark poverty of India. It was certainly unfortunate that there was a disagreement among us on this question. But who should be blamed for it—the foreigner or ourselves? Ourselves chiefly, because we do not realize that if we weave only one yard of cloth in one month, even that one yard is our gain and not loss to that extent. You may buy Khadi to present it to Thakurji (temple deity) or give it to the poor. Take it for certain that when any sister or brother spins, she or he is laying one brick on the building of Swaraj. If we continue to spin, we can save 600 million rupees from going abroad.

“The fourth thing my brother referred to was brahmacharya. Everybody should carve his precept on his heart in letters of gold. Since ancient times our ‘shastras’ have been insisting upon control over passion through the ideal of brahmacharya. This virtue has not been made a part of religion in Europe. Take the example of Bhishma.⁶ He had grown so powerful through brahmacharya, that he vowed that if he would not



compel Lord Krishna⁷ to take up a weapon to fight him, he did not deserve to be called son of king Shantanu. Krishna had then to take up the wheel (to save Arjuna from Bhishma's swift and well-aimed arrow). That action stirred Arjuna's heart to vigorous action. He beseeched Krishna to keep to his vow and and promised Him that he would fight with all his strength and skill. That shows how powerful Bhishma was. At that time Lord Krishna said to Arjuna “ब्रह्मचर्य परोधर्मः (brabmacharya is the chief dharma)”. That is why I tell you, “Remember Vishwanath (Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of Benaras) and observe brahmacharya. Let your patriotism be active. Adopt the ways of doing so. Brother has shown them to you.”

For the third part of Gandhiji's speech Malaviyaji appealed for funds and kept standing for about half an hour to note down the contributions. Nearly 850 rupees were collected on the spot but only the future can show how far the students respond to Gandhiji's appeal to wear Khadi.

1. During this year M.D. regularly wrote a “Weekly Letter” for ‘*Young India*’. As the contents of this letter are largely a synopsis of his articles translated here, only those sentences have been incorporated which could be easily done. The @ mark to show an original writing has not been given to these stray sentences.

2. Gandhiji called Malaviyaji his ‘elder brother’ and the latter called him his ‘brother’. They were on the closest terms though they often differed in politics. Though strongly opposed to non-co-operation, Malaviyaji, invited Gandhiji in 1920 to propagate it before the students of the Banaras Hindu University—whose founder he was.

3. Son of King Hiranyakashipu who, though but a child, refused his king-father's order not to chant the name of Lord Vishnu. The child Prahlad was persecuted and tortured, but he withstood it all. At last Lord Vishnu took the man-lion form and killed the king.

4. He joined Gandhiji early in 1916 during the Champaranya struggle. At the call of non-co-operation he resigned from his professorship from the Banaras Hindu University and founded the Gandhi Ashram with the help of its non-co-operating students. He is even now active in politics as an Independent M.P.

5. A well-known dramatist in Hindi—‘Bharatendu Harishchandra’.

6. Son of King Shantanu. He took a very austere vow of remaining unmarried for life, in order to fulfil a fisher-king's stipulation that his daughter would marry king Shantanu only if he was promised that her son and the son's line would succeed to the throne of Shantanu.

7. Lord Krishna had declared his resolve not to take part in the Mahabharat war personally and to abjure the use of any weapon whatsoever. Bhishma began the extermination of the Pandva forces with such terrible effect that even Arjuna could not kill him at first. Lord Krishna, to fulfil his devotee Bhishma's desire, took up a wheel to stave off a deadly arrow aimed at Arjuna. Arjuna was roused, only then and then killed Bhishma by stratagem and valour.



9.1.1927

As Malaviyaji had called upon the people to observe the Sharaddhanand Day, he and Gandhiji led a procession from the Gandhi Ashram to the Dashashwamedh Ghat, performed ablutions there, offered *jalanjali* (tribute of water) to the departed martyr and then went and offered prayers in the temple of Kashi Vishwanath and Annapurna Devi (the Goddess who provides food). The gathering then formed itself into a meeting, *Mahimna Stotra* (verses in praise of Lord Shiva) was recited and Devdas conducted congregational repetition of *Ramanama*. When it ended Gandhiji said that as Shradddhanandji left the world for the sake of the shuddhi of Hindu dharma, the people's debt to him could not be discharged till that shuddhi was completed. He added that the motto of his life was brahmacharya and self-restraint and that these two should therefore be treasured in the heart and acted upon. There was a German sister—Miss Houseding—in the procession. She entered the Kashi Vishwanath Temple as a Buddhist.¹ Malaviyaji says that there were some untouchables also, but God alone knows whether the temple-priests knew them as such. If they also discharge their debt to Shradddhanandji, there would be a revival in Hindu Dharma in no time.

The procession walked back on foot to the Gandhi Ashram. A group of untouchables was already waiting there. Gandhiji gave them the message of shuddhi and Malaviyaji repeated it in the charming patois of the audience. Children's hair was cut, they were given a purificatory bath and a meal and then sent back to their homes. It may be said that this was an act which paid at least to some extent a fitting tribute to the departed Swamiji. Even the youngest among those children had come in contact with Swamiji. They felt immensely happy on the day.

[An extract from M.D.'s article in *Young India* dtd. 27.1.1927]

@ "To come now to the Gandhi Ashram. It has had a chequered history, beginning with the withdrawal from (Benaras) Hindu University College of 200 students, formation of the Vidyapith (National University), a further increase in numbers to the depletion in ranks due to the depression in the country and concentration of few determined souls, left after ebb and flow, on Khadi work. The tenacity, the will, the courage, the intrepid and undimmed faith with which these few have pursued their task have been-worthy of soldiers in any battle for freedom. I visited the Ashram nearly four years ago when the inmates were struggling with unfavourable conditions. I saw them then, with Prof. Kripalani at their head, doing all their tasks themselves, including the drawing of the *mhote* (a leather bag to draw out



water) from the well for the garden and the scavenger’s work and subsisting on Rs. 7.80 per month. Their determination won the day and whereas then they satisfied themselves with some literary education and spinning and weaving and a little carpentry on the premises, they have today a successful Khaddar organisation.”

“It is not for nothing that I call their faith unflinching. For the last four or five years Kripalaniji lives at Ahmedabad as Principal of the National College there. They therefore have the cheering and elevating company of their Guru for only a month or two in a year. That contact is enough to sustain their faith and keen sense of duty. There may hardly be any other institution which goes on regularly and with undimmed enthusiasm for self-sacrifice even during long absences of the founder.

“The Ashram is in Benaras only in name, as all the inmates have settled in villages around Benaras and work there. Their centres are at Akbarpur, Milki, Muzaffarnagar etc.”

Another extract

@ “In some centres spinning and weaving is done under the exchange system and in one or two Khadi is taken straight from the weavers who themselves get the yarn spun from the vicinity. Close control is exercised by the Ashram workers over this spinning and weaving, and the report of work is a record of steady progress in quantity and quality and in reduction of prices. The following tables give in a nutshell the result of 5 years work:

	Production in Rupees	Sale in Rupees
1921	48	3,011
1922	4,756	23,746
1923	26,123	28,115
1924	16,000	21,577
1925	36,157	32,769
1926	64,312	71,805



Price in annas per yard at the centres

Width	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
36"	9	8	7½	8	7½	7½
42"	-	-	7¾-8¼	8¼-8¾	8½	7¼-8
45"	-	-	9-9½	8½-9½	8½-9	7½-8¾
48"	-	-	-	9¼-10½	9-9½	8½-9

“It should be borne in mind that the reduction in each case has been in spite of the improvement in quality each year. There was a pretty little exhibition arranged in the Town Hall which was open to all, and where the arrangement itself was an eloquent record of progress from year to year. The figures of sale cover sale of Khadi from other provinces also, and the response from the province in respect of Khadi produced in the province itself is very small. The Benares visit will have borne some fruit, if it stimulates local demand for the Khadi manufactured by the Gandhi Ashram”.

Opening the Khadi Exhibition held in the Town Hall as a part of the annual celebration of the Gandhi Ashram Gandhiji said:

“I am both glad and sorry to say that I have not come here to give a new programme of work and I cannot think of any such programme. I am sorry that I cannot satisfy your hope, but glad also inasmuch as your hope means that you cannot give up your trust in me. The politically-minded people may wish an aggressive programme, but you have stuck to the old programme as you have realized that the constructive programme undoubtedly helps the people, though the vocal public may not like it. Why do I lay so much stress on Khadi and the spinning wheel? There is no country in the world where poverty is as deep as in India. What other work can we give to the people to relieve their distress except the spinning wheel and hand-loom? If people give money to feed the Hindu and Muslim poor of India, that charity cannot make the poor rich. We must provide them some occupation. It is therefore essential for you to wear Khadi and give money to help it.

“I have come here for only the Gandhi Ashram. I want to see the working of the Ashram, to get as much help from the public as I can for it, and to open this Exhibition connected with it. Please visit it and see the exhibits. When you heard that the Gandhi Ashram propagated Khadi, you hailed the information with cheers. But the fact is, we



can do ten times the work we have done so far, if people help the Ashram. They say that Khadi is dearer than foreign cloth. I say, 'Buy Khadi even at that sacrifice for that is your real dharma.' Will those who are prepared to die for the sake of religion fight shy of giving a few pice more to the poor? How can he call himself a Sanatani Hindu who does so?

"I visited two meetings of women—in the Bengali quarter and the Hindu college. At both these places women gave me both cash and ornaments.

"I am asked why I have sealed my mouth as regards the Hindu-Muslim question. I say that that question has passed out of man's hands. God alone can solve it now. Let us pay our funeral tribute to Swami Shraddhanandji. I am told that his murder was not a single man's work. Whatever it be, how can I talk of Hindu-Muslim unity in the land where such a thing can happen, where a man like Swamiji can be murdered? Had we not gone mad, it would have been easy to solve this question. Musalmans should understand that Islam does not and cannot sanction the murder of an innocent man.

"Others tell me that Shraddhanandji was an enemy of Musalmans. This is not true. We did not agree in all matters, but if I do not express today how dearly I loved Shraddhanandji, who will regard me as truthful and trust me? When he was alive, he once assured me that Musalmans had no reason to fear him. That is the state of real *shuddhi* (purification) in which we all can express our thoughts in full freedom. And they say that Islam means peace and that the sword has therefore no place in it.

"Though Shraddhanandji was a Punjabi, he loved the animal world so much that he had given up meat-eating. He had warned India that the country was not safe unless it gave up untouchability.

"Shraddhanandji was a Hindu, was an adorer of the (Bhagwad) Gita. The day is coming when Musalmans also will acknowledge that Shraddhanandji was their well-wisher. There are many holy precepts, I agree, in the Quran, the Bible and other scriptures. All the same I get all I want from the Bhagwadgita. God rules over this world, if there is Rama but not Ravana, truth not untruth in it, I want to proclaim to the world, 'Let everybody whose heart has grown dirty, purify it quickly.'

"A sannyasi gave us a saying of Kabir (a mediaeval saint adored by both Hindus and Muslims). He says: 'Call Him Khuda or Ishwara—we cannot know where God is, but cannot hide our sins from Him'. I can understand how brave and pious Shraddhanandji was. I want to say two things to Hindus. If you want to be fit for a man



like Shraddhanandji, you must uproot untouchability, throw it into the Ganga and thus purify yourselves. And this is second thing: ‘Don’t nurse any anger against the murderer.’ As one who claims to be a Sanatani Hindu, I tell you, let no Hindu go mad. If we lose our sanity, Shraddhanandji’s soul will be grieved and we shall shame our Hindu Dharma. He who is a man of God, is a devotee of God, answers madness with wisdom. Let the Hindu try not even to dream of retaliation for Shraddhanandji’s assassination. And I will tell every Musalman—no matter if he is even a great Maulvi (Muslim scholar)—that the Quran does not countenance such a murder.”

1. Non-Hindus are usually not allowed entry into Hindu temples. Gandhiji's spiritual heir, Sri Vinobaji of ‘Bhoodan’ fame, made a breach in this hoary tradition, when he insisted upon entering the Vithoba Temple at Pandharpur only if non-Hindus accompanying him in his pilgrimage on foot were allowed to have the ‘darshan’ of Vithoba on the same footing as he.



11.1.1927

When Gandhiji toured over Bihar last time in 1925, he had to drop some places from his itinerary. They were included by Rajendra Babu¹ when Gandhiji's programme was fixed at Gauhati. Accordingly, we went to Daltonganj from Benares. The name itself shows that it is a new town. About 60 years ago, an Englishman, Mr. Dalton, cleared some jungles and founded this city. It is the capital of the Palamu District of Chhotanagpur Division.

[An extract from M.D.'s article in *Young India* of 26.1.1927]

@ "It has been a very strenuous time, what with noisy crowds and motor journeys over bad roads and what with friends' anxiety to cover as many places as possible in the shortest possible time. At Daltonganj the villagers from the hillside had come from distances of twenty to thirty miles and mustered in their thousands. One speech or one speaker could not reach them at a time, so Gandhiji first addressed the people in front, then those in the rear and then on the sides. This was sufficient to restore quiet and they responded wonderfully to the appeal for collections. Though the bulk of the contributions were in copper and nickel, the total collected was Rs. 526, i.e., one third of the purse collected from the select rich".

Addressing the meeting Gandhiji said: "When I was on tour in 1925, I was scheduled to come here but could not, as I was not keeping well. I thank you for your donations. We must remove our deep stain of untouchability. I hope the sacrifice of Shradhanandji will do so to some extent. His sacrifice may also have the effect of making us wash our hearts with his blood. No Hindu should ever think of revenge and no Muslim should express sympathy for it even secretly. The second thing is about Khadi. Bihar is in such a happy position with regard to Khadi, that it can take up the challenge of supplying Khadi to the whole of Bharat. I have received an anonymous letter. It seems to have been written by Christians. It wants every Indian to read the Bible as his gospel. It attributes to me sentiments I had never even dreamed of. Let the friend who works among these people tell them that their letter contains half-truths and half-truths are worst than lies. I again thank you for the purse you have given me".

From there to Dhanbad and Jharia. We did not hope for, and did not get, a good response there, though in 1921 nearly 5000 rupees were collected from these towns. The charitable among the rich people there are in bad straits. More than a hundred



out of the three hundred coal-mines are lying idle. The Railway has imposed such a heavy freight on the coal that its price in Bombay is higher than that of the coal imported from South Africa. But this is not the place to deal with the railway policy of the (British) Government. Most of the mines producing inferior qualities of coal are either closed or working only partially. Taking all this into account, the contributions can be termed good. And of course it included donations from labourers.

1. A great non-co-operating lawyer and staunch colleague of Gandhiji, who had later on the honour of being the first President of free India.



12/13.1.1927

A meeting was held in Jharia on the 12th evening. For the first time Gandhiji plainly stated at that meeting that the responsibility for Shradhdhanandji's murder lay with those Musalman papers and people that hurled abuses on him and Lalaji and Malaviyaji and called them enemies of Islam.

At Dhanbad the Local Board and Municipality gave addresses of welcome to Gandhiji. In reply he said: "I thank you for your addresses. I am not unaware of the functions of a Municipality as I had to do something or other in connection with such work in South Africa. I think that civics properly applied can reform a whole country.

"But India is the only country in the world where the country's uplift depends not upon cities but upon villages, Think of the difference between the numbers of our towns and villages. The latter are overwhelmingly larger and citizens draw their sustenance from them. While we in India mostly live upon agriculture, in Europe the bulk of the population lives upon industries in towns whose population therefore exceeds that in its villages. They can afford to do so, as they carry away wealth from here. Our exports exceed our imports and this factor should bring wealth to our country. All the same while India has grown poor, Britain has grown rich. The reason is clear. There is invisible export of our wealth.

"People from many provinces come and settle here. What attracts them is a definite share they get from the exported wealth of the poor." I say, 'You may take your share, but give at least some return to the villagers. That is why I talk of the spinning wheel wherever I go. Don't forget the poor in your attempts at making yourselves rich. My demand is the simplest: 'Wear the cloth made from the yarn the poor spin.' The spinning wheel is the one single link that can join us all together. It is therefore my humble appeal to you to add spinning to your other duties. So long as you do not, your shrewdness as businessmen is defective. Not a moment passes when I do not think of the poor and do not do anything for their uplift."

Addressing the meeting at Katras Gandhiji said:

"People come here from different parts of the country in order to earn their livelihood. Among them are labourers also. They should know that I too am a labourer. When I am asked, I say I am a farmer, weaver, spinner and Bhangi (sweeper), though I like it best to be a Bhangi. My Bhangi brother should never feel ashamed to do his work. As a labourer myself, I tell you I wish God may give you much money but with it



a pure heart also. A drunkard asked me, 'If all these drink shops are closed, how will the labourer manage to do without liquor?' I said, 'I shall see what they will do.' Let me tell the labourers, 'For God's sake give up your drink-habit, your gambling. By that sin the Pandavas fell. Give up prostitution also—and ganja. Why do you make your mouth a smoking chimney? Give up aping the rich. If they commit a crime the world puts up with them, but if we the common people commit the same crime, it scorns us. You should rather remember those who are poorer than you and who don't get any food to eat. Have you any sympathy for them in your hearts? If you have, wear the cloth spun and woven by them. Unless you discard mill cloth you cannot show your sympathy for the poor.

“Now the next thing—about the collection. I ask you to contribute your mite. Give something for the memorials of Shradhanandji and Chittaranjan (Das). Government servants as well as all others must contribute. Shradhanandji gave up his life for untouchables. His was sacred blood. Let Hindus and Muslims wash off the distrust that lies in their hearts with that blood. The Hindu should never even dream of vengeance. The Muslim should drive out whatever sympathy there may be lurking in his heart for the murder. The Prophet Mohammad has not stated in the Quran that such murder was permissible. We feel despondent at present but we ourselves are the cause. We have become cowards and forgotten the very idea of freedom.”

An address was presented on behalf of the Workers' Committee of Jharia. When a gentleman got up to read it in English, Gandhiji asked him to stop and addressing the assembly said: “I thank you for the address. I am glad that Sikh brothers live harmoniously here. But what a strange thing it is that a big town like Jharia buys only Rs. 500 worth of Khadi!

“Now the next thing. I am requested to say something that could bring about happy relationship between the employers and labourers here, and I am reminded of my work at Jamshedpur. I do not know your disabilities, but I request the employers to remove them. If you find my help necessary, call me and I will come.”



14.1.1927

At the meeting in Aurangabad: “Things in India are the reverse of what they should be. Railways exist for the good of their country in other lands, but here the fact is just the opposite. The railways which the Government have built here are not for the economic benefit of the country but for its exploitation. But that is nothing before other grave evils. This sad state of our country can however be improved. If you give up foreign cloth, there may be some improvement in our plight, but not enough. All our trouble cannot end with the boycott of foreign cloth. If, knowing all that it means, you adopt Khadi, we can turn the tables to our benefit. If we know nothing more about Khadi than the simple fact that we should wear Khadi to help the poor, even that would be something, as Khadi does possess that power and it is for that reason that I call the spinning wheel Annapurna Devi (Goddess that provides food).

“The responsibility of bringing about the downfall of the country did not originally lie with us, but with the East India Company. But now for letting it remain in that state we are answerable. It would be good if you realize this fact.”

In our itinerary of places south of the Ganga there were still one or two remaining. Gaya is a wealthy town. They say that there is none among the Brahmin priests there who earns less than Rs. 5,000 a year, but many of them squander their money in immoral ways. Owing to our unclean habits this holy town becomes so dirty during pilgrimage days, that a special hospital for cholera has been set up permanently. The citizens of the town did not contribute much, but the collection at the meeting was excellent as usual. A gentleman gave a motor car which fetched Rs. 750/-.

In the welcome address given by the Municipality it was plainly stated, ‘We cannot understand your Khadi and (removal of) untouchability programmes.’ In his reply Gandhiji wondered why, in that case, he should have been given a welcome address at all. It would have been good, he added, if a copy of the address had been sent to him in advance. He also expressed his deep regret at the fact that the town was dirtier than even Ahmedabad, though it was a sacred town where holy ceremonies for deceased ancestors were performed.

At the evening meeting a lawyer, with a Hungarian (i.e. foreign) cap fairly greasy with hair-oil, read the welcome address on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha. It contained lavish praises of Khadi, untouchability and other programmes and



requested Gandhiji's help in the 'shuddhi' and 'sangathan' movements. It was necessary to reply to this address in some detail:

'The President of the Municipality reminded me that this was my third visit to Gaya. Gayaji is a very holy town of the Hindus and the address of the Hindu Mahasabha reminds us that it was at Gaya that Lord Buddha attained perfect knowledge. For these reasons I chose the route via Gaya. But when I went to see the Library, I was pained at the thought that the roads of that town which was regarded so holy were more dirty than of many place I have seen. Though I have referred to it at the Municipality, I repeat it before you, as the responsibility for such uncleanliness lies with you also. If people who live here do not do their duty, do not keep their houses clean, what can the Municipality do? Wherever citizens are alert, the city-father is also alert, and if he is not, we may not elect him a second time. I would not feel any inhibition in telling you, 'All of you please take up brooms and buckets of water and clean the streets. Don't think that that is the work of the Bhangi alone. It is specially your business to begin the cleaning.'

"The Hindu Mahasabha address states that the local Mahasabha is trying to make Hindus fearless. But I have seen that cowardliness is not the weakness of Hindus only. It exists among Musalmans and Christians also. It is the characteristic of cowards to cower before bullies. Were it not so, India would not have been in the sorry plight, in which it finds itself today. I wish everyone who loves God, whatever his religion, sheds his cowardliness.

"I congratulate you for pushing forward the spinning wheel, Khadi and untouchability programmes. In this same town I stated formerly that untouchability was a grave sin, a big stain on Hinduism. We have to bend our heads in shame, as we have not washed off the blot. The Gita, the Upanishads, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana tell us that we should never regard anyone as untouchable and should live cordially with the whole world. These scriptures do not say that we must not bow down to a learned Brahmin, but they do not at the same time say that we must look down upon untouchables. I wish that there will be no 'fifth class'¹ of untouchables in this sacred town. You have requested me to help you in your shuddhi work. But you must know that real shuddhi is 'atma-shuddhi' (self-purification). In the purification of our hearts and the assimilation of the untouchables into Hindu society lies their shuddhi as well as ours. To that extent I am with you in your shuddhi movement. And I feel that it will be universally acknowledged that the greatest service of



Shraddhanandji who died for his religion was his work for untouchables. His longing for the uplift of untouchables never abated. I have often described how burning it was.”

1. Hindu scriptures speak of 4 classes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra but not any 5th class of untouchables. That, says Gandhiji, is an unhealthy accretion.



(An Extract from M. D.'s article d. 27.1.1927 in *young India*)

@ “(But) I have made no secret of the fact that I did not approve of all aspects of shuddhi work. After much prayerful study of the Hindu Shastras, I have come to the conclusion that there is no room in them for conversions such as they have in Islam and Christianity. I am also certain on a prayerful reading of the Quran that there is no warrant for the *tablig* that is being promoted today. It is possible that I may be mistaken. Let God correct me in that case. I for myself, would love to protect my religion with *tapascharya*—the way of prayerful suffering, which is the royal road to success in any noble object. The real memorial that the Hindus can raise to Swamiji is to rid Hinduism of the curse of untouchability. Let both Hindus and Musalmans cleanse their hearts with the purifying blood of Swamiji’s sacrifice. I must be free to read the Gita or the Quran of my own accord. Why should a Hindu compel me to read the one or a Musalman to read the other? Why should I need a Christian to compel me to read the Bible? No one may stand between a man and his religion or God. He who has no inkling of religion, whose heart is arid and unpurified, how dare he purify (by proselytising) others?

“But that is my opinion. As I am a votary of liberty I have in spite of my opinion insisted that Shraddhanandji had as much right to propagate the Vedic Dharma as a Musalman to propagate that of Quran. And if Shraddhanandji was assassinated for his shuddhi work, it did no credit to Islam. Hinduism is proud of the sacrifice and is enriched by it. Let no Musalman secretly approve of the act or believe that it has done any good to Islam. Let not a single Hindu harbour any thought of retaliation. If the Hindu and the Musalman rid themselves of mutual distrust and fear, there is no power that can stop their freedom. We are the makers of our own slavery. I had sealed my lips upto now on this burning topic. It is Shraddhanandji’s sacrifice that has compelled me to open them to a certain extent. But I can give no guidance in this atmosphere. I shall only send my prayers to God that He may rid us of fear and hatred and distrust and make us rely solely on the strength of love”.

(The following is added by M. D. in Gujarati *Navajivan*)

“I only pray to God to make us brave, save us from hating anybody and teach us the art of love in order to win others. It is the dharma of both Hindus and Musalmans to send a like prayer to God and make a fitting memorial of Shraddhanandji.



“Now let me say something on cow-protection. It is very easy to protect the cow. The true Hindu will certainly protect the cow and not sell it off. But at present what the Hindus do is to torture the cow in order to extract more milk from it than it can yield. That is not the way of cow-protection. The Hindu must rather make a study of this question. There is a go-shala (cow-shed) here which I am invited to visit, but I have not been able to go there. There are about 1,900 go-shalas in India. If we make everyone of them ideal dairies and tanneries, we can save the cow.

“Now about the spinning wheel. If you have a feeling for the poor, who live in villages away from your sight, you must wear Khadi. Give up foreign cloth and wear Khadi woven out of sacred hand-spun yarn. There is a Khadi shop here. I visited it. It is the smallest shop in the market, with the smallest stock of cloth, and, I am told, is working under a loss. And then you say you are trying to spread Khaddar. Does your statement mean anything? I would on the other hand like to see the largest number of Khadi shops and only a petty shop selling mill or foreign cloth. If we wish to be true sons of India, to be true Hindus and Muslims, can we not do even this simple thing? I appeal to all my brothers, ‘Adopt Khadi, increase Khadi shops and enlarge those that exist.’

‘For that work, I want money. My only work today is to give the message of Khadi once again. Rs. 29,000 were distributed among 8000 women and that has given them very great relief. If you think such people deserve help, you must give me money. It is for the spread of Khadi specially that the All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund is collected. May God grant you wisdom and charity of heart, so that our poor can get some money.’

We crossed the Ganga at Gaya on our way to Patna and arrived at Sonapur. It is considered to be the sacred place where Lord Vishnu saved the elephant. It is a small village, but two separate meetings of men and women were held there before we left for Chhapra District. Collection of funds, as has been said, had already begun from Daltonganj but a new step-that of collecting ornaments from women was taken at Sonapur. Gandhiji exhorted the women “Think of Sita. Do you imagine she went about with Rama in his 14 years’ forest wanderings with heavy ornaments like yours? Do you think they add to your beauty? Sita cared for the beauty of her heart and covered her body with pure Khaddar. The heavy ornaments you wear are not only ugly, but harmful inasmuch as they are the permanent receptacles of dirt. Free yourselves of these



shackles and relieve the poverty of the people who have no clothes, much less ornaments, to wear.”

The response was immediate. Ornaments came off from hands and feet and in a moment Gandhiji left the meeting with a bag filled with silver ornaments.

There was another departure also at Sonapur. As it is a junction of many trains, there are always crowds of pilgrims on the platform. Gandhiji got into his train and began to collect funds from the pilgrims. Not content, he called for Khadi from the local Khadi Bhandar and began to sell it. “I am a Bania, come here on business. I want to collect money for the poor and sell Khadi made by them. Here is a *chaddar* (sheet) for Rs. 2-8-0. Will anybody buy it?” he said, and before the train started many rupees’ worth of Khadi was sold off. And this sale of Khadi went on at all stations right upto Chhapra.

This northern bank of the Ganga is a feast to the eyes. The region is studded at every half a mile with emeralds of Mango-groves and carpeted with fields smiling with *tuar* (lentil) and wheat and gram and peas. It is filled with many reminiscences of Ramachandraji and the greenery that we see now is but the progeny of that ancient foliage under which Lord Buddha had often rested and preached. It therefore naturally takes us back to those hallowed times and a tired traveller would not fail to halt here for taking rest and enjoying the serenity which these historic and beautiful sights evoke. But we had to rush through the region and give our eyes a treat as best we could.

A gathering of thousands had collected even on the platform, when we reached Chhapra. We put up at Dr. Mahmud. Gandhiji had a talk here with Mazhar-Ul-Haq (a staunch non-co-operating barrister of simple habits). He plainly stated that his mind had begun to distrust Gandhiji. He was afraid that Gandhiji had grown anti-Muslim. He considers Gandhiji’s statement: ‘Muslims are too free with their sticks and swords’ as his terrible fall from his high ideals. He said: “I did not regard anyone else as my leader. Gandhiji was my only hope in the present circumstances. But now I am sunk in deeper despair.”

The Municipality gave a welcome address. The language was framed by Mahendrababu’s daughter. In reply Gandhiji said:

“My tour this time is mainly for Khadi and the spinning wheel, but before I touch it, let me say a word about something else—I mean uplift of untouchables. Along with



my effort for this spinning wheel, I am trying to help untouchables also, I regard untouchability as a big black spot on Hinduism. It is the duty of every Hindu to remove it. Shradhdhanandji spent his life for untouchables, even gave it up. He used to affirm that every Hindu ought to employ an untouchable servant in his home. Let us drive out untouchability for the sake of shraddhanandji, if for nothing else. Let us learn a lesson from his martyrdom. Let both Hindus and Muslims wash their sins with his blood. Let us remove the distrust which we have for each other. Shradhdhanandji's death would be a cheap price, if we can bring about unity as its result. Swaraj has no meaning, so long as we have not forged true friendship between us.

“I told you I want to work specially for Khadi and the spinning wheel. I want to tell you, whether you are a Hindu or a Musalman, you must give up foreign or mill cloth. Don't spend a pice after it and buy only hand-spun Khadi. It cannot be produced without money, volunteers will therefore come to you and you may give them what you can. I am also going to sell this Khadi which you see here. It was made by women who had no other occupation to sustain them. I like to do this business instead of delivering speeches. Mazhar told me one very fine thing. He said 'Our people are very loving but unintelligent. Were they sensible, would they not have accepted Khadi long since?'"

When they heard of the sale of Khadi, the mad crowds made any further quiet hearing impossible. There was a wild rush from the people for Khadi. There was no end to commotion in the women's meeting also. We were so fed up with the hubbub there that we may as well say we fled away from the meeting. As we proceeded a little to the north, we met on our way people who had come riding on elephants. It was quite natural for the people to get tired, when they had congregated in thousands and had to wait for hours together without anybody to maintain discipline. That was why those meetings could not be held quietly. The collections were made never the less. We rested for the night at Jiradehi, which as the birthplace of Rajendra Babu was a place of pilgrimage for us. Thousands had gathered even in that village of hardly 6 or 7 hundred souls. We left the village on Monday.

Overflowing enthusiasm and lack of discipline was the feature of the regions we visited so far. The places we went to after leaving Jiradehi were perfect examples of excellent organisation. There is a division of the Chhapra District called Mairwa, where is a Khadi Depot and where hundreds of volunteers have settled in its villages. There is a high standard of national consciousness there. Many men had gone from there to



take part in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha (for insisting on the right to carry a procession with the National Flag through European quarters). A Mr. Ramaji has devoted his life to the causes of khadi and reform in the marriage system. He arranges hundreds of marriages every year where no dowry is accepted either by the bridegroom's or the bride's party. His method to win the people's heart is the performance of *Ramkirtan* (dilating upon Rama's exploits in verse and prose). He refuses to dine with anybody who accepts dowry for his son or daughter and spends the money he gets from his 'kirtans' for the cause of Khadi. This pious singer is very influential all over the division. They say he once went even to Ayodhya (Lord Rama's birth-place) where he performed Ramakirtan and, by humble and earnest entreaty, made the sannyasis there wear Khadi. Unfortunately, after that Khadi was worn out, the ascetics went back to foreign cloth. Is there any wonder if one, who has no desire to earn his livelihood and lives upon beggary only, takes up any cloth he is given?"

1. An elephant went to a lake where its leg was caught by a crocodile. It struggled hard to free itself, but sank deeper till only the tip of its trunk remained above water. A heartrending cry to Lord Vishnu to save its life brought Him to the place and the elephant was saved. The elephant signifies man and the crocodile the evil nature in him.



(The following is an extract from M.D.'s article in *Young India* d. 27.1.1927)

@ “The meeting that was at once a model of orderliness and the biggest that we have yet had was at Mairwa. Over thirty thousand had seated themselves, almost in battle array, the vast mass, including the huge elephants that had brought some of them to the meeting, having the appearance of a peaceful military camp. There was not a stir when Gandhiji came and none even when it was announced that he would first give a few minutes to the women who had a purdah meeting in a corner and then come and address them. A long speech was out of the question here. They did not want a speech either. They knew what they were to be told and what was to be expected of them. But Gandhiji addressed them a few words from several places in the meeting and asked them to empty their pockets for the poor. And the response that they made is something unique in our memory. The coins did not rain, they poured. Men and women (who had now broken through their purdah), young and old, vied with one another to contribute their mites, and paid ringing testimony to the fact that it is a poor man's movement. The run on the dais was just like a run on a bank, not in this case to embarrass the Khaddar Bank but to enrich it. The pile of coins collected required three men to carry it and it is estimated that it will amount to nothing less than Rs.1000. Mairwa has a Khaddar Depot in charge of the A.I.S.A. and an army of volunteers had evidently done their duty. The meeting at Gopalganj was nearly as big, but the realisations were much less as the meeting was tightly packed and there was scarcely any room for the collectors to go about with their bags. As for Khadi, it fetched two or three hundred rupees in sale at every meeting and within half an hour or so.”

(The following is M.D.'s article in *Young India* of 27.1.1927 on the meeting at Siwan:)

Prayer the only Way

@ “Challenged to say something on Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji delivered a Hindi speech of which the following is a condensed summary:

“I am glad you say that your subdivision is better than other parts so far as Hindu-Muslim unity is concerned. But can you say that you are so united that your unity will stand the strain of anything happening elsewhere? I wish there can be at least one province, one district, one subdivision in this vast land which can proudly say that no power can foment a Hindu-Muslim quarrel there. We may think we are living but disunited we are worse than dead. The Hindu thinks that in quarrelling with the



Musalman he is benefitting Hinduism, and the Musalman thinks that in fighting a Hindu he is benefitting Islam. But each is ruining his faith. And the poison has spread among the members of the communities themselves. And no wonder. For one man cannot do right in one department of life, whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.

“I said at Comilla that the problem has passed out of human hands, and that God has taken it into His own. May be the statement springs from my egotism. But I do not think so. I have ample reason for it. With my hand on my breast I can say that not a minute in my life am I forgetful of God. For over 20 years I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God. Hindu-Muslim unity I had made a mission of my life. I worked for it in South Africa, I toiled for it here, I did penance for it, but God was not satisfied; God did not want me to take any credit for the work. And so I have now washed my hands. I am helpless. I have exhausted all my effort. But as I am a believer in God, as I never for a moment lose my faith in Him, as I content myself with the joy and sorrow that He wills for me, I may feel helpless, but I never lose hope. Something within me tells me that Hindu-Muslim unity must come and will come sooner than we might dare to hope, that God will one day force it on us, inspite of ourselves. That is why I said that it has passed into the hands of God. This, I said, might be taken to be an arrogant utterance—arrogant inasmuch as it implies that it is not in the power of any other man to achieve the work, as if no one has worked for it more than I. But there is no arrogance in the statement. Hundreds may have done the work with the same earnestness, love and energy, but none with more. And I believe that all of them must be feeling as helpless as I. In 1920 I said that not even the British Empire with all the resources of its armed strength, diplomacy and organisation could efface us, make us slaves, or divide Hindus from Muslims. But that was because I thought we were God-fearing then. We trusted one another and we relied on one another’s strength. But how am I to prevail upon you today to cast off all fear, hatred and distrust? Shraddhanandji was not an enemy of Musalmans. He was a warrior, he had the courage of his conviction. Assassination was not the way to fight him. Let us Hindus and Musalmans both, wash the sins of our heart with his blood.

“And what is it that we should be fighting for? We Hindus may be idol-worshippers. We may be mistaken. But when God gave every man the right to make mistakes, when God suffers us to live although we are idol-worshippers, why should not the Musalmans suffer us too? And if a Musalman thinks he must slaughter the



cow, why should a Hindu stay his hand by force? Why should he not fall on bended knees before him and plead with him? But we will do no such thing. Well then, God will one day make the Musalman and the Hindu do what we will not do today. If you are believers, I beseech you to retire into yourselves and pray to the Indweller to stay your hands from wrong and to make them do the right thing. Let that be our prayer every morning and evening. There is no other way.

“I have not said so much anywhere else. Here I was asked to say something and I did. My faith in Hindu-Muslim unity today is as strong as in 1921 and I say now the same thing as I said then. But today the climate is unfavourable.

“And now about the spinning wheel and Khadi. Shall I cease to spin just because others don't? I have affirmed that my faith in the spinning wheel is so deep that, if those Hindus and Musalmans who believe in me give up the spinning wheel and burn it, my spirits will be elated all the more and I shall tell them, ‘You all have gone mad. You can never integrate the poor of India with yourselves without the spinning wheel.’ Free distribution of rice and flour is not the way to render any service worth the name to the countless millions of India's poor people. To take up that course is to betray them. The common man of India is starving for want of an occupation. Our seven hundred thousand villages have no work on hand. That is why I maintain I am not going to give up the wheel, even if you all do so. I shall plunge myself into the bonfire of spinning wheels, if ever it is lighted. And the people of India will begin to admit: “What the man used to say was right.” You are free to denounce the spinning wheel as a lie, a deception, a sword that kills you, but I know the poor man's voice. That is what makes me roam over India to beg for funds and call upon the people to give up foreign cloth. If you wear one yard of Khadi, it puts six annas in the pockets of the poor. And if you buy mill cloth you lose four annas, since they fly to foreign lands. In a heart-rending tone the poor Indian woman wails, ‘You will remain slaves, so long as you keep me in slavery.’ You love things made in Paris or England. Why don't you then go and settle there? Ask yourselves why thousands of women flock to me. They crowd around me as they know I am their humble servant. They throng as they know that my rambles over the whole country are for them. Do you want, I say, to let your sister's honour be robbed? What a pitiable situation it is that you are not able to consume even the Khadi your own province produces. There is a reputed ex-lawyer right here who was going to be a High Court Judge. When even such a man as he has chosen to dedicate himself



to khadi will you refuse to wear it? And think of the plight of the poor woman of your province. She has not even a spare sari to change after her bath!

“You regard some people as untouchables. I say, ‘never do so.’ To look upon any human being as an untouchable is to cease to be human beings ourselves. The world scorns and laughs at us for our custom of untouchability. What a travesty that a reader of the Bhagwad Gita says, ‘Water or food touched by this man is polluted and not worth eating.’ I could find no trace of such a high-brow attitude in the Gita or the Upanishads or the Mahabharata. That is what impels me to call the spread of untouchability as an infiltration of Satan’s forces into Hinduism, Why did Shraddhananda die? For the untouchables. He told me, ‘Your work remains incomplete till every Congressman engages an untouchable servant in his house.’” These words show how much his heart burnt for untouchables. He used to prod me, ‘Why don’t you use your influence for championing the cause of untouchables?’”



19.1.1927

Darbhanga

Addresses were given by the District Board, Municipality and the Association of Tax-payers. Thanking them Gandhiji said:

“I cannot say anything about the plea of the Tax-payers’ Association. If the Darbhanga Municipality is indifferent to their interests, it is a matter of regret. It is impossible for any Municipality to discharge its duty properly, if it scouts, or is indifferent to the spinning wheel. I am pained to hear what you said about the Hindu-Muslim quarrel here, I did not know that there were disturbances in Darbhanga on the Bakr-Id day. I do not read newspapers. When I come to know of such quarrels, I am sorely distressed, but not surprised. What surprises me is rather the news that a particular place is free from any such quarrel. Those cities or small towns where there is no ill-feeling between the two communities are few and far between.

Yesterday I spoke at length on this subject at Siwan and I don’t want to say much here. I have the same faith in Hindu-Muslim unity now, as I had in 1921. And I must add that Swaraj has no meaning without that unity. But today this question of fraternity is not in our hands but in God’s as He regards us unfit for bringing about unity. And yet my hope stands undimmed that a day will come—and within a few years—when this harmony will be established. The two cannot live without each other. If we do not come to terms ourselves, God will compel us.

“But for the present my tour has only one object—Khadi and spread of the spinning wheel-and whatever service I can do to untouchables in passing. If untouchability is not destroyed, Hinduism is definitely doomed, but the community that produced a hero like Swami Shradhdhananda is not going to be destroyed.”

(Extract from M.D.’s article in *Young India* of 27.1.1927)

@ “I summarise here the result of the collections. One thing is clear. The country-side is still instinct with life.... The response of the city and town-dwellers is far from satisfactory.”



3.2.1927

(M.D.'s 'Weekly Letter' in *Young India*)

@ “The rush through space continues and will continue until we reach the end of our tour at Patna on the 30th. The surging crowds and the stupendous meetings make one wonder whether the organisers of the tour could not have done anything better, for we find that in spite of their anxiety to satisfy all, they have not been able to include all places that wanted to be on the programme. And when we reach the end, the feeling will not be so much of relief as of thankfulness that Gandhiji has stood the strain fairly well—not a sense of relief, for the thousands of people that for a moment overwhelm you, fill you with hope of the tremendous possibilities of a movement the magnitude of which newspapers retailing gloomy reports of communal disturbances and division among Congress ranks have failed to gauge. Let the doubter and the sceptic go to Bihar and see that the province watered by the mighty rivers, Ganga and Sarayu, Gondak and Sone, is watered no less by the mighty Ganga of faith which will never dry.

“Darbhanga, Champaran, Monghyr and Arrah—four districts in the course of a week! It is impossible to gather one’s impressions and arrange them however briefly within the scope of a weekly letter. But I shall try to give a sketch as hurried as the tour.

“Darbhanga is the land of modern *tirthas* if I may say so without offending orthodox susceptibilities. For *tirthas* are holy and purifying and whereas the squalor and cupidity and hypocrisy that reign in our orthodox *tirthas* stink in one’s nostrils, a pilgrimage to the modern ones—the Khadi depots—chastens and uplifts. ‘You must not accompany me,’ said Gandhiji. ‘You will see nothing today in the rush and hurry. Go to these places tomorrow and study them to your heart’s content’. And I willingly obeyed. The visit was not only a study, but a revelation, a feast for the eyes and solace for the soul. Pandaul and Madhubani and Sakri and Kapasi conjure up visions before you. In beautifully swept courtyards these women are sitting—all Musalmans, it will gladden Maulana Shaukat Ali’s heart to know—working out of their wheels a music of which the echoes still resound in the ears. Not ten or fifty, but three hundred giving a wonderful demonstration of the art to which they were born. As we paused and wondered at every stage at the dexterity of these mothers and grandmothers, one of the men who showed us round said; ‘There are not less than a thousand, sir, in this



locality. They spin and we weave. These are all women from weavers' families.' And as you proceed you notice a sister young, but awfully humpbacked, and you seem to melt with pity at her misfortune. But no! She laughs at your pitying look, and the gossamer yarn running out of her proud fingers, seems to tell you that God has not deprived her of the cunning of her fingers and she can earn therewith a living possibly more honourable than the spectators. A few yards from her is a dame, whose silver hair, wrinkled forehead and crumpled cheeks tell you her years. She is spinning away her fine *Kokti* yarn without caring to notice you. 'How long have you been doing this?' 'Since morning,' she replies. 'No, I mean how many years?' 'I cannot say exactly.' She smiles wondering at the question. 'But you can imagine, since I began it ever since I was married when I was that age,' she says, pointing to a tot who might have been her great-grand-daughter. 'And how much do you earn out of this?' the irrepressible economist in you asks. 'Well, that is the sole means of our livelihood,' she says and when pressed to be more definite she gives you details which the weaver friend clad in fine homespun has to help you to understand. 'That means 7 to 8 rupees a month earned in your spare hours?' You ask almost envying her wage, though you earn ten times as much with less labour. 'Well yes,' she modestly admits, not willing to proclaim her high wage. And lest you should run away with hasty inference she adds: 'Not all earn so much. All have not as much time as I, and all do not spin so well. And then you do not get as much out of ordinary yarn as from *Kokti* yarn.'

'At the depot you meet women with their bundles of yarn anxious to tell the visitors that the fall in the cotton prices have adversely affected them. How? They take away a pound and a half of cotton and return a pound of yarn, the price of half a pound of cotton being their wage. It was a commentary on the exchange system of getting yarn that obtains in these parts. At Belwar there is a colony of Brahmin women-spinners, girls spinning on their neat little *taklis* and elderly women on their wheels. Their hands do not show the cunning of their Musalman sisters, but the boundless enthusiasm of a sixty years old virgin-widow who has brigaded them tells you what the Charkha (spinning wheel) means to them. Among these too there are spinners, though not many, whose art you pause to admire. The modest mother spinning away with the baby at her breast has no proud tale of a heavy wage to tell you. But more proudly still, because unselfishly, she says, 'My yarn went to make Mahatmaji's garland yesterday.' Kapasia is a village where nearly all the weavers weave handspun yarn. We visited a number of places and found men, women, and children working and not a soul idle. It was, again, a Musalman village organised by Hindu youths. Let the



Musalman sceptic visit one of these centres and learn the lesson of patriotism and perseverance from these Musalman men and women. We sat and talked with the weavers. It was no use talking to them. Their spokesman was far more able to give you a business like speech. He knew both the economics and politics of his trade. “Do you ever fight as Hindus and Musalmans do in other parts?” ‘No, sir, we do fight amongst ourselves, as the Hindus do amongst themselves, but never the one community against the other. We have no time left. Our women spin and we weave. The Musalman weaver and the Hindu spinner are as brother and sister. I do wish our Brahmin brethren also were doing something, when their women spin away at their wheels,’ he said casting a just reflection on the idle Brahmin.

“But I must pass on. Darbhanga and Monghyr have been the best in point of contribution too. Some of the monster meetings in Muzaffarpur District were as big as, if less organised than, the Mairwa meeting. The demonstrations in Champaran have been very noisy—they seem to have a special claim on Gandhiji, feeling as they do that they made him famous and those in Monghyr and Arrah have been the rowdiest, possibly because Gandhiji visited some of these places for the first time. And yet the response everywhere was heartiest, collections having been quite in proportion to the crowds, excepting at Motihari, where not much could be collected, for no fault of the crowd, but because of the faulty arrangement of the meeting.

“In this connection let me make an observation or two. I have said something in my last letter as to the arrangement of the meeting. Particular care requires to be taken in the construction of the platform. It should be not less than six to seven feet high and broad enough to seat five or six people, with enough space on all sides. That will ensure collections by Gandhiji without danger of a rush or accident (so many people being anxious to hand the money to Gandhiji himself). At Begusarai in Monghyr the arrangement in this respect was perfect, the platform being something over six feet supported on four strong pillars, between which men could come and go. And as Gandhiji bended to receive money, men at the rate of 14 per minute passed through his hands, so to say, having satisfied themselves that they paid the money to Gandhiji himself, and yet being successfully prevented from touching his feet—a thing which always gives rise to terrific rush and crush. We escaped accidents on Bihar only by a fluke. Let us however make accidents practically impossible, by better organisation and arrangements.



“It must be said that during the short time at their disposal the workers succeeded in getting together fair purses at most meetings. The collections at meetings have, as I have pointed out, a lesson all their own. Taking the Mairwa meeting to have numbered 32,000, the collection there worked out at two dice per head. That was the result of nothing but fine organisation. Organisers in other provinces will please note.

“I must mention in brief some of the items of interest. Amongst the purses and collections must be mentioned one little purse at Muzaffarpur. It was presented on the occasion of Gandhiji’s visit to the local Khadi Bhandar by the dyers, washermen and printers who serve this All-India Spinners Association branch. It was handed to Gandhiji by a washerman clad in homespun. ‘How much is it?’ asked Gandhiji. ‘Rs. 150, sir.’ ‘I appreciate it very much, but you must have made a lot of money too?’ asked Gandhiji. ‘Yes,’ said the washerman. ‘Thanks to your movement, our hands are full.’ ‘Well, then’ said Gandhiji, ‘know that even this purse that you are presenting will go to add to your income.’ ‘We know, sir. Nearly twenty *dhobis* (washermen) here refuse to wash anything but Khaddar, and two of the best *dhobis* in the town are Khaddarites. Some of the fashionable gentry wearing foreign clothes feel the pinch of our vow, but how can we help it?’ ‘Certainly not’ said Gandhiji with a hearty laugh. ‘Let them beware.’ The Khadi in the shop was tastefully arranged, there were all varieties, and some of the finest specimens of printing and dyeing were there to satisfy the most aesthetic taste. Let aesthetes and people with houses to furnish ask for whatever variety of cloth they want and they shall have it.

“At Muzaffarpur the students also surrounded Gandhiji. There are a thousand belonging to schools and a college. Every place in Champaran is full of happy memories and Gandhiji began his speech by narrating one of the sweetest. ‘You students, I wonder if there is still any one of those old boys at college—with Kripalani at their head, were the first to welcome and harbour me in Champaran. Your response during the years that followed was no less remarkable. Will you not do today the little that I am asking of you?’ The rest of the speech was an impassioned utterance—a plea for Khadi-wearing and Brahmacharya couched in the same tone as the speech at the Hindu University. They offered a slender purse, but responded heartily to the call of purchasing Khadi.

“I shall reserve some more items of interest for a future letter.”



The following is M.D.'s additional account (in Gujarati *Navajivan*) of Gandhiji's tour covering the period of the above Weekly Letter:

25.1.1927

Gandhiji visited the Christian Methodist Mission in Muzaffarpur, explained there the implications of Khadi and gave an idea of the service it can render to the poor.

“The man who says, ‘Lord, Lord’ but does not serve the poor, vainly invokes His name. This grand building and this splendid garden would become your Mission only when they are used for service of the poor,” he said.

Addresses were given at a public meeting. The Hindu Mahasabha accepted Gandhiji's request to give up reading its address. Gandhiji said: “I am glad that the address extols the greatness of renunciation. I quite understand what has been written about the Seva Samiti. The congratulation address reveals sincere feelings. Anger is not the right method to achieve success. Our success in the test of truth and non-violence lies in our control of anger, even when we are being killed outright. The young men's address refers to the murder of Shradhhanandji. The epithets used are improper but excusable. The pain I feel at the death of Shradhhanandji is equal to the pain of the framer of the address. If I said I felt more pain, it would look like self-praise. Therefore, I content myself with saying that I feel as deeply as he does.

“I wish every community feels the same pain. Suppose out of fear the murder had sealed my lips after the simple expression of sorrow; suppose, instead of purifying myself, I had tried to avenge the murder, what would have been the consequences? It is wrong to think of retaliation and behave accordingly. Let us tolerate one another's views. Let us accept that everyone has the right to express his view. Let us purify our hearts with his sacred blood. Let us pray that our hearts imbibe the courage of Swamiji. If we have that courage, it is not necessary to get angry with anybody.

“I could have dilated upon the madness of this murder, but I don't wish to go into it. I can protect Hinduism as much as any other man—Hindu, Muslim or Christian—can protect his religion. And how? I must never abuse anybody, never get angry with him. What I have said formerly, I repeat today: ‘The way to protect one's religion is to be prepared to die for it.’ Nothing but that readiness to embrace death can do us good. What can a Pathan—six feet tall—do to a woman or a child who is willing to die? It is not necessary to cherish anger to save one's religion, it is not necessary to draw the sword, or pour abuses, to save it. He who thinks these things



necessary, is sadly mistaken. Our scriptures do not sanction these ways. Let the whole world misinterpret the Gita, the Mahabharata, and the Vedas and say that the sword is essential for that purpose. Even then I will say, it is not. Non-violence has been preached in them also. And if the Musalman lets me say so, I shall say that the Quran upholds the same thing as the Gita. Let no Muslim think that the Quran asks the believers to protect their religion by violence.

‘I am fiftyseven now. I don’t know whether I shall be alive next year, but I know this: If you want to protect your religion, you can do so only by being a votary of truth, non-violence, brahmacharya, non-possession and non-stealing.

“Nobody can save his religion without acquiring these five qualities, without overcoming the temptation of the whole wealth the world offers. Udhishthira told but one lie¹ and immediately he was punished. That is how the Mahabharata points out how gravely a single lie is punished. I do not at all wish to cool down the fire that burns in the hearts of youths. That is why I said so much in reply to their address.

“A voice coming from my heart tells me that Khadi alone can raise India today. He alone can be a true believer in Swaraj, whose heart has a place for the man who dies of hunger and thirst. The spinning wheel entered my heart in 1908 and the more I think over it, the clearer it becomes to me that, for making the Indian woman free, for providing her livelihood, there is no other means save the spinning wheel. Mill cloth of Ahmedabad or any other mill can never do so.

“I thank the Seva Samiti for calling me not a ‘Mahatma’ but a truth-speaker.”

At a students’ meeting Gandhiji said: “There was nothing that could tempt me to accept your invitation and come over here. I agreed never-the-less, since at the present time—for this year—I wish to be a *bania* all over. You remind me of the year 1920, but I recollect today the still earlier year, 1917. None of you might be present then, but it was the students of this same Muzaffarpur who were ready to welcome me and then I came and stayed. How can I forget those people – Prof. Kripalani and his students? What we did in 1920 was a great achievement. I do not wish to withdraw anything from what I said then. (Gandhiji promised then the advent of Swaraj in a year). Nor do I repent of the statement. We may not have at present the edge on our opponents, Hindus and Muslims may be cutting one another’s throat today, but nobody can make us forget that glorious period. However, we need not look back to it with wistful regret, though that age of enthusiasm among youths has passed. I had



hoped that you, youths would keep up your courage. But one cannot expect you to keep it up, when an ebb sets in all around you. That you had risen to that great height was itself a great thing. (Thousands of students had left their Colleges and Schools in response to the Congress call of non-cooperation.)

“But I don't want to repeat the old story today. I only want now to speak of a thing or two which every student can do. Revered Malaviyaji gave me an opportunity to spread Khadi among students. The fact that you gave me a purse before I could say what I wanted to is not going to shut my mouth. There were 2000 students in Benares and yet they give me a thousand rupees. If you believe in Khadi, your contribution is smaller. In fact the Gita even tells us: तद्विद्वि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया. (Know the truth from him whom you regard as your 'guru' by humility, repeated questioning and service.) But the situation today is so adverse that one fears that a quotation from Sanskrit would be misinterpreted. When I began reading the Bible (last year), some persons charged me with a desire to convert the students into Christianity!

“Have you thought over what makes it possible for you to prosecute your studies? Whence come the funds for them? The Government gets Rs. 250 millions from liquor. The expenses our Ministers of Education incur are provided from that revenue. So the very source of this education is tainted. And the method of imparting this education is so expensive that all Indians cannot get that education even after hundreds of years. Will you then give absolutely no return to those poor people at whose expense you received your education? Is it an absurd advice, if I ask you to serve labourers? You send money to Manchester by wearing cloth manufactured there. You cannot give any return whatever to the poor people of this country thereby. You give a return, only when you wear 'swadeshi.'

“And what is this 'swadeshi'? Indian mill cloth is not true swadeshi (mills have to import machinery, etc). Khadi is the one thing that could be termed 'perfect swadeshi' (It distributes all it gets among the poorest). The least thing you should do is therefore to wear Khadi. Only then a few pice may be given to villagers and a few remain with you. True *swadeshism* can be established in the country, when Khadi becomes the current coin. Why should such a very costly organisation function for selling foreign cloth? My aim is to make Khadi the current coin and then the expense for selling it would not come to even 5 per cent. We must produce cloth worth 1200 million rupees to meet our clothing needs.



“Our big commercial magnates will not then lose much. Some amount will indeed be distributed that way. Your minds may have been shaken as regards the propriety of other items (of the 1921 programme like boycott of Councils, colleges etc.) but why should that make you doubt the Khadi programme? There are snakes, malaria and *kala-azar* (black-fever) in India. Shall we therefore run away from India? Our graveyard, our crematorium, our temple, our masjid are all here. Be determined therefore to be perfectly *swadeshi*. Foreign things must be taboo. What will you do if somebody gives you foreign cloth gratis? Refuse it outright. That is why I say, learn up the Khadi mantra perfectly. Read the book ‘Hand-spinning and Hand-weaving.’ Distribute millions of its copies, as Malaviyaji recommends. I tell you again, ‘Wear Khadi’. Don’t be satisfied with what you have given. Collect more and give the amount to me. Visit the local Khadi shop. Save something from your tiffin-expense and give it to me for Khadi. If you do that, I shall regard it a sufficient contribution from you to the national *yagna*.

“And now the next thing. Keep your ‘brahmacharya’ unsullied. Letters come in heaps to me. How shall I describe the utter deterioration in our health and strength from our breach of it? Temptations, and nothing but temptations, to excite the passion face you. That was why Shraddhanand resorted to the Himalayas. (He founded a residential school and college there). He went to a place which was frequented by tigers and wolves. And why? He saw the youth of the Punjab in the process of moral ruin. He saw that they were fear-ridden. Though he could not realize his ideal fully, the institution does retain the ideal. A brahmachari is one who tries all possible means to seek *Brahman* (the Absolute) and knows it. There is an infinite scope for the use of that means of brahmacharya. Passion is a burning brazier. Touch it not. Save yourselves from it. If you want to lead the life of the free and fearless lion, you must keep yourselves aloof from the squalor. I conduct *Navajivan* and *Young India*. I write articles there and elsewhere in order to warn you on this matter. I myself would have been caught in the trap of that temptation, but was saved as I was an adorer of truth. As a man with experience and as a student, I say, ‘If you don’t observe brahmacharya, you will repent, you won’t be able to gain Swaraj.’ You will never win it, I predict, by means of the bomb. For you the right thing to do is brahmacharya. It possesses the power of the bomb and the sword. And Khadi is a thing that preserves brahmacharya, but how can he wear Khadi whose heart is unclean and has no sympathy for the poor?”



1. His chariot stood a few inches above the ground from his prowess of truth. But he stated that Ashwathama was killed and added in an inaudible tone that the elephant named Ashwathama was killed (and not the warrior of the same name, about whose death he was asked). This half-truth brought down his chariot to the ground—at once.



26.1.1927

Begusarai (Monghyr)

Gandhiji said: “We are suffering from our sin of never thinking of the poor. The remedy to save the cow from slaughter lies with us. All that is necessary to do for us is to change our mentality. Cow-slaughter cannot cease, so long as we do not create thousands of cow-sheds, dairies and tanneries. How can it stop, so long as the cow is sold off with as little compunction as when a goat is sold?”

At a meeting at Betiah Gandhiji was given a garland of the flower of *matar* (a pea) and *sarsav* (an edible oil) seeds. Addressing the meeting he said ‘I do indeed approach the rich in big cities like Calcutta and Delhi and flatter them, but I go to the poor and flatter them also. The cowries (smallest coin) of the poor are as acceptable to me as the thousands of rupees the rich give me. But it may be said that the work that is done through the poor man’s paisa reaches millions of people. I would like to create a bridge between the rich and the poor. Let nobody be a lord or a slave of anybody else. I have pointed out the spinning wheel as the means by which both the rich and the poor could become true servants of India. There is no power except that of the wheel which can bring about that result. A widow, Sudhankuvar, has given away a building for public purposes. She told me, ‘Put it and all other gifts to good use’. I replied, ‘The first lesson the children will learn will be that of the spinning wheel. Without teaching that lesson first, it is idle to talk of other things. I asked her to make a formal document of the gift of that building to the Bihar Vidyapith (National University). She then gave me Rs. 250 and promised another Rs. 250 for the deed. I appeal to you people to look after that school. She, a widow, cannot look after the school by herself alone. Nothing but the spinning wheel presents itself before my eyes even for such activities. The fire burning in my heart cannot be quenched, so long as even one single man is starving and does not get an employment though he wants it. There are quite a large number of rich people here. I wish they used their wealth for the spread of the spinning wheel.”

But the story of these *tirthas* should now be cut short. The collection work of course continued everywhere. Fairly good amounts were secured even at the weaving centres and those at Meetings were quite good as usual. Some of the meetings in Muzaffarpur District were as monstrous as at Mairwa and the arrangements also were good. But disorder began as soon as we reached Champaran District. Nothing could



be collected at Motihari owing to lack of proper arrangement at the meeting. Though the meeting at Betiah was overcrowded and unquiet, the collection was excellent, and a lot of Khadi was sold out. Gandhiji began his speeches at all places in this district with 'These places are to me holy places of pilgrimage, for it was here that I had the 'darshan' of India's poverty.' The work done in 1917 (Satyagraha against compulsory cultivation of indigo on 3/20th of every farm) has left a permanent effect. The oppressive indigo-planters have disappeared completely. Some of them plant sugarcanes now instead of indigo, but they have grown harmless. They themselves have now become dependent upon their tenants. And Betiah fought another fight, all by it-self, and won a great victory. There is a 'Royal Bazar' i.e. a market under the management of the British Government. That market brings an annual income of about 30,000 rupees. When Gandhiji was released, volunteers went to this market to persuade the shop-keepers to close their shops and attend Gandhiji's meeting. Government officials stopped these volunteers and insulted and beat them. That infuriated the shopkeepers who then vacated the shops of that market. The Betiah Municipality built a new market and the shopkeepers set up their shops in it. The Government market remained completely empty since then and it was locked up, while the Municipal Bazaar, known as Gandhi Bazaar, worked in full swing. The thrashing of the volunteers was the subject of many questions in the Council, with the result that the Manager was dismissed and the Collector given the charge of the Bazaar. The latter expressed regret and requested the Municipality to withdraw the volunteers who were picketing the Government Bazaar. Volunteers were withdrawn, but no shop-keeper came forward to occupy any shop of the Government Bazaar. So the Government is now offering the Municipality a share in the income of the Government Bazaar in order that it could be used again by the public. This is the first fruit of the Champaran Satyagraha.

Vast gatherings in packed meetings obstructed the collection work. In Monghyr District specially, there were unforgettable surges of humanity. The collection at Begusarai however was quite good, as the arrangements at the meeting were excellent. A platform about 7 feet high was raised on 4 strong pillars. People could pass underneath it and Gandhiji could collect donations from hundreds of people without being the victim of their craze to touch his feet. He calculated that he could get donations from 14 persons per minute on an average.



The arrangements in the Muzaffarpur District were very attractive. Purses collected from villages and counties round-about were given to Gandhiji.

28.1.1927

Arrah

Gandhiji visited the Jain Bala Ashram (Orphanage) and the Jain Research Institute. He was told that 85 girls had been rehabilitated at the orphanage and Sanskrit, Hindi and spinning were taught there. Gandhiji asked the girls who among them were girl-widows, and questioned one little girl whether she knew what the word 'widow' meant.

It was found that there was one widow from Agra district, aged 5, another from Central Provinces aged 16 and two from Madras aged 24 and 16.

Weekly Letter

10.2.1927

(By M. D. in *Young India*)

@ "The last day in the Bihar tour was given to the students and professors of the Vidyapith (National University) and to the Khadi workers. Rajendrababu as Vice-Chancellor gave away the degrees to nine Snataks (graduates) and Gandhiji delivered the Convocation address. But before I come to that, let me dispose of another interesting item. I think it has been known by now that Bihar enjoys a unique place in all the provinces for the mutual good-will and even friendship between the non-co-operating workers and the official and the semi-official world. It was not difficult therefore for Rajendrababu to invite the Vakils (lawyers), Barristers, Members of the Councils, Ministers and Government officials to a special Khadi Exhibition arranged in an institution which is the Hon. Sinha's gift to Bihar. The meeting was very well attended, but the quiet nature of the function, which the organisers had intended it to be, was spoiled by crowds who raided the Shamiana (tent). Gandhiji would have loved nothing like a discussion on Khadi with the members of the audience, but as it was not possible, he gave them only a talk, of course in Hindi. He had with him charts of daily income per head in different countries of the world, and of production and sale of Khadi during recent years prepared by the students of the Vidyapith. 'Look', said he, 'how this long strip of red representing the per capita income of U.S.A. compares with the little speck which represents that of India. Whereas the one is over



Rs. 14 per day the other, is 14 anna (=3/32nd of a rupee) per day. Compare the incomes of other countries — England, France, Japan, which are respectively Rs. 7, 6 and 5 per day. And even this 1 annas per day is the average. The actual income of the vast majority of our poor people would be still less, if you were to keep out of account the income of salaried ministers and Executive Councillors, of a few barristers and fewer millionaires. I ask you in all humility to suggest some way wherewith you can supplement this scanty income. I have been asking one and all but without avail. As a result of hard thinking and living contact with the millions during recent years I have suggested the Charkha as the only means calculated to supplement this income.’ He then took up the Khadi production and sale charts and showed the steady and rapid rise in production in Bihar and drew attention to the slow pace at which sales were going up. ‘This production means Rs. 30,000 distributed to 3000 of the poor women of Bihar. Come with me to the Khadi centres of Darbhanga and see the joy and happiness the Charkha has brought to those Hindu and Musalman women. If I cannot give work to more, it is not my fault, but yours. If you do not care to purchase the products of their hands, the work cannot progress. Every yard of Khaddar you purchase means a few coppers in the hands of these women’. ‘A few coppers’, he added, ‘and not more. But it means a few coppers where none was earned before.’ I saw the fallen women in Rajamundry and Barisal. A young girl came and said to me, ‘Gandhi, what can your Charkha give us? The men who come to us pay us Rs. 5 to 10 for a few minutes.’ I said to her that the Charkha could not give this, but if they renounced the life of shame, I could arrange to teach them spinning and weaving and help them to earn a decent living. As I listened to that girl my heart sank within me and I asked God why I was also not born a woman. But if I was not born a woman, I can become a woman and it is for the women of India, a large number of whom do not get even an anna per day that I am going about the country with my spinning wheel and my begging bowl,’

“The talk had its effect. Owing to tremendous rush every one could not see the exhibition as well as he wanted, but ministers and barristers saw the exhibition the next day and over Rs. 2000 worth of Khaddar was sold in a day and a half.

“I come now to the Convocation. The Registrar’s report gave the following figures of educational institutions and students: 1 College with 32 students; 9 high schools with 797 students; 16 middle schools with 1,285 students and 30 primary schools with 1,019 students. In all the institutions the medium of instruction is Hindi,



spinning is compulsory and weaving is also taught in some of them. Some of the special features of the report are worth noticing. It traces in brief the history of the different high schools, mostly maintained by public funds, and in some cases from the income of the lands donated to them. Whereas the number of students in 3 out of the 9 schools has considerably gone down, in 6 the number continues as before and in 3 others has been steadily increasing. The College is residential, located in a beautiful mango grove on the bank of the Ganges, and the students' monthly food charges are probably the lowest in the whole of India, *i.e.*, Rs. 8 to 9. Twenty four have upto now taken their degrees. Their report gives interesting details of their post-collegiate career; one of them is preparing for a diploma of the College of France, one has found an important place in a business firm in Japan, one has studied dairying and cattle-farming and has a dairy of his own, two are engaged in journalism, eleven have taken up service in the national school, one is doing business in Calcutta and one is doing Congress work.

“The very large number of people from the city who attended the Convocation testified to the public attention the institution has succeeded in attracting.

“Gandhiji's Convocation address was more a long heart-to-heart chat than a speech, although it was addressed not only to the students, but to the public at large. But it was a public whom he might have well taken into confidence, who understood not only the spoken word, but the unspoken language of the heart. It was a talk full of colour and passion and replete with autobiographical references.

“He hoped at the outset that the ‘Snataks’ (Graduates) would live in their lives the vows they had solemnly taken that day and said, as he did at the time of the Gujarat Vidyapith Convocation, that the Vidyapith would have more than justified its existence if it turned out even one ideal student and one ideal teacher. For what was the function of these institutions? To discover gems, no matter how few, ‘Of the purest ray serene.’ And he proceeded to give a reminiscence of his South African days: ‘I lived in South Africa for 20 years, but never once thought of going to see the diamond mines there, partly because I was afraid lest as an ‘untouchable’, I should be refused admission and insulted. But when Gokhale¹ was there, I felt it my duty to show him the chief industry of the place. There was no fear of his being insulted. So we went to the biggest mine there, and saw scenes which I have not forgotten. Mountains upon mountains of excavated earth and stone and no diamonds! It was after millions were sunk in excavating millions of tons of earth and stone that a handful of precious stones could



be discovered. And when Cullinan, the owner, discovered the stone named after him— a stone larger than the one that adorned the crown of the Czar and the Kohinoor— after years of labour and millions of pounds had been spent on it, you might imagine his joy, He felt that his lifework was done. If we should not grudge to spend any amount of labour and capital on a thing which had but an artificial value, how much should we spend on excavating jewels from the human mine? Let us work away in that spirit.” That was an apt simile apter than Ruskin used when he coined that phrase ‘manufacture of souls.’ That manufacture is only in God’s power. We human mortals have but to discover what is already there hidden by God.

“He then referred to the positive and negative aspects of all non-co-operating institutions. The negative which consisted of withdrawal of all connection with Government had already been achieved by the existing institutions. When he thought of the number of students and teachers that he had called out, he felt not the slightest regret. Nor did he feel repentant for the fact that many of these had gone back, that many were discontented and unhappy. He felt sorry for them, they had his deep sympathy, but regret or repentance he had none. ‘These troubles and sorrows are our daily lot, should be our daily lot. If observance of truth were a bed of roses, if truth cost one nothing and was all happiness and ease, there would be no beauty about it. We must adhere to truth even if the heavens should fall. What matters it, if by following truth we were to lose the whole world including even India? We shall be true votaries of truth only if we follow it to death, in the conviction that under God we will get back the things we hold dear including India. I know that a large number of our teachers and professors are restless, a few starving. That is true penance necessary for a proper cleansing of the national atmosphere.’

“That was the negative aspect and he was glad it had been carried out and a fair share of penance had been gone through. But this dual world had a positive aspect too, and one which was more difficult if also more permanent. Where else was it to be fulfilled except in institutions like the Vidyapith? And he drew a contrast between the method of education followed in Europe and that followed in India. ‘In Europe the education follows the peculiar genius of the people. One thing is taught in three different countries in three different ways according to the varying culture and genius of each. Only we delight in slavishly following the English model. The whole objective of the present system was to make us faithful imitators of the West. There is nothing novel in this, it is but the natural outcome of our having entrusted our affairs to those



who never cared to know us. Poor Macaulay! What could he do? He sincerely believed that our Sanskrit literature was all superstition and he seriously thought he would give us something wholesome in the shape of Western culture. Let us not abuse him for having unintentionally worked our ruin. As a result of English being the medium of instruction we have lost all originality. We have become birds without wings. The most we aspire to is a clerkship or editorship. One of us may under the system be a Lord Sinha² but every one at best is designed to be part of the huge foreign machine.

“At Muzaffarpur a boy came and asked me if by going to a national school he could one day be a *Lat Saheb*. I said, ‘No, you can be a village *Lat*, but not a Lord Sinha. Only Lord Birkenhead can make you that’.

“He referred to the craze for more and more palatial buildings raised out of the money of the poor, and raised for the purpose of giving an education which was denied to the poor. ‘I had an occasion to visit the Economic Institute at Allahabad. As Prof. Jesons showed me over it and I was told that it had cost Rs. 30 lakhs (if my memory serves me right), I shuddered. You could not raise these palaces but by starving millions. Look at New Delhi which tells the same tale. Look at the grand improvements in first and second class carriages on railways. The whole trend is to think of the few and to neglect the poor. If this is not Satanic, what is it? As Sir Lappel Griffen once put it in his speech as member of the South African Deputation, only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches. The arrangement of our affairs is in their hands and with the best will in the world, the best of them could not order our affairs as well as we could. For theirs is a diametrically opposite conception to ours. They think in terms of the privileged few. We must think in terms of the teeming millions.”

“And that naturally led him on to the Charkha, which he said should be the very pivot and centre of all our arrangements.

“Let the Snataks take their degrees, learn anything they like, but let it centre round the Charkha, let their economics and their science subserve the purpose of the Charkha. Do not relegate the Charkha to an odd corner. The Charkha is the Sun of the solar system of our activities. Without it Vidyapiths are Vidyapiths in name. Lord Irvin (then Viceroy of India) told God’s truth when he said that for any advancement through the Councils we should look to the British Parliament. Let us not be angry with him. He cannot think but in terms of the Parliament. The Sun of his system is London, the Sun of our system is the Charkha. I may be mistaken in this, but so far as I am not



convinced of the mistake, I shall treasure it. The Charkha at any rate is incapable of harming anybody and without it we, and if I may say so, even the world may go to rack and ruin. We know what Europe has been feeling after the war in which lies were propagated as the highest religion. The world is weary of the after-effects of the war and even as the Charkha is India's comforter today, it may be the world's tomorrow, because it stands not for the greatest good of the greatest number but for the greatest good of all. Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself I have also erred; when I see a lustful man I say to myself, so was I once; and in this way I feel kinship with every one in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy. It is in this sense that I want you to make the Charkha the centre of your studies. Just as Prahlada³ saw Rama everywhere and Tulsidas⁴ could see nothing but Rama even in the image of Krishna, let all your learning be directed to realising the implications of the Charkha. Our science, our carpentry, our economics should all be utilized for making the Charkha the prop and mainstay of our poorest. I know, in Gujarat Vidyapith we have not succeeded in doing it. I am not saying this in a spirit of complaint. I am simply pouring out the agony of my heart. May you all understand it.'

"The rest was an appeal for helping the Vidyapith and it evoked a hearty response from all present. Rs. 2000 were promised and over Rs. 600 were collected on the spot."

1. The Hon. G. K. Gokhale, whom Gandhiji afterwards called his 'political Guru', was on a Government-supported mission to South Africa to inquire into the grievances of the Indians there.

2. The one Indian peer as well as the one Indian Governor of a Province (Bihar) under the British regime. But due to the 'steel frame' of the I.C.S, (Indian Civil Servant) 9/10th of whom were Whites, his Governorship did little good to India. He connived at repression also.

3. Though but a child, he refused to bow to the decree of his King-father not to chant Lord Vishnu's name. The latter killed the King in His Man-lion Form.

4. A mediaeval saint and author of Hindi Ramayana, which is still popular among millions of Indians.



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

30.1.1927

I (M.D.) was the President of the students' Social Gathering. Gandhiji attended it. I said: "Dear friends,

"I am neither a teacher nor a respected elder, but only a servant. But I can understand why even then you have chosen me to preside over your function. This is the age of the worship of the *shudra* (the servant class). We have begun to be conscious of the truth that our society cannot stand, cannot live, if now we do not appreciate the services the *shudras* render. Perhaps that is why you have conferred the Presidentship on man like myself who does the *shudra's* work of service and not on one who does the Brahmin's work of study and teaching.

"But it is not without some reluctance that I am here to give you the mantra of service. Is it not carrying coals to New Castle to give that *mantra* to that land which is filled with the hallowed memories of King Janaka, Rama and Lord Buddha, that land which has had the good fortune to be the architect of the MAN (Gandhiji) who is the architect of the whole of India today, that land which constantly hears the chants of that same mantra of service from fakirs like Rajendrababu and Mazhar-al-Haq Saheb? All the same repeated chanting of this holy mantra is always desirable. That is what has given me the courage to come here. "Your motto is तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय (Lead me from darkness unto Light), that of our (Gujarat) Vidyapith is सा विद्या या विमुक्तये which means 'that is learning which leads to liberation', The goal of both the institutions is thus to attain that learning. In other words we hold before ourselves the ideal of being true servants and not the one of being rich or famous. I know that you and your teachers are passing through many serious difficulties in your attempt to implement that high ideal. But were this dharma of service easy, the sage would not have loudly proclaimed सेवाधर्मः परमगहनो योगिनामप्यगम्य (The dharma of service is very difficult to know. Even Yogis cannot comprehend it). It is difficult indeed, but the key for knowing and practising it has been shown by the father of the concept of national education. If I may speak of it in one word, that key is 'self-purification'. When that self-purification—for which Gandhiji has been striving day in and day out and which he has been proclaiming everywhere—, kindles your hearts, it will kindle many others through you. These mantras of service are means to attain that self-purification.



Literary knowledge is not indispensable for gaining it. There have been countless saints in history who were innocent of literary knowledge and yet who, by their attainment of self-purification, have rendered great and meritorious services to the world. But if you insist upon having academic education, if you are bent upon being deep scholars, you must use your learning in a way that can lead you to self-purification. To show you what the means to gain self-purification are, I shall quote that great gospel, the Bhagwadgita, which Gandhiji regards as the wish-fulfilling tree, which he reads without fail daily and which he uses as the touchstone to test the purity of everyone of his acts. In one single line the Gita neatly sums up these means:

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् |

“Sacrifice, charity, and penance purify the aspirant, remove all the evils of man’s mind.’ When we understand the real meaning of these three means, we shall know the three great *mantras* of service also.

“Yagna—sacrifice—has been defined by the Gita itself in another place as *sattwic yagna i. e.* the action that is performed without any craving for its reward. The definition of *yagna* that is suitable to our times has been given to us by Gandhiji and he is performing that *yagna* before our eyes with his incomparable sincerity. The word *yagna* comes from the root *yaj* which means to serve. Hence every action performed with a view to serve society is *yagna*. Each *yuga* (age) demands a different *yagna* to suit its needs. When the Gita says सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा (After having created mankind along with the *yagna* it should perform), it indicates that *yagna* means the *yagna* of the whole society.

“Gandhiji does not deny that the word ‘*yagna*’ must have meant at one time ablation of ghee (clarified butter) and wood into a lighted fire. He even accepts that a *yagna* of that kind must have been absolutely essential then. When our ancestors came to these parts, dense forests must have proved obstacles in their attempts to settle down and the destruction of those woods must have been an essential *yagna* of society in those days. But the *yagna* necessary for the present times is the one that can clear off the dark and deep forests of poverty. That *yagna* is the *yagna* of turning the spinning wheel for the service of society. As it was the sight of the half-naked sisters of Champaran (in Bihar) that opened Gandhiji’s eyes to the terrible poverty of India, I may as well say that he got the initiation to perform this *yagna* of the spinning wheel in this very land of Bihar. We may say that a whole age has passed out since



then. And Gandhiji has now come here to Patna after giving the message of the spinning wheel to about a million people of Bihar during his halts in his tour in this province.

“You may wonder why, when non-co-operation and Satyagraha are his biggest activities, when truth, non-violence and brahmacharya are the three aspects of his foremost *sadhana* (spiritual pursuits) Gandhiji should put the spinning wheel even above those things. If however you believe that truth, non-violence and brahmacharya are the right means for Self-realization, you will understand Gandhiji’s insistence on the use of spinning wheel. It was as a result of his incessant, discreet, vigilant, observance of truth, non-violence and brahmacharya that Gandhiji could come to know of the horrible penury of India and discover the way out of it. That explains how Gandhiji does not contradict himself, when he gives this prime importance to the spinning wheel. Gandhiji had discovered long ago the weapons of Satyagraha and non-co-operation, but from his ever-growing observance of truth and non-violence, he visualised ever more clearly the need of giving precedence to the spinning wheel even over Satyagraha and non-co-operation. Looked at from another angle, one may say that his experiments in Satyagraha and non-co-operation inevitably led him to the conviction that the spinning wheel must be made the centre of all his other activities. Seen from either standpoint, it will be found that the spinning wheel was the ripened fruit of all his activities undertaken till now.

“And with what a number of implications he has invested that yagna of the spinning wheel. That wheel hums the message of dignity of physical labour; it sings in pathetic tones of the starving stomachs of the poorest of our poor people and of the need to remember them and preserve the chastity of our mothers and sisters; it calls upon us to eradicate the sham and the bullying that are the characteristics of the present age; and through everyone of its revolutions, it strengthens our hope that the musical harmony of the coming age of non-violence will replace the discordant and dreadful screeching of the present age of violence. And that is why Gandhiji ascribes to the yagna of the spinning wheel all the gravity and importance of a national yagna.

“If you want to know what great value he attaches to the performance of that yagna, you may ask Rajendrababu. During the last fifteen days he took Gandhiji to numerous villages of Bihar. Though he was the very image of kindness and consideration, Rajendrababu remembered only the interests of his province and forgetting his natural bent, he relentlessly kept Gandhiji engaged from morning to



night. After finishing the morning prayer of 4 a.m., Gandhiji would give the reins to Rajendrababu for the rest of his whole day and the latter would not allow Gandhiji to relax even at meal times, even upto 11 p.m. All the same Gandhiji would go on cheerfully doing his appointed work and never miss the performance of his yagna of the spinning wheel though he could not begin it earlier than at 11 p.m. or even at midnight. And what was the nature of that yagna which sometimes began so late? It was to spin for one hour or 212 yards of yarn at the least. He would give up sleep, give up his meal, but not that yagna even once. Regardless of his closely-packed engagements, he used at first to make it a point to spin for half an hour. But then he met another yogi who initiated him into the performance of the same yagna for another half an hour. Gandhiji therefore took the vow of spinning for at least one hour or 212 yards. Let me not, however, extend further this story of how-much he prizes the yagna. Is it not superfluous then to add that when he was in such dead earnest about performing that yagna, he was equally particular in being regular, concentrated and alert in keeping to the other vows of his life?

“Let us come now to the second means of self-purification, ‘dana’ (charity). Gitaji gives the definition of the best kind of dana. In consonance with that definition Gandhiji also says that that is real charity which satisfies the needs of the prevailing times and places, and is given to deserving persons or objects. It must moreover be given without cherishing any hope of getting any kind of return for the gift. You may wonder why I am talking of the right type of charity to you of all people, when you yourselves live in poverty and cheerfully bear all its hardships. But I think, the power of giving to others which even you possess is great. You can certainly give to others your spiritual gains in life. You must use for the freedom of others, the academic and scientific lore you are acquiring for your own freedom. Instead of turning your knowledge into cash-values of pound, shilling and pence, you should give it to others and thus make your gift invaluable. Till his last breath St. Francis used to say to his colleagues: ‘Simply go on toiling. There is God above to give you payment for your labour. Don’t ask for its payment from man.’ If you give away as a largess the knowledge you acquire in literary education, in hygiene, in medicine etc., that certainly is a very high type of charity. ‘There is nothing more sacred than knowledge,’ says the Gita, and there is no charity higher than that of giving it to others. Don’t soil your sacred possession of knowledge with paltry thoughts of acquiring exclusively for yourselves greater scholarship, fame, money etc.



“And now comes the third and the best means—‘tapa’ (penance). That means has been elaborately defined in the Gita, because penance is the very foundation of the whole structure of life. Without tapa, yagna and dana become impossible. Service without it is then impossible. The Gita has classified tapa into 3 divisions: physical, vocal and mental. The first comprises of worship of elders, *i.e.* the Guru and parents, cleanliness, guileless behaviour, brahmacharya and non-violence. The second (vocal) means is speech that does not pain others, is truthful, beneficent and loving, and repeated study and chanting of the sacred words of sages. Mental tapa—the third kind—consists of cheerfulness of the mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint and purity of thought. ‘Now, now,’ You will exclaim. ‘You ask for the impossible! Put into practice the whole code of the highest morality! How can we, erring mortals, observe such ‘tapa’?’ But that self-distrust is a temptation you must overcome. If anybody can practise tapa of the kinds noted above it is you, the youngsters. Wordsworth says:

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive;
But to be young was very heaven.”

“To be simply living at the stirring times of the dawn of freedom which is definitely coming to us is by itself a matter of good fortune, but to be a virile young man is to be in heaven itself. You, young men, are in that state of supernal bliss. You possess greater power than Rajendrababu or myself for performing tapa. In fact every human being is born with the power of performing tapa and he increases that power or squanders it according to his circumstances.

“I don’t know your way of living. But even if, unfortunately, you have begun to lose your virility, the waste cannot be very much and hence you have every reason for being optimistic. That power of tapa which the Gita expounds in 3 verses is nothing else than brahmacharya. If we put it in modern parlance, we can say that physical tapa means brahmacharya, *i. e.*, keeping the body pure and making it an instrument of service to society and to dharma. That again means looking upon every action involving physical labour as one intended for serving God. One then becomes a spinner, weaver, carder, dyer, washerman, woodcutter, sweeper, cow-herdsman, tanner etc. as but an agent of God. Vocal and mental tapa mean maintenance of cheerfulness, when you perform actions pertaining to those avocations and when you have to face society’s adverse criticism, and manifestation of truth through all your behaviour. If we see into the matter a little more deeply, we shall find that all the three kinds of tapa are closely interlinked. And when sages give it in a nutshell, they use one single word:



‘Brahmacharya.’ If you want to see the glory and greatness of brahmacharya, read Gandhiji’s ‘Autobiography.’ If you wish to observe its tangible result, accompany Gandhiji in his tour for about a week; and if you want to know its ramifications, study his world-spreading activities.

“But I will speak here only of its visible results. We don’t have anywhere else the monstrous crowds that gather in Bihar. In our present tour we saw 25 to 30 thousands collected in many places. When such masses go mad in their scramble for touching Gandhiji’s feet, even a man of a sturdy physique would tremble if he had to face the music. These crowds never care to see whether it is dawn or midnight; if he is sleeping, they hold a light before his eyes to wake him up; and if he is walking alone, they catch his legs with such a firm grip that often he is hard put to it to save himself from falling down. They sincerely believe that a Mahatma needs no sleep, no food, no rest. They seem to think that a Mahatma’s business is simply to give darshan to his adorers all the 24 hours of the day—as does the idol in a temple, though even that darshan the officiating priests sometimes keep closed. In spite of all this strain while all the men around him may feel exhausted, be fed up, fall ill, Gandhiji is ever active and undaunted, goes through all the items of the programme fixed for him and thus seems to prove true the definition of a Mahatma as conceived by the deep faith of those innocent rustics.

“What is the cause of this wonderful feat? How did he get such an iron constitution? With the beat of drums he cries out that that is the result of brahmacharya. I ask you to understand what great power this brahmacharya possesses and start learning from today the art of conserving it. The power of tapa possesses a light like that of the sun. You can enter the darkest place with the aid of that power. Without having that power of brahmacharya, with what face can you approach women in order to serve them? With that power in you all the numerous doors of service are open to you and without it, it is all the darkness of midnight. Last year Gandhiji had taken charge of some students like you and looked after them. Gandhiji put before them three things for observance of brahmacharya, all of which are contained in Gita’s definition of ‘tapa’ as I explained to you. They are truth, repeated study and control of the senses. The first step of self-reform is to confess one’s error or sin, however grave it be. There is no physician in the world that can match the Guru and the father. It is sin to hide the slightest malady, the most trifling error before the Guru and the father.



“This insistence of Gandhiji on truth and his deep love for the student world has created such a widespread effect that students from all corners of the country write to him letters confessing their falls and secrecies and gain peace and solace from him. If there is any dark spot anywhere in you, go to those teachers whom you revere and wash it off by a frank confession or get it cleansed by contacting Gandhiji. His doors are open day and night to hear your sorrows. At Dhanbad it was raining cats and dogs, and seasoned elders nodded their heads saying that no meeting could be held, but two students came up and said ‘We shall hear you under the pouring rain.’ They did not consider that their request meant that Gandhiji too would have to undergo the strain of facing the pitiless rains. Setting aside the dissuading advice of all others, Gandhiji accepted the boys’ request and headed for the meeting place under torrential rain. That is his love for you, students. It is again in pursuance of that love that Gandhiji puts himself to a severe test in order to make the children of the Ashram observe a particular discipline. He joins the children of the Ashram in their congregational chanting of the Gita after the morning prayer of 4 a.m., without minding whether he had to end his preceding day at 12 midnight or even at 2 a.m. I request you also to maintain this practice of reading the Gita. If not today, within a year or say within a decade, you will find the Gita precept woven into your life.

“Restraint of the senses is the third thing. When we get up in the morning or go to bed at night, it ought to be our prayer that our eyes may see, ears hear, nose smell, tongue taste and skin touch nothing but that which leads us to the Good, the Beautiful and the True. But in the midst of all these sense-restraints the topmost stands the control of the palate. As Gandhiji says, we must give food to the body just to give it its due-not to pamper it. In order to open the eyes of all, he has given up all kinds of spices and for some time he used to abjure milk and salt also. This is the right time for you to bind yourselves with solemn pledges—it is only now that you can easily conquer the craving of the palate. When you grow to an advanced age all your senses will slip from your control, the palate will be like a horse without the rider and you will lose the game of life. That is why you must be alert right from today.

“And remember that the vow of service is as difficult as a sword-dance and it is death to take a solemn vow and then break it. If you pass any resolutions in your meetings, treat them as seriously as oaths taken before an altar. Every morning you loudly pray to God मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय (Lead me from death to immortality), but do you



know what it really means? We are dying every moment. Through that prayer we pray to God that we may cease to die. Shakespeare says:

“Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once.”

There is in this couplet an inkling of that same truth. Every breach of an oath or a resolve to undergo some penance is nothing less than death. Death comes only once to a valiant soul—not for him those countless deaths, that are only for cowards,

“Let us then join and take the vow of service after fully understanding what that serious step means. Let us become Shudras (servant castes), Dheds, Bhangis, Chamars (untouchable weavers, sweepers, tanners) and by thus identifying with them make them our kith and kin. Let us by purifying ourselves through yagna (sacrifice), dana (charity) and tapa (austerity) pray to the Lord in company with Mirabai (a mediaeval princess who renounced her state to serve Lord Krishna):

“गिरधारी लला, म्हाने चाकर राखो जी!”

“Dear Lord, accept me as Thy humble servant.”



17.2.1927

(M.D.'s 'Weekly Letter' in *Young India*)

@ From Bihar to C.P. Marathi and Berar and what a change. None of those huge crowds scrambling for darshan and making even the nights uncomfortable at times, none of their overflowing enthusiasm, bhakti (devotion), unquestioning faith and radiant hopefulness. You come to scenes of ordered meetings, disciplined and smaller crowds, people wanting answers to questions, vakils mostly and their following looking askance and avoiding you and yet an irrepressible desire on the part of the faithful few to take their share in the work.

“That explains why the Bihar tour was a triumph of the people, and C. P. and Berar tour was the triumph of an individual. In Bihar the little organisation that there was was spontaneous and came from the people, Rajendrababu always remaining behind the scene. The C.P. and Berar tour was Jamnalalji all over. As we saw the programme he had fixed up with meticulous details from the time of getting to bed, with hours and minutes in every case, we gazed at him in incredulous wonder. ‘If we carry out this programme in all its detail’, I said, ‘we should have Swaraj at the end of the tour’. And here I am at the end of the tour ready to confess defeat, and yet to say that if there were twentyone men for our twentyone provinces, having the conviction, faith, consummate tact, business ability and clock-like regularity of Jamnalalji, we should immediately have Swaraj. Many are aware of the great organising ability of Jamnalalji, many have witnessed the bravery of the mild Bania at the time of the Nagpur Satyagraha, but hardly anyone knew, as we did this time, that he had in an equal measure the qualities of a perfect soldier. Here is the diary of our itinerary:

2nd February

Gondia

Tumsar

Bhandara

3rd February

Nagpur

Wardha

Hinganghat

5th February

Yeotmal

Dhamangaon

6th February

Amraoti

Akola



4th February

Chanda

Warora

Wun

Pandherkwada

7th Feb.-Monday

8th February

Shegaon

Khamgaon

Malkapur

“It was, as one can see, a heavy programme that he had arranged, but he had done so with the confidence of a hero of many battles arranging his campaign. Many days before the tour he had rehearsed the tour himself, organised the sympathetic elements in what had been regarded as an apathetic area, successfully approached people apparently unlikely to help, and dinned into the ears of each and all the paramount importance of keeping time. The result was, that though at times we felt a little bit rushed, we wished that everyone was so rushed by a hard taskmaster.

“But as I have said, the tour was a personal triumph for Jamnalaji. One has a feeling that without him the tour would have been a failure, if not impossible. The Bihar tour would have been a fair success even with Rajendrababu absent, organising in other provinces. The reason is obvious. The intelligentsia were as a rule apathetic, and the masses who were disciplined and trained in organising meetings etc., in the days of the great Lokamanya,¹ had few local workers to guide them. At Bhandara we were the guests of Sjt. Ganpatrao Pande M.L.C. He had given a handsome contribution and as we were leaving, Jamnalaji gave him a few copies of the Khadi Prize Essay. ‘One copy is enough’, he said. ‘Why?’, said Jamnalaji, ‘You can present it to your vakil friends.’ ‘No’, said our host, laughing, ‘they will not read it, even if I present it to them’. ‘I know’, said Sethji, ‘but you can send a few copies to Tumsar.’ Tumsar we had visited a couple of hours ago and it has a national school which is growing in popularity every day. ‘Yes’, said our host, ‘it will find many readers in Tumsar.’

The little dialogue is significant. At every place where there is a good national school it has been a radiating centre of healthy national activity, as we shall see when I come to Akola and Khamgaon.

“But I come to the tour itself. We began at Gondia the extreme west and cut right through the centre of the province to Malkapur the extreme east end of the Central provinces. Gondia, as the readers might remember, had in anticipation of the visit presented Gandhiji with a handsome purse of Rs. 5,500. So there were no



collections to be made, only a Khadi Bhandar had to be opened. And Gandhiji struck a new departure here. He did not declare it open with a speech, he simply sat down with a yard measure and a pair of scissors and with a cash-memo book before him. There was a spontaneous rush of customers. Gandhiji sold to every customer himself, and signed the cash-memo as salesman. In about three quarters of an hour he sold something near Rs. 500 worth of khadi and motored away to the next place. ‘My action is my speech,’ he said at another place, ‘I did not speak at Gondia. I simply sold Rs. 500 worth of Khadi and I was glad. Why was I glad, knowing as I did that when crores of rupees worth of cloth is dumped down in our country from abroad, Rs. 500 worth Khadi is a drop in the ocean? I know the shame of my having to sell Khadi and tempt you with cash-memos signed by myself. But what am I to do when you will not understand the value of such a simple thing as Khadi?’

‘So at every place he repeated the Lokamanya’s mantra: ‘Swarajya is my birthright,’ always adding his own rider, ‘And you cannot have it without Khadi.’ At every place he emphasised the meaning of Swaraj and gave his definition of a Swarajist. ‘Be true Swarajists,’ he said at one place, ‘You may or may not go to the Councils, but, pray, give your offering to the Swarajya-yagna’. The business of the Swarajist is not, like the old man of the sea, to ride on the backs of the poor folk, but to make them a return in the shape of wearing and popularising Khadi. Do not talk of winning Swarajya without making a fair return to the villager for the daily exploitation to which you subject him.’ At Chanda—where, by the way, the Municipality is making an annual contribution to Khadi—he said: ‘What am I to do with these garlands? ‘This is no time to be going about with garlands on, this is no time either, for taking milk and other things denied to the poor. How often have I wished that I could sacrifice even the milk and give it to the poor starving women of the land. But I have desisted, for it would be self-immolation. However unwillingly, I have to take it, to serve them as best as I can. Pray therefore do not throw away money on garlands. For every rupee saved on these garlands you give 16 women one meal. Are not we ashamed to be deaf to the cry of the poor on whose toil we live, and from whose soil we draw our sustenance? If you cannot even wear Khadi manufactured by them, you had better stop crying ‘*Lokamanya ki jai*’ (victory to Lokamanya). Show some of his spirit, do some of his work, show in your action a particle of his overflowing love for the poor and then take his name.’



“But the message has not been entirely lost on them. The run on Khadi was a regular feature of every meeting. Even at Wun, Yeotmal and Amraoti, the strongholds of Responsivists,² as every passer-by reminded us, the sale of Khadi was considerable, and the meeting collections were good, though not as heavy as in Bihar. At Amraoti the Municipal Chairman in a feeling speech exhorted one and all to pledge themselves to wear Khaddar as he was going to do himself from that day and five of the influential men there followed suit. At Akola, thanks to Nanabhai Mashruwalla who acts as a golden link between non-co-operators and all others, even some vakils participated in the functions, and the sale of Khadi was quite considerable. Women in these parts make a point of attending meetings and wherever we have had separate meetings for them they have been very successful. At Akola the ladies had not only collected a purse of Rs. 500, they invited Gandhiji to open a Charkha class under the auspices of the Home Classes for Women.

“A word about collections and I come to the students in these parts. In spite of the slump in the cotton market,—it is unbroken strip of cotton area, this Province,—the purses collected at all places were substantial, thanks to the Marwari merchants of the place, and thanks again to Jamnalaji’s efforts. Some of the notable contributions may be recorded here. Sri. Pande M.L.C. of Bhandara gave Rs. 1,500, Sri. Raghavendra Rao, Minister, gave Rs. 1,100, the Nawab Saheb of Nagpur Rs. 200, Sri. Deshmukh, Minister, Rs. 500, Sir Shankar Rao Chitnavis Rs. 200, and Sir M.V. Joshi Rs. 21, for all these again thanks to Jamnalaji. Sir Shankar Rao’s and Sir M.V. Joshi’s contributions are all the more remarkable as noted Liberals (those who believed in outright co-operation. They had a very small following.) as a class have not yet blessed the Khadi movement.

“The mention of Nagpur tempts me to record a happy recollection. Just as we entered Nagpur, Gandhiji was greeted by Parsi ladies all clad in spotless Khadi. Dr. Cholkar who introduced Mrs. Byramji said: ‘Here is a Parsi lady who uses Rs. 1000 worth of Khadi every year.’ She attended the meeting, gave her widow’s mite of Rs. 200 and placed with Gandhiji an order for Rs. 1000 worth of Khadi from the Ashram. ‘Don’t infer from my fine sari.’ she said, ‘that you are to send me fine Khadi. You may send me any Khadi you like, for there is enough need for it as all of us including children wear Khadi.’

“I pass on to other happy recollections. I have mentioned the women’s meetings, especially the Akola one. I come now to the students. The students of the



Nagpur National School fighting against great odds and doing jobs make both ends meet. I shall say nothing about the various technical branches they are attempting to pursue, for the remarks that Gandhiji addressed to the teachers of the Khamgaon National School apply to them with equal force. The students at Akola (and I don't mean only the National School students) had collected a handsome purse of Rs. 211 and handed it to Gandhiji which redounded to their credit. Two students of the National School had gone about the whole town collecting money from students of *all* schools; seven hundred in all had paid their mites. It was unique, the way in which these youngsters had organised the business. Gandhiji gave them a little heart-to-heart chat and congratulated them, and as usual again appealed for their coppers and asked them to purchase Khadi. The youngsters again emptied their pockets and purchased as much Khadi (mostly caps) as the balance could buy them! Let that be a lesson to all schools and colleges.

“I come now to the Khamgaon school, the pride of the province, and of the place. It is an ever-growing school, maintained entirely out of public funds and has on its rolls 200 boys, a hundred of whom are resident students and fifty have their board and lodging free. The school building was built mainly by the students. It has 14 teachers, most of whom are life-members. Khadi-wearing and spinning are compulsory and physical training is in charge of a capable physical-culturist.

“Gandhiji had a quiet time with the boys and teachers. He asked the latter to pick up the brightest of the boys and he examined him in English, Sanskrit and Charkha. The result did not satisfy him and he gave the teachers minute instructions regarding the teaching of Sanskrit and English. For the three highest forms they have a course of carpentry, clay-modelling, tailoring, carpet-weaving and painting— any of which the students have an option to choose. The rest of Gandhiji's talk which was addressed to the teachers was mainly about the place of the Charkha in the school syllabus. ‘I see’, said he, ‘that the Charkha has a place on your programme, but it is one out of the four or five things you teach here. Now I want you to understand that the Charkha has a place all its own, for reasons that should be obvious to you. For Charkha is not one of the professions that you teach. A profession is for earning a livelihood, and if Charkha was to be taught as a profession it should have no place on your syllabus. But it has a special purpose. When you put it in line with carpentry, clay-modelling, etc., you are guilty of a confusion of thought. Charkha is an instrument of service. In a national school therefore when the nation expects us to train national servants, the scheme of



studies will centre round the Charkha. It is a science in itself and it is a science which gives us a knowledge of the means of ameliorating the condition of the masses. Do you know that we have not a national institution where mechanical engineering is taught and where good spindles are made? If therefore you learn mechanics, concentrate on learning how to make a true spindle and how to mend a wrong one. You should be able to say the circumference of an ideal wheel, the distance between the axle and the poles, the number of revolutions of your spindle, etc. A carpenter in a national school will not have as his ambition the making of an ideal cabinet, but an ideal Charkha. In short you should study the Charkha scientifically and with religious zeal, i.e. with a view to making it the mightiest lever of the nation's salvation.'

"I am afraid there is no room for even the barest summary of some important speeches. Two extracts, however, I may not withhold. Speaking of untouchability at Khamgaon, Gandhiji said, 'If I could think of anything that is untouchable, it is foreign clothes. Any thing that is prejudicial to the welfare of the nation is untouchable. Anything that is calculated to do the nation a disservice is untouchable. Liquor therefore is untouchable, foreign cloth is untouchable, but no human being is untouchable, and I regard it as fiendish or Satanic to regard a fifth of the land as untouchable.' Speaking on the same subject at Akola, he said:

"My views on untouchability are not the product of my Western education. I had formed them long before I went to England, and long before I studied the Scriptures, and in an atmosphere which was by no means favourable to those views. For I was born in an orthodox Vaishnava family, and yet ever since I reached the years of discretion I have firmly held my uncompromising views in the matter, which later comparative study of Hinduism and experience have only confirmed. How in face of the fact that no Scriptural text mentions a fifth Varna, and in face of the express injunction of the Gita to regard a Brahmin and a *bhanghi* (an untouchable sweeper) as equals, we persist in maintaining this deep blot on Hinduism, I cannot understand. Regarding a Brahmin and *bhanghi* as equals does not mean that you will not accord to a true Brahmin the reverence that is due to him, but that the Brahmin and the *bhanghi* are equally entitled to our service, that we accord to the *bhanghi* the same rights of sending his children to public schools, of visiting public temples, of the use of public wells, etc., on the same basis as these rights are enjoyed by any other Hindu. It is to the service of the untouchables that Shradhanandji devoted the best part of his life. He lived and moved and had his being in the service of the suppressed class. What



shall I say of the attitude that persists in holding up a wholly irreligious practice as religious? Let us therefore search ourselves and purge our hearts of all narrowness. Let us realise that it is a just Nemesis that is punishing us in South Africa and that our treatment of our brethren is no less iniquitous than the White man's treatment of our countrymen in South Africa.'

1. Lokamanya—People's loved and respected. This title was given to B.G. Tilak by the public in appreciation of his sacrifices, valour and services to the country. He was the undisputed leader of specially Maharashtrians till his death in 1920. He gave the mantra 'Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it.'
2. Those who believed in giving response to those "gestures of the Government which they thought would help country, as against those who did not believe in council-entry at all and those also who believed in entering the Councils for obstructive tactics. The Responsivists were against Khadi and boycotts of Councils, law courts, schools and colleges etc.



(Additional report of the week by M.D. in Gujarati)

3.2.1927

Sri. Saklatwala came to see Gandhiji at Nagpur. We had been hearing the echoes of his roars for many days past, but the first actual meeting took place only at Nagpur. He wanted to see Gandhiji long since, and during Gandhiji's Bihar tour had inquired by wire Gandhi's itinerary in the Central Provinces. So he came to Nagpur for the meeting. Both of them met each other with the greatest warmth. In spite of his long stay in England, this Parsi gentleman began the talk in the specially sweet Parsi-Gujarati of his community. "You don't want to have a private talk, I suppose?" said Gandhiji, "you don't mind these people sitting around?" Pat came the reply: "Not at all. No secrecy with us. We speak from house-tops whatever we want to." Every word of his talk bore the seal of his utter frankness and goodness. But this interview turned out to be a one-way street, as is the case with many amiable Parsis—Shaukat Ali too—who are bursting with their own talk. Saklatwala thus took up the whole interview period himself, but was not content! Gandhiji therefore invited him to Yeotmal for another talk.

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The practice of selling Khadi begun at the Gondia meeting continued all through the tour. The size of gatherings in Bihar and in C.P.—monstrous in the first and dwarfish in the second case—need not lead one to the conclusion that the public at large in C.P. was indifferent. The intelligentsia—the lawyers, the educated, the politicians—was undoubtedly apathetic, but in every town and village which we visited the popularity of Khadi was plainly evident from the rush of the common people, as soon as the sale of Khadi began. Admittedly, the sale of Khadi in C.P. was not as large as in Bihar, but that was because Biharis far outnumbered the C.P. people. The fact however stands that nowhere in C.P. could we see lack of enthusiasm for Khadi. Sri Madhavrao Ane (Responsivist leader) once remarked to Gandhiji: 'I am afraid, you will hardly find anybody wearing Khadi in Berar (part of C.P.). It is not popular here.' Sri. Ane is definitely a very honest man and must have said what he felt. But his own birth-place—Wun—falsified his fear. His townsmen gave Gandhiji a purse of Rs. 3,500 for Khadi and at the public meeting the people evinced great enthusiasm for buying it.



4.2.1927

The Berar tour began from this Wun. It was here that Gandhiji got, for the first time in this 'tour, a garland of yarn with roses knitted at intervals. A non-co-operating Muslim lawyer, Abdul Rauf, delivered a very feeling speech: "It was unfortunate that people strayed from the road you had shown. But the time is coming when hard knocks will bring them back."

This was the reception song:

“Leaving your Ashram, you came here to Wun.
Your sight has breathed new life into us, corpses.
O great Gandhi! What welcome may we give you;
What service render unto you,-grovelling creatures
that we are?
It is only your grace on creatures like us,
That you have deigned to come.
But why this down-cast face? this despair?
Can dawn be far behind the darkness of this night?
Groupism has poisoned the climate of the land.
If God showers His grace,
We shall soon follow again
Our trusted matchless guide.”

In reply Gandhiji said:

“I thank the respected author of the song for what he has said. You all know that I have only one single object for my tour this time. As the author has said, the climate of the country has grown so vitiated that for all other objects we have no recourse but to keep patience. When man finds himself helpless, he looks up to God for purifying the climate. It is good that God does not grant us everything we wish. If He did, we would grow puffed up with pride. God alone knows what will please Him. But the road He has shown is only one. Regardless of our disappointment and despair, if we but go



along the right path shown by Him, no evil can ever come to us. That is what makes me silent on other things. I shall talk only of Khadi, a subject over which there cannot be there ought not to be any dispute, a thing which every one—Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, can do. Nobody has ever shown that Khadi harms any Indian in any way. For uniting ourselves with the poor we have nothing except the spinning wheel to fall back upon.

“Another thing. We observe untouchability. But how can we call him an Indian who regards any human being as an untouchable, who refuses to let him use our public well or enter our temple?”

At Amraoti also Khadi had a brisk sale-300 rupees worth of it being sold off in a moment. The President of the Municipality moreover took the pledge to wear only Khadi and in a stirring speech exhorted others to do the same. Some four or five society-leaders then took the same pledge.

By and large, however, the intelligentsia was indifferent as has already been stated. A newspaper at Yeotmal published an adaptation of a couplet from the Bhagwadgita:

खादीकौन्सिलयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकारावुभौ |
परं कौन्सिलसंन्यासाद्वरीयान् तत्समाश्रयः ॥

(Both the Yogas-through council work and khadi-are indeed beneficial but instead of renouncing councils it is better to resort to them.)

The lawyer-class thus kept absent from Gandhiji’s meetings. And yet it was Shah Abdul Rauf, a former lawyer, who gave Gandhiji a hearty welcome when he entered the province of Berar. At Amraoti, again, those who took the pledge to wear Khadi were educated men and Dr. Patwardhan even resolved to see that there were at least 100 Khadi-wearers. But there was one welcome feature even in the apathy of the educated class. Those who were honestly opposed to Khadi remained absent from Gandhiji’s meetings and thus showed the courage of their conviction. All honour to them. But the fact that Khadi was sold to the extent it did shows the prestige and popularity it has gained.



5.2.1927

Sri. Saklatwala paid his second visit at Yeotmal by previous appointment. He gave further instances of his simplicity and candour there. He sat on the low wooden seat used in the Indian home for the simple meal of rice and lentil and had his talk with Gandhiji from 12 noon to 4 p.m. He wore a poor Englishman's dress and had a pair of spectacles with one broken pole,—which he kept in a cheapest steel case—and rough and durable shoes that were unpolished. All this clearly marked him out for what he was, a sincere Communist. His patriotism burst out from his talk every now and then and created an impression that he belonged to the pedigree of the stalwart Parsi leaders of the past like Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozshah Mehta and Sir Dinshaw Wacha. After 4 p.m. he set out with Gandhiji for visits to the many institutions that had invited them. At a physical culture institute, they were shown some feats and exercises of the students and requested to give their remarks in the Visiting Book. Gandhiji wrote two sentences in Hindi conveying his good wishes and emphasising the need for physical culture. Comrade Saklatwala wrote the following in Gujarati in a very legible and charming hand: 'Excellent work undoubtedly. But what about the girls of these boys' families?—Shapurji Saklatwala.' Thus even while he was seeing gymnastic performances, his mind was thinking all along of the biggest suppressed class. 'What do we do for women? What for the poor? What for the suppressed?' That was his one occupation and preoccupation. This trifling incident disclosed the real Saklatwala in him—the man whose heart was drenched with sympathy for the suppressed of all kinds. On the way he remarked: 'Yes, (Sir) Pherozshah was right. Who are we but the representatives of the higher classes, of landlords, capitalists, and scholars? What right have we to call ourselves representatives of the poor?'

He detests the present politics of India—quite naturally. He thinks we are being dragged down to the old policy of mendicancy: meaningless resolutions, and unavailing petitions to the Olympian Gods of Britain. Giving his experiences of Delhi, he said: "In the House of Commons (of Britain) there are two pictures on the right and left of the Speaker. One shows the speaker cowering before the King who has his whole army at his back. It indicates that the King is all-powerful and the Speaker merely his tool. In the other the Speaker boldly faces the King and declares, 'I am but the mouthpiece of the People's Will and nobody, not the mightiest monarch, dare cross that Will.' And look at this picture: Vithalbai Patel is in the Chair, a resolution to discuss the situation in China is tabled (in the Legislative Assembly), and the Viceroy



bans its discussion. Vithalbhai simply washes his hands and says ‘After the Viceroy’s order, I can do nothing.’ Well, why could he not do anything? Have not ‘the representatives’ of the people the right to voice the people’s feelings in the Assembly? ‘But if he allowed the discussion, Vithalbhai might be compelled to resign!’, someone may object. But why should he be forced to resign? Has not the Swaraj Party some speakers who have the knack to stand up one after another and go on speaking on the Resolution for about a fortnight and thus exhaust the patience of the Assembly? By then the situation may have changed altogether! That’s why I say to these Swarajists: ‘Buy for me some landed property to enable me to be a candidate and let one of you vacate his seat for 3 or 4 months. I will then show how hot I can make it for the Government.’ But I don’t know if the Speaker can become a trouble-maker in India.”

That is Shapurji Saklatwala all over. But that is one aspect of the man. His talks and the speech he delivered in the evening at Yeotmal revealed him in another. He said in effect: Imperialism has got to be ended. Everybody is striving to end it. Countries like China, Russia, Mexico are succeeding. Why can’t we? If we too align ourselves with them, our voice is bound to be heard. If we had a compact Union of a million workers, nothing is impossible for us and it is easy to organise such a Union. What does it matter if there are differences among us? Everyone has the right to hold his own view. I say, Hindus and Muslims have the right even to fight with each other. Are people in other countries not fighting among themselves? They are; and yet they enjoy freedom. Why then can we not be free? Only, we must all gather together and declare emphatically that we want to live in freedom, just as people in other countries do. Why should we beg freedom from the rulers? We should on the contrary tell them: ‘On what conditions do you wish to remain here?’

His great objection against Khadi is that it does violence to the mill-workers of Lancashire. Not that he is particular about the method to win one’s aims— whether violent or non-violent,—but he means to say that we have no basis for our claim of non-violence, when we use and propagate Khadi. He says besides, ‘Khadi cannot bring about unity. How can that man foster unity who sits alone in his house and spins away solitarily? Unity can only be brought about when people work together in a mass in big plants?’

This is only a brief summary of his view. It can be elaborated perhaps into 50 pages, but, in short, that is what he means. Gandhiji replied: ‘All that is practicable in what you say is being done. What is not, is not done. Unless you stay in India for at



least some time you cannot understand our difficulties. It is my claim that the compact organised force you want is being created by this same Khadi that you object to. And how do you see violence in Khadi? Do we commit violence on the liquor-seller, when we cease to buy liquor from him on realising the evils of drink?’ Sri. Saklatwala gave an almost affirmative answer, and Gandhiji significantly laughed in reply, suggesting thereby that violence was then justifiable and essential. As for Khadi’s power of forming a strong organisation, Gandhiji told Sri. Saklatwala, “Join me in my tour for a few days, cancel your immediate return to England and observe what Khadi is doing. Better see for yourself what kind of organisation is springing up among weavers, spinner-women, dyers, washermen, printers and others connected with Khadi, rather than make me put it to you in my language.’ But Sri. Saklatwala has no time for it. He closed up the subject with the words: “We shall have to kidnap and imprison you somewhere, as those Sinn Feiners of Ireland do, and then say: ‘Lead us now according as we ask you to’. The interview was thus dissolved in laughter. In justice to Sri, Saklatwala, however, it must be added that he is delighted with the air of freedom and self-reliance which Khadi has produced.

A purse of Rs. 1800 was given in the public meeting in the evening. Gandhiji’s reply:

“I thank you for the address. I am grateful to you for the purses you and the sisters have given me. I felt unhappy when I entered this town and have the same feeling even now. I even now regret that the leader of this place, my friend Sri. Ane, is not present here. Jamnalaji had informed me that he would be away and he too has wired his regret at his absence. I know we are politically apart. Patriotic¹ citizens here moreover differ from those others whom I regard as patriots. But difference in views cannot separate friends.

“You have also heard that an M.P. of Britain is here with me today. He has come to see me and, incidentally, you will have opportunity to hear him also. I am sorry I shall not be present at his speech, as I have to attend another meeting.

“I don’t want to say much today. I want to do only one thing—propaganda of khadi and the spinning wheel. If we fail to make Khadi the vogue of the country, it will be difficult to infuse potency into the mantra which Lokamanya gave us. All through his life he chanted the mantra, ‘Swaraj is my birthright’. But what he gave us was the first half of the mantra that could bring us Swaraj. To make that mantra potent, I have



put in the second half and that is, 'The means to gain Swaraj is the spinning wheel and Khadi.' 'The late Deshbandhu (Das) had collected 250 thousand rupees for village organisation. Swaraj is not for the few city-dwellers alone, it is not for the rich alone, it is as much for the villagers as for them. Without the spinning wheel it is impossible to weld into a sound organisation our seven hundred thousand villages. The announcement for the collection of the all-India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund contains this same appeal, namely, for the highest possible donation from everyone for spreading the spinning wheel.

"If you want to maintain a healthy contact with the poor, you can do it only through Khadi. If you compare the average annual incomes of different countries, you will find that ours is extremely small and even among us that of the villagers is miserable. What supplementary occupation will you give to those people sprawled in seven hundred thousand villages? If you want to follow up in action the Lokamanya's message of Swaraj, you must adopt Khadi and discard foreign cloth for the sake of those poor people, if for no other purpose. A mill-owner friend of mine has given me the information that from one yard of cloth that the mill-worker produces, not even one Paisa goes to his pocket. That means that the lion's share of the earnings from mill-cloth goes to fill the pockets of the rich. Mill-cloth is not indispensable necessity, it is a matter of luxury, or say, fastidious taste. You can curb that tendency. Mirabai (a mediaeval saint-poetess) has said:— 'The Lord God has bound me fast with the frail yarn-string (of love).' You will find even an old woman of 80 among spinners. The yarn she spins cannot but be weak. But if you bind together the 300 millions of India with that frail yarn, Swaraj will fall into your hands like a ripe fruit. Without it Swaraj is but a castle in the air. You may go to the Councils if you want, join Government schools if you like, but do at least this much. Do all that you like, but only after making the spinning wheel the Sun of the solar system of all activities for Swaraj.

"I visited today a hostel for untouchable boys. They gave me an address. There is a cry of desolation in it. I have not inquired into the accusations it contains. You cannot find anywhere else in the world untouchability of the type that exists in India. The Devil of untouchability would be destroyed, only when untouchable children are provided free and unrestricted use of temples, schools, and wells. Both Hindus and Musalmans should wash their sins with the sacred blood of Shradhanandji, if they want to atone for his death. Khuda has definitely stated that he who plays foul with any one will have to repent for the sin."



Sir. Saklatwala said the following in Hindi:—

“God made the land not for paying a tax on it, but for producing food. Gandhibhai (Brother Gandhi) asked you to manufacture Khadi and to spin. In this spinning work every one sits alone in his own house, but in industrial workshops people collect together and work. I think that if the workers themselves fix the prices of the goods they produce in such plants and distribute the profits among themselves, they would be happier. The farmer in America does not earn one anna, he earns quite a number of rupees. He keeps a car and sees pictures and plays. Not that there is no unemployment there, but during that period every man gets Rs. 12 and every woman Rs. 5. These are times when everybody—the businessman, the employer and everyone—looks after his own interest first and last. Why should not the mill-worker do the same? A Mill Workers’ Union has been formed in Ahmedabad. Form such Unions all over India and unite with the labourers of Britain. The other day a Bombay mill-owner declared a cut in the salaries of his employees. The Secretary of the Mill Workers’ Union sent a wire to England. The Labour Union of England sent Rs. 5,000 in response. And they sent another amount afterwards. That opened the eyes of the mill-owner and he withdrew the cut. At the time of the miners’ strike in England Labour Unions of other countries sent 15,000,000 rupees to the striking miners. What I mean to say is that wherever you work in a plant, collect a fixed amount as a subscription for membership and form a Union. Have the courage to help even the labourer in England. Sri. Ane has gone to Delhi as a member of the Legislative Assembly. Whom does he represent except big men? Whoever represents you there? But if you form a Union, somebody is sure to hear your complaints, laws beneficial to you will be passed, and you will get the upper hand over your employers. If you form Unions, you will find your strength doubled in a year and the worker in Britain will become your brother or sister. The time is soon coming, when the labourers’ children will see their fortunes opened. I am not asking for the withdrawal of workers from farms or factories, but I want things to be so managed that the workers’ earnings could be doubled. That country is poor and helpless, where the labouring class is not intelligent and literate. You, the mill-workers, should confer among yourselves on this matter.”

Gandhiji’s reply to Saklatwala’s strong stand for large industrial plants in India, was simply this: “If all the multimillions of India begin to work in big plants, our production would be so stupendous that we should have to find out unexplored countries, even planets in the heavens, so that we can exploit them and compel them



to consume the goods we produce.” Saklatwala had nothing to say against this argument. The difference between the approach of Saklatwala and that of Khadi-lovers is easy to make out. The latter want to make the patrician step down into the proletariat class, while Saklatwala wants to raise the proletarian to the patrician class. While the exponent of Khadi wants to make the upper class understand its duty to society and persuade it to undergo physical labour and thus align itself with the poor, Saklatwala’s attitude is just the reverse. He cannot understand the dangerous possibilities of his course at present, but I have no doubt that if he stays here for a while and sees for himself the situation of the country as it stands, his service of the poor would take quite a different form. The trouble however is that he cannot afford to stay here. It would be good if he tries to go more deeply into the Khadi cult, even during his short stay in India. Western civilization is out for raising man’s needs, it aims at the boundless heavens, while the Khadi-lover believes in:

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

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The students’ meeting at Akola was begun with the song: ‘We are worshippers of the goddess of Freedom.’ Gandhiji said: ‘The song you sung and the pledge (of wearing Khadi) you took are essentially one and the same. There is no difference between your worship of freedom and your pledge to make India free (through Khadi). There is little difference in moral grandeur between the oath to invite death for Swaraj and the one to join the army of constructive workers. As you have put me under a debt of obligation by your present of the purse, I said so much about your song.

“You have made my work easy by accepting the spinning wheel. Lokmanya’s name will live so long as the name of Bharat lives on the earth, His mantra, ‘Swaraj is my brithright,’ was not for India alone, but for all mankind. If even this little girl has that birthright, what means has she got to win it—if not the *takli* (a whirligig to spin yarn) ? On that little *takli* depends our economic regeneration. The man who is almost dead with starvation becomes the slave of the man who gives him food. Our economics has gone awry these days. When ten persons have no work on hand and are compelled to depend upon one man, the situation is definitely alarming. The daily income of an Indian is one anna and a half at present. The only effective means to increase that income is the spinning wheel and *takli*. Hence the means for getting



Swaraj, the first and foremost means, is the spinning wheel. It can be called our armament also.”

The public meeting at Akola was very orderly. Besides some addresses, a purse of Rs.4,813, which included contributions from women and students, was given. Gandhiji delivered in reply the most remarkable of all his speeches in this tour. After dealing with untouchability (the remarks on which have been included in “the Weekly Letter” of 17.2.1927, Page 152.) Gandhiji said:

“Remember Ishwara, Khuda, Allah in order to be saved from our internecine feuds. The Hindu who recites the Gayatri mantra as well as the Musalman who does his *vaju* (washes his hands etc. before prayers) and remembers Khuda has no reason to fear anyone. Nor is he afraid of treachery from any quarter, I have never been able to understand why we may fear that somebody will harm us. Unless we give up our distrust of each other, we cannot claim to have learnt any lesson from Shraddhanandji’s death. The only way to pay him due honours is for you to give up distrust and fear. There is no other way.

“But my first love is Khadi and the spinning wheel. I talked to you indeed of untouchability and communal harmony, but there is no solid work which every common man can do for them. After freeing his heart of the dirt of untouchability or of different treatment towards Hindus and Muslims, what else can he do about them? He may pray to God, he may desist from slandering anybody, but what concrete action can everybody take in those matters? Hence I say, ‘Let every one ply the spinning wheel’. That is a work on a vast scale and it is easy and natural for everybody to give his tangible contribution to the work. There are large masses of men in our country who do not get a square meal daily. It is not I but (Sir William) Hunter who warns us that poverty is growing in India day by day. You can’t say that the pockets of our millions are filled, when only those of the few *millionaires* are filled.

“Gnawing hunger will drive a man even to theft. And theft of what? The man who is starving does not distinguish between edible and inedible articles. Hunger is a terrible thing. We are unfit for everything, so long as we do not relieve a hungry man’s agony. That is what makes me say ‘Spin for Swaraj’. Only the spinning wheel can be the axle upon which our national activities may revolve. It is the Sun of the ‘Swaraj System’. No planet can match it. There are millions of stars in the sky, but they cannot even collectively do what the Sun does singly. Numerous other activities are going on



in India and you may as well do them. But remember, the spinning wheel is the one and only possible tie that can bind you with the poor. If you give up that, all your other activities will come to nought. What do we do at present but live upon the exploitation of the poor? England exploits us of the upper strata and so has no need to directly exploit the poor. But why should we inflict upon others the sufferings under which we ourselves groan?

“And yet, if you want to ride on the back of the poor, you may do even that; but shall we not give them at least some recompense? The villager is poor, is unemployed. We must provide him some work to remove his enforced idleness. That we can do if we wear the Khadi he manufactures. Do this much and I shall be satisfied. As a result of our purchase of his Khadi, we gave him last year nine hundred thousand rupees. But we ought to give him 120 millions. Sri. Khadilkar recited a verse from the Bhagwadgita which means, ‘This duty performed in a small way saves us from great dangers.’ The spinning wheel is a duty of that kind. Even a single spinning wheel is not negligible in power just as a drop in the ocean is not. The spinner discharges through it two duties at once towards himself and society. What has impelled me to call spinning the great national sacrifice of the present age is this power of the spinning wheel. And where, I ask, is the difficulty in discarding foreign cloth? What special charm or excellence does it possess? And what repelling ugliness is there in Khadi to make it unacceptable? Why do I not say anything about wheat and rice? Because you eat only their indigenous products. Similarly you should wear the Khadi produced locally. I should not, but I am compelled to say so much, as we don’t understand the good of wearing local Khadi.”

When the speech ended and Gandhiji began to sell Khadi, there was a wild rush to buy it and the sale of Khadi at that meeting made a record among all the sales at meetings in the C.P. and Berar Provinces.

A large crowd collected at our prayer meeting in the evening. Hardly had one of our party finished a hymn, when an unknown person sang another. Then that devotee of God, Sri. Pangarkar, sang a third song. That fired a little girl sitting among the crowd and she sang Janabai’s (a maharashtrian saint-poetess) hymn ‘पहले माझी ओवी’—‘My Ovi First’ so sweetly that the whole audience listened with rapt attention. The delightful fragrance that Maharashtra emits thus comes upon us quite unexpectedly, wherever we go.

We have been touring with such electric speed that if I were to report all the incidents, I could not keep pace with the programme. I am writing this from Khandesh



(in Maharashtra) though I have still to cover Khamgam (in C.P. and Berar). We went to Segaoon from Akola and thence to Khamgam and Malkapur, which is the western end of C.P. while the eastern end is Vilaspur and Gondia. Our visit of Khamgam was as noteworthy as that of Akola.

1. Reference to 'Responsivists' and 'Swarajists.'

(As M.D.'s Weekly Letter d. 17.2.1927 gives a neat report of Khamgam, his Gujarati version is dropped.)

24.2.1927

Weekly Letter

(by M.D. in *Young India*)

@ The Maharashtra tour began at the east corner of the Khandesh districts, went right through the centre of the two districts up to Shahade in the West and broke off at Dhulia, thence going South to the Nasik and Ahmednagar districts. Here is our itinerary:

9th February

Pachora
Shendurai
Neri
Jamner
Bodvad
Edlabad
Warangaon
Bhusaval

10th February

Rawer
Jalgaon

11th February

Pimprala
Erاندول
Dharangaon Dondaiche

Chopda

12th February

Amalner
Sindkheda
Chimthana
Vikhran

Nimgul

—

Balvant

Tapipara

Shahada

13th February

Malpur

Dhulipur

14th Feb., Monday

15th February

Sakri

Nijampur

Ner

Kusumbe

Khed



At Malkapur the last place in the Berar tour Jamnalalji left us in charge of our new jailor, Sri. Dastane. His very gentleness precluded him from being a hard taskmaster and though he had arranged his programme exactly like his predecessor, he could neither keep time himself nor make others do it. But one is inclined to extend one's fullest sympathy to him, as in becoming a khadi organiser, the erstwhile foremost member of the Bhusawal bar had to forget his law and learn business, while his predecessor in C. P. and Berar had simply to apply his proved business capacity to a different and perhaps a more congenial field.

As regards collections the tour was nearly as good a success as the C.P. and Berar one, thanks to Sri. Manilal Kothari who had visited important places in anticipation of the tour and helped Sri. Dastane in making the collections. From the points of view of Khadi sales, the Khandesh tour may be said to have been a greater success than the Berar tour. People from the villages flocked everywhere and in some places practically exhausted the Khadi put for sale. The fact is that Sri. Dastane and Sri. Thakkar have been actively carrying the message of Khadi from place to place, and their efforts have already begun to bear fruit. Sri. Dastane has opened a little Ashram at Pimprala where he is planning to provide for the training of workers in all the processes of clothmaking. At Chopda a production centre has been working from the 1st June 1925. The maximum number of spinners entertained at the centre was 93, Khadi produced upto September 1926 was worth Rs. 3,125, out of which Rs. 329-13-9 were given as wages to carders, Rs. 884-6-6 as wages to spinners and Rs. 936-8-9 as wages to weavers. The report of the Khadi worker at Chopda gives some more interesting details, which workers every where might do well to furnish. There are in Chopda 9 members of the (All-India) Spinners' Association who have been regularly sending in their quota and 27 habitual Khadi-wearers. (One does not know what difficulty these habitual wearers can have in becoming members of the A.I.S.A.) In addition to the handsome purse given at Chopda—Rs. 1,300 out of which was earmarked for Cow-protection Fund—1,40,000 yards of yarn were also presented to Gandhiji.

One of the special features of the tour was the auctioning of the caskets containing addresses at the meeting where they were given. The beginning was made at Jalagaon and the process was continued until Dhulia. 'You must know, friends', said Gandhiji, 'that excepting things which have a special artistic value and which I can hand over to Prof. Malkani who is collecting such things at the Gujarat Vidyapith, I cannot



afford to carry those caskets with me. For one thing I carry no steel trunks with me, nor have I any provision at the Ashram to keep them. The only course left for me therefore is to sell them. Don't you think that in doing so I am in any way disregarding or belittling the love with which they are being given. On the contrary I propose to return the love in the best manner I can, and that is by converting the caskets into the money for the work which is nearest my heart and for which you are showering your love on me.' The sentiment was appreciated everywhere, with the result that at a village like Shahade a trifling casket fetched as much as Rs. 300, and at Dondaiche the plate and other things fetched over Rs. 200.

There was another feature. Whereas in Berar the critics avoided us during this tour they were good enough to give everywhere in writing their questions to be answered by Gandhiji at public meetings.

At Amalner for instance a doubt was expressed as to the utility of carrying the message of Khaddar to a mill-area like that place. "There are 2000 labourers here and they form the bulk of the population. Do you expect them to wear Khadi? Do you expect the mill-owners to wear Khadi?" Gandhiji gave a lengthy reply. "It is a question", said Gandhiji, "that you well may ask, and yet should not need to ask at this time of the day. Truth has to be repeated a million times if it is not understood by all. If only a single expression of truth was sufficient every one should have been a believer in God by now. The fact is that the truth that God is one has a million times been told, but the hearts of only a few have been able to receive it.

"The 330 rupees that the labourers have contributed to the purse are for me worth their weight in gold. But it is not for the first time that labourers are giving concrete expression to their sympathy. Even the mill-owners have done so and will do so in the conviction that they are helping a good cause, and the labourers are doing so because of their sympathy for a fellow-labourer like myself. But an understanding of one's duty and the observance thereof are different things. If they went together we should have Ramarajya. There are for instance those who know the value of brahmacharya but who cannot observe it. Even so there are those who appreciate the message of Khadi but who are not able to conquer their love of ease and comfort and exclusively wear Khadi. Many come and tell me: 'We value your message, but show us the way to carry it out.' And as honest conviction is bound to be followed by practice sooner or later, this attitude fills me with more hope. You may be employing 2000 labourers here but do not forget that you tear them from the soil, do not forget that



your mills can provide only a handful with labour, and can never find employment for the millions who must be rooted to the soil and who want more work. The question has been before the Royal Commission of Agriculture, the question is before the Viceroy and I challenge any one to find a better solution than the one I have placed before the country. Dr. Roy could not carry his chemical works to the famine areas of Bogra and Khulna, he had to fall back upon the spinning wheels. Let not your ambition be to concentrate thousands of spindles in a mill, but to convert every home into a spinning mill.

“Do I seek to destroy the mill industry”, I have often been asked. If I did I should not have pressed for the abolition of the excise duty. I want the mill industry to prosper—only I do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary if the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction. The mill-owners who support me understand my attitude and many want this movement to prosper, even if its prosperity should mean their loss.

“And you ask how those who produce mill-cloth may wear anything else. Do you know that in Manchester the manufacturers do not wear their own products? You need not mind your inability to use cloth produced by your own mills. The good Duchess of Sutherland saw the miserable plight of the poor islanders of Hebrides and placed spinning wheels and looms at their disposal, The citizens of Manchester, including mill-owners, do wear the hand-spun stuffs prepared by the Hebrides people, even at three times the cost of the mill-stuff.

“Do not hanker after cheapness and fineness. If you want cheap and fine stuffs you must spin fine yarn as the late Jogesh Chatterji did or you must spend more money for it. Those who talk of Swaraj cannot have both cheapness and fineness. Think of the sacrifices that Lokamanya made and expected of you. Think of the sacrifices all fighters have to make. In Queen Elizabeth’s time heavy duties were imposed on foreign stuffs and heavy penalties were prescribed for the purchase of Holland laces. Am I asking for much when I ask you to remember your poor and purchase their Khadi? Do not say you will maintain the poor on charity. Only two classes of people are entitled to charity and no one else—the Brahmin who possesses nothing and whose business it is to spread holy learning and the cripple and the blind. But at Jagannath Puri the iniquitous system of giving doles to the able-bodied idle is going on to our eternal shame and



humiliation, and it is to wipe out that shame that I am going about with the message of Charkha up and down the whole country.”

I now come to Dhulia the place of which we have the pleasantest memories. It is the place in Maharashtra where the leading men have refused to allow their political differences to come in the way of their appreciation of the message of Khadi. It has the unique honour of a staunch Liberal like Barve and a staunch Responsivist like Sri. Jawadekar, working cheek by jowl with an Independent like Nanasaheb Dev and confirmed No-changers like Messrs. Thakkar and Balubhai Mehta. As the saintly Nanasaheb Dev, who is the silken tie keeping gems together, said: ‘Our friends in Poona are amazed at the way in which a seemingly unequal team like ours can pull well together. I told them, we sit together in a circle keeping our eyes fixed on a centre like say Khadi, whereas you in Poona sit with your eyes turned away from the centre.’ The result is that they have been able to enlist the sympathy of many vakils (lawyers) who unlike many places in these parts at least wear Khadi. Nanasaheb Dev with Barve, Thakkar, Balubhai Mehta and Ranadive brothers is now planning a scheme to reconstruct a village area, with Khadi work and temperance as the centre. As it is, even now Sri. Thakkar goes from place to place instructing the villagers in social hygiene and sanitation and village economics and politics. He submits instructive fortnightly reports which the friends circulate amongst themselves and publish for the benefit of the people.

The programme at Dhulia was heavy, but everything was so ordered and quiet that Gandhiji could address 6 meetings during the day, spinning on his Charkha throughout the speeches. ‘You will not,’ he said, ‘regard me as impertinent if I go on spinning while I address you. I do so because of the wonderful stillness here and because I think I can best respond to your affection by giving you an object lesson in the thing I most believe in. When Dr. Tagore came to our Ashram some years ago, I asked him, after the morning prayers were over, to address a few words to our boys. He said nothing, spoke nothing by way of apology, but sang one of his sweetest songs in his sweetest way and was quiet. That to my mind was the acme of his courtesy. He satisfied us with the best that his soul could give. I am simply following him in turning my wheel before you, which is my only lyre and through which I think I can render the greatest service to India.’



(Additional account of the above week given in Gujarati by M. D.)

In one sense the task that faced Sri. Dastane, the former lawyer, was easier—at least in Khandesh—than the one which Sri. Jamnalalji, the businessman, had to tackle. Most of the Khandesh District is a cotton strip with a large number of businessmen and only a few lawyers who are by profession fond of disputation. The attitude of those lawyers moreover was by and large quite different from that of their brother-professionals in Berar and other parts of Maharashtra. With all that there definitely was a class of doubting intellectuals and they put forward their questions at Gandhiji's public meetings everywhere. But Gandhiji liked their frankness and sometimes answered them at length.

As though the Tilak Swaraj Fund was an inexhaustible treasury, people often question Gandhiji: "But you have that Fund with you! Why then this fresh collection? Will not this fund meet with the same fate of mismanagement and defalcation—as was the case with the earlier (Tilak Swaraj) Fund?"

Gandhiji's reply to this charge at the public meeting in Pachora deserves reproduction.

(Instead of translating M. D.'s account of the reply, a relevant Note by Gandhiji himself in *Young India* d. 3.3.1927 is given below:)

@ "During the Maharashtra tour at one or two meetings I was asked what had become of the crore (ten millions) collected for Tilak Swaraj Fund. The questioners had every right to put this question even though they might not have contributed a pie to the fund. A public fund becomes public property and therefore every member of the public is entitled to know in detail the administration of such funds. I therefore answered the question fairly exhaustively. The gist of my answer will bear repetition although the question has been answered in these pages already.

"The accounts have been published regularly by the All-India Congress Committee. Copies of the audited account can be had at any time from the Congress Secretaries or the Treasurers. Every pie has been accounted for. There is no doubt that in some instances those to whom funds were entrusted were not faithful to the trust, but that is as much as to say that the Congress like all human institutions is an imperfect body having in its fold all sorts of men. I know of no institution in the world which does not have dishonest agents. The congress is no exception. But I can say this that no loss has been sustained beyond what a most careful merchant suffers. The



little loss that had been sustained is due not to negligence, but has occurred in spite of vigilant inspection and auditing. It should be further borne in mind that the Congress had in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and in Seth Jamnalal Bajaj an incorruptible working Secretary and an incorruptible working Treasurer respectively. Moreover 75 percent of the funds were administered locally by local representative who had assisted in raising the funds and who were trusted by the people. Lastly, the largest amounts were mostly earmarked and controlled by the donors, subject no doubt to the conditions that they were to be used only for purposes coming within the programme of non-co-operation and the accounts were to be open to inspection by Congress agents. Personally, I have absolutely no regret about having raised the Fund and my conscience is clear as to its administration. Everything that was humanly possible to guard against fraud, maladministration or misappropriation was done. The fund has served an immense national purpose. The tremendous organisation that came into being all of a sudden could not have been created without this great national fund to which both rich and poor contributed so handsomely.”

(M.D. gives in Gujarati the following account of Gandhiji’s further reply at Pachora:)

“Some hypocritical Khadi-wearers took a bad advantage of K. Venkatappayya’s softness of heart in Andhra. Some well-known men in Bihar bought Khadi but have been delaying payment for the bills. In any case the amount thus mismanaged or misappropriated may be about Rs. fifty or even a hundred thousand rupees but not more. That is nothing beside the 10 millions collected. Such things can’t be helped. Only the other day Mahadev Desai lost 400 rupees at Bhandara. He serves me like a servant and also looks after me. All the same he lost that amount this time. What can I do about it? Should I not write it down as lost? Mahadev indeed has requested me to let him repay the loss. But so long as he is not able to pay up the whole amount is there any course open to me except to treat it as unrecoverable? For one reason or another such losses are bound to occur in every business, but nothing can be done about them.

“You may therefore contribute your mite to this fund under the clear apprehension that as in all such cases something from this fund is going to be wasted. If you don’t believe in this cause, please don’t give me a single pie (smallest coin) simply out of respect for me. Give out of your free will and with the full awareness that some part of it may be misused.”



In the numerous small villages to which Sri. Dastane took us, the sale of Khadi was very brisk. It would be good if, like the figures of donations in money, we could get those of Khadi sales immediately. But that is a difficult proposition when ours is a stormy tour.

Maharashtrian ladies come in large numbers at the meetings, but one can as well say that Khadi is conspicuous by its absence among them. The sari they wear is 12 yards long. How to wear such a long and heavy sari made from Khadi is their chief headache. If they went in for a coloured Khadi sari with a silken border it would be too expensive. One or two Khadi-lovers expressed this difficulty at Dhulia and stated that they had failed to persuade the ladies of their families to wear Khadi saris. Some 2 or 3 sisters in Poona are making tremendous efforts to produce fine Khadi saris to suit the habit of Maharashtrian ladies, though even those saris are very costly. Maharashtrian women will have to wear thick and short Khadi saris—like the ones used by the women of Sri. Dastane’s family—so long as Maharashtra does not begin to spin yarn in large quantities.



11.2.1927

Though Gandhiji's voice had grown hoarse he delivered a speech the while he spun: "You see, I find it difficult to speak. But even if my voice fails me totally, my speech is certain to continue. I can never deliver a better speech through my voice than through my hands, as I am doing just now. Your donation of Rs. 1300 for cow-protection shows your clear thinking. It convinces me that you like the kind of effort I am making for protecting the cow. You have shown that you realize the demands of the situation by earmarking some amount for untouchability also. The rest of the amount will be credited to the All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund (for Khadi).

"A speaker said just now that you celebrate the day on which the Lokamanya visited your town. It was he who proclaimed, 'Swaraj is my birthright.' After deep deliberation on Swaraj, I have come to the conviction that we must increase the power of the spinning wheel by its universal use. There are millions and millions of poor men in India. They do not get sufficient food to eat. It would be 'stolen wealth', if we doled out money to them, since if anybody takes food without labouring for it, he is a thief according to the Gita. The gospel asks us to perform a yagna, *i.e.* put forth some labour for taking food. One should therefore earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. In order to provide this sacred labour, I roam all over India to collect money. This town is the richest in this East Khandesh District. I appeal to you to make it an excellent Khadi producing centre and buy all the Khadi it manufactures.

"Just as by Khadi we forge a link with our poor millions, we forge another with 70 millions of Indians by uprooting untouchability. Let both Hindus and Musalmans imbibe Shradhanandji's courage for doing so.

"When I say that every cottage should be made a mill, a doubt may arise, 'What an enormous time it would take to achieve that consummation?' I say in reply, 'Nobody inquires when the golden age of truth will come. Will anyone argue that we must give up truth because that age doesn't seem to be coming nearer?'

"I want you to buy not a pennyworth of Khadi just to please me. That would be deception and my faith in Khadi does not depend upon other people's wearing it. I have the power to follow the dictates of my dharma even if millions spit upon me. I ask you therefore to give your mite as a contribution to a religious activity. It is my aim to serve the poor and through that service to have the vision of God. Don't bring in



any deception-lie-in that religious act. I can live without your wearing Khadi, but blind love and hypocrisy will kill me.

“You want cheap Khadi and without any trouble on your part! Is that possible? It does not become a man who wants Swaraj to make such a demand. ‘The father of the mantra of Swaraj, Tilak Maharaj, said that one should not get out of jail by begging pardon, even if one had to die in it. For Swaraj one may have to mount the scaffold or to refuse to leave the battlefield even when one’s father, mother, son, or wife was dying or dead. Lord Chelmsford lost his son in the last war, but that did not deter him from continuing in his post. The one and only son of Lord Roberts died in the war, but not for a single day did he relinquish his duty. In Elizabeth’s time people used to buy cloth made in England at 10 times the price of foreign cloth. Am I then asking too much from you? Buy Khadi though it be costly, and reject foreign cloth even if it is given you gratis.



13.2.1927

“For the harmonious atmosphere in Dhulia the greatest credit goes perhaps to Nanasaheb Dev. His face itself reminds us of the Sanskrit phrase वदनं प्रसादसदनम् (His face is the abode of geniality) and when we hear him speak we see the very image of प्रणयमधुरो वाचि नियमः (self-restraint in speech sweet with love). His life work—singing St. Ramdas’ kirtan (song-cum-story), writing and publishing his biography reveals itself in his gestures and behaviours, Other workers are the gems and he the golden string of the necklace that adorns the town. He said to Gandhiji: “Regard our district as your own. Take us as your own men for this village work at least if for no other.” He is moreover an organiser par excellence. Sentences written on the Khadi arches raised at the ends of streets were very significant. Instead of the hackneyed ‘jai’ of so-and-so, ‘Vande Mataram’ (Bow to Mother Ind) and others, we read ‘Khadi feeds 700 women-spinners in Khandesh’, ‘Wear Khadi and serve the poor’, ‘Foreign cloth is the greatest drain on the country’s wealth.’ Before escorting Gandhiji to the place of the Municipality’s and Local Board’s addresses, Sri. Dev took him round the whole town quietly and showed the houses of the town’s prominent people. When the car approached his own house, he allowed it to speed away with the simple remark, ‘That’s Dr. Dev’s house. That’s my mother over there.’ The late Dr. Dev, Sri. Dev’s elder brother, was a member of the well-known ‘Servants of India Society’ and during his life-long service the last field of his work was Champaran, the place of the first ever satyagraha of Gandhiji in India. Gandhiji protested: “Had you halted the car for just a while, I could have had the darshan of your mother.” But Nanasaheb Dev was the last man to take for himself or his family a privilege that others did not enjoy.

The Local Board gave its address in its own big hall. Gandhiji sat on a raised cotton gadi with a cushion to support the back. The cloth used was khadi exclusively. He said: “I did not expect such pin-drop silence here. It is a pleasant surprise and makes it easy for me to pour out the deepest emotions of my heart. Out of the programme of 40 minutes here, you have set apart 10 minutes for me. Had I known that you had been kind enough to reserve only 10 minutes for me, I would not have made arrangement to suit my personal need for that short period.

“You see I have brought my spinning wheel here. I am sure, you understand that it is difficult to spare time for it from my very closely-packed programme. And I have bound myself with a solemn vow to spin every day. Therefore, I wish to put to double



use my time for public appearances, even at the cost of appearing to be impertinent. But I hope you won't look at the matter in that light. I can best return your love for me by showing to you my power of service at its highest. Like a good musician who shows his art by singing before the public, I want to exhibit mine by spinning in your presence.

“After these preliminary remarks, let me say first of all that I thank you for your addresses.

Call it a Local Board, a District Board or a Municipality, they are words carrying the same sense in a way. They have only one common function to perform and that is to know the troubles of the people and try to allay them. I have stated my ideas on this matter at Ahmedabad and in Bengal, but I wish to say something here also.

“I have observed these institutions all over India in a detached spirit, but I confess I have not seen a single institution, whether a Local Board or a Municipality, which I can regard as a good model for others. I have not seen any institution which by its own vigilance-and not by the power of the Government Officer there-keeps roads so clean that dust does not fly, dirt does not gather, drainage water does not run, and stone and rubbish do not lie collected on them. Lionel Curtis has passed a scathing remark: ‘I have seen the villages of both England and India. There is no comparison between the two. In the first I see cleanliness, fragrance and beauty of life and nature, but it seems Indians have built their houses on heaps of rubbish and squalor.’ We should only pity him. He does not know that while the daily income per head in India is hardly an anna and a half, in England it is about 25 times as much, i.e., Rs.2. At the same time we must not on that account overlook the substratum of truth in his castigation. Hardly any educated man may have wandered among our villages, entered into the life of our villagers, as much as I. We people know nothing whatsoever of the laws of hygiene and Sanitation, and in order to teach those laws to the people, if for nothing else, I have thought it proper for us (the educated) to go into the Municipalities or Local Boards. Shall I tell you what wonderful work the Municipalities of South Africa are doing? Let us for a while set aside the fact that those people oppress us, the coloured races. That apart, I cannot help saying that there is total lack in India of the kind of effort they are putting forth to keep the people in health and cleanliness. Don't tell me that in our absorption in political work no other work is possible. I don't believe it. On the contrary I am convinced that when we gain the power of taking Swaraj, no power on earth can stop its advent and that we can gain the power of taking Swaraj only when we develop every limb of the body social and



keep it free from disease. Only to the extent that we already possess the power of acquiring Swaraj, shall we be able to assimilate Swaraj when we get it.

“And let me say another thing. These institutions are content to clean only those roads and streets through which the Governor or the Collector is expected to pass, But why this negligence of the roads which bullocks or carts of villagers use? Unfortunately the motor-car has penetrated into our villages also. But what do the Local Boards do for improving what are only cart-roads, in order to allay the difficulties of bullocks trudging along them? And what shall I say about our gutters and drainage? For that you may read my thoughts expressed at Gaya. They are applicable not only to Gaya but to every city in India.

“And now I wish to come to primary education. I humbly beg to say that if we want to really look after our education, we must see it essential that the spinning wheel has a place in our schools. (Here our ‘Time-keeper’, Sri. Dev, warned Gandhiji: ‘Seven minutes more’). What education shall we give to the farmer’s children, to the multi-millions of them here in India? Our aim ought to be to see that a progressive number of them were able to look after their farms excellently. They have to sit idle for 4 months every year. What may they do during the period? I appeal to you to form a Committee of Inquiry for a probe into this problem. On my Part I have thought over it deeply and am certain that Inquiry Committee will find no other means than the spinning wheel to keep the people engaged during those months of idleness. That impels me to ask you to treat the spinning wheel and Khadi as a science and train your children to it. You may call experts in that science to your aid and first teach it to your primary-school teachers through them. There are 600 boys in the mill-workers’ schools of Ahmedabad. All of them are children of the ‘untouchable’ classes-weavers, sweepers and such others. They have expert spinners there. And while the children sing hymns, their hands ply their *taklis*. Their yarn is good enough for making cloth’.

Untouchables were the first to meet Gandhiji when he was being taken round the town. Addressing them Gandhiji said:

“The iniquities we, caste-Hindus, have heaped upon you are so many and so horrible, that enough amends cannot be made even if we scraped our own skins and presented you with shoes made from them. I am a non-Brahmin by birth and became a sweeper by action. It is no calamity to be a sweeper. One can become a Bhangi (sweeper) in two ways. Somebody may call me a Bhangi by way of an abuse-as if a



sweeper is a burden to society, though he does the very useful work of cleaning latrines and sweeping streets. Or one may call that man a Bhangi whose service of the people reaches its acme. The Bhangi's service is like that of our mothers, but we never call them untouchables. Far from it, the mother is revered as a Goddess worth remembering during our morning prayers. The Bhangi therefore is a true servant of society—with the only difference that he works for earning his bread, while the mother does it in a beneficent spirit. The mother serves the child with love and she gets love in return. But salary is the return the sweeper gets for his service. Just as we cannot live without mothers, so can we not live without sweepers. That means that by their work they do only their duty to society. I myself can do a sweeper's work in an excellent manner. Let those who are sweepers among you here know that I can beat the best of them in the excellence of his cleaning work.

“To the caste-Hindus I point out only one thing as regards untouchability. I rebuke them, blame them, for observing untouchability which I call a dark spot on Hinduism. As I told you, when I approach the caste-Hindu public I tell it that untouchability is a heinous sin.

“But to untouchables themselves I say another thing. You eat putrid flesh, become drunkards, commit adultery and keep yourselves dirty. There is no one present here to bear witness to the strength with which the objectors emphasise these things. Do away with these serious defects. Perhaps nowhere in the world are as many putrid-flesh-eaters as in India. Give up beef, liquor and adultery. An adulterer is just like a beast. But you will protest: ‘Do not other people commit the same sins?’ I say let them, but I ask you not to do so. We must not compete with others in wickedness and crime. Let me plead only this fact: ‘You will greatly strengthen my hands in my plea for removal of untouchability, if you reform yourselves in these matters’.

“And for that same reason I ask untouchables to make it a point to wear Khadi. The untouchables of Malpur have given up weaving. The untouchable weavers of Kathiawad (Saurashtra) have given up their work, left their homes, and gone to towns where they clean latrines. Your salvation, as well as that of all the poor of the land, lies in Khadi. When I hear that a particular non-Brahmin (Gandhiji includes the ‘untouchable’ in the non-Brahmin class) sticks to the path of truth, the fact delights me. I believe in *Varnashrama* dharma.¹ A hatred for Brahmins has grown up these days, but that should disappear. All Brahmins certainly do not claim to be knowers of Brahman (the Absolute or God); nor I do claim to be one. But they honestly believe



that they have undergone heavy sacrifices and penances, for upholding Hindu Dharma. All that we need to know is that spiritual knowledge and power are not the close preserve of anybody or community. We should wish that our own effort to gain them must be the most strenuous. As to its result, what can we do about it? Others (Brahmins?) were taught by their parents. Shall we hate our parents for not teaching us? Who will buy Khadi, if the non-Brahmin does not?"

It was a pleasure to note at the students' meeting that Nanasaheb possessed a keen sense of discipline; he sat down among them. Gandhiji said:

"Students go on disclosing their confidential matters to me more and more and hence I come to know increasingly their vices and virtues as well as their ambitions. One aspiration that is essential for the student to cherish is that of service. Money is not the right return for knowledge acquired. But in India we do not give even money to our learned men. The school student does not and cannot bear the expense of his education. High schools cannot make both their ends meet from the fees the students give them. Only the managers of educational institutions know what a large extra amount they have to spend yearly. That is a sad story. Education is at present given from the excise revenue from liquor and opium. Hundreds of thousands are made drunkards in order to provide for the education we receive at present. To say the least, their drink habit is encouraged. Hence it is essential for the student to develop his power of service to make amends for the money spent on him. Just think! You get the education that others are denied. You are therefore in a sense guardians of other (illiterate) boys and it is but your duty to help them. You should therefore think along this line: 'I shall save one anna every month, set it apart for the poor and give in addition a half-hour's daily labour (by spinning) to my mother-land, Bharat.' The money saved and given to the poor will of course be from the father's purse, but the labour of half an hour undergone by the student will be his own contribution. If millions do one and the same work in this way, the work will generate very great power owing to the enormous number of men employed in it. But the work must be uniformly one and the same. If everybody follows his own whim as regards the work he would do, the result will be rack and ruin and disorder and chaos will prevail. For example, if we want to fill up an enormous pit, that work could be done if millions throw baskets of sand in that same pit, i.e., at one and the same place. When the strike of mill-workers in Ahmedabad was going on, I told them, 'Throw the sand of the river-bed into the pits and uneven surfaces of the Ashram ground.' For any work there has got to be perfect



coordination of the heart and the hand into one unit. If numerous hands do any work with united heart, the output would be tremendous. By plying this spinning wheel I am showing you how easy this work is, since I can do it wherever I go. And even during this short time, I increased the wealth of India, be it ever so little. If every student spins for half an hour as a sacrifice and sends his yarn to the nearest Khadi centre, the price of Khadi can be very greatly reduced. Yagna-sacrifice means the use of the body for other people's good. Excellent cotton is produced in these parts. Spin excellent yarn from it. The word Yagna has other wider and deeper meanings still. You can for instance become in future workers for organising villages.

“And now another thing. The traditional name for a student is ‘Brahmachari.’ He who wants to keep up his naturally keen intelligence and sharp memory cannot do so without observing brahmacharya. The Indian student is unable to retain these inborn powers owing to his lapse from brahmacharya and the compulsory use of English as the medium of his instruction. There is no urge in him for learning. He feels tired and exhausted easily. His intelligence loses its clarity and grasp. His health deteriorates. I see no glow on the faces of students and the sight pains me. I am now an old man and physically of little use to others. I was affected with diseases also. All the same, not a single student is able to keep pace with me, when I go out for a walk. Very few students may be having the vigour to walk 40 miles. We cannot even take enough work from others. That is what impelled an Englishman to remark that we are ‘the blotting sheets of European civilization.’ This will not do. If we conserve our vitality by means of brahmacharya, our work in quality and quantity will be so impressive that we shall be able to remove the sorrow of our land in no time. But at present we do not have the power of even chanting the name of Rama. For alligning ourselves with the poor, the two powers of the spinning wheel and brahmacharya are very necessary. Sir Prabhashankar Pattani was an insomnia patient, but he took to spinning and the habit cured him. Spin, therefore, for your own peace of mind, if for nothing else. Can the hard labour of breaking stones give you peace of mind? No. Sacrifice, willingly undergone for a good cause, can give you that. You may indeed have it by telling the beads of a rosary, a tasbih, a mala (Arabic and Sanskrit words for rosary). But definitely the spinning wheel has at least as much power as a rosary. It is even more powerful because the man who tells his beads is likely to be a hypocrite. A deep aspiration and purity of heart are essential for a man who tells them. If they are not there, the telling would become a merely mechanical action of the hand. It would be like the Prayer Wheel² of the Tibetan Buddhist. The spinning wheel too may indeed become a lifeless



routine. But if you spin with the consciousness that you are spinning for the sake of *Daridranarayana* (Lord God in the poor man's form) you will gain peace, you will gain purity and, in addition, not only render service to the country but also add to your earning. Let every student spin and then tell me whether the wheel has helped him very effectively or not in controlling his passions.”

The Municipality gave an address. The Captain of the volunteers was Surajmal and the President Govindji Khimji. The girls who sang the welcome song were all clad in pure Khaddar. As usual the welcome address was enclosed in a casket. In accepting and selling the casket he said the same things as at earlier meetings. Giving a handsome compliment to those who spun as persons doing an excellent work, Gandhiji said in addition:

“Don't take it for an insolence on my part that I spin while the meeting is going on. Spinning is to me an indispensable holy act of sacrifice and I have so many things to do on hand. How can I cope with them all, if I do not snatch time in this way for spinning? When I was advocating Tolstoy's principle of bread-labour, nobody cared to listen. But when I took to doing this spinning work, people began to heed me. Sir Edward Clerk used to wind a ribbon. If he could have that privilege, why may I not have this? I don't mind it if you regard this as even my *vina*. You told me how a whole town, new Dhulia, was created, but the credit goes all to the Englishman. I am not highly satisfied with its roads however. I believe in city life and think that it should be made a life worth living. The Lokamanya proclaimed, 'Swaraj is my birthright', but that mantra does not mean that Swaraj can be gained through the Councils. The Lokamanya propounded that mantra before there was any talk of councils in the air. His proclamation means that the work for Swaraj must be carried out through every institution. But there is at present no Municipality which can be complimented as 'ideal', on the ground that it can rightly claim that its latrines are as clean as its libraries, as a visit to both of them can show. Nobody should be content with the cleanliness of his own latrine. I have moved about in the town. Your latrines and gutters are not clean. There was dirty water in the gutter and it was stinking. In my reply to the address of the Calcutta Corporation, I showed the remedy. If the members take brooms in their own hands and sweep off filth, the town would be clean. They should keep the town gutters as clean as their courtyards. And as we have accepted the policy of punishment in the case of such institutions, a fine should be imposed on those who commit a nuisance.³



There was a ladies' meeting. Gandhiji chatted with the little girls there. Girls of the Municipal schools were spinning while the meeting was going on. Gandhiji first gave the Gujarati women a piece of his mind at this meeting:

“What I aim at is to develop spinning into a gigantic business of 1200 million rupees and thereby shame the Mulji Jetha and other Markets. But if in my attempt I don't get the needed support from you, Banias, my plight would be like that of the greedy Brahmin who hung from the branch of a high cocoanut tree.⁴ But, unlike that Brahmin, I am a hard-headed Bania and that tooa Gujarati Bania. I call myself Gujarati in order to induce Gujaratis to join me in my sacrifice for the nation.

“In your address you speak of my unswerving love and loyalty to my wife. But how few are there who implement this ideal of perfect loyalty to their life-partner? If there be any, I congratulate him. By his conduct he gets the right to write this eulogy in the address. But what shall I say if there is none such?

“Gujarati women are brave. Manibehn (Sardar Vallabhbhai's daughter), Anasuyabehn (a pioneer labour leader), Gangabehn (an 'untouchable' weaver), none of them is weak-kneed. As a rare chance, some man may presume to cast an evil eye on the first two, but as for the third (Gangabehn) nobody dare think of it. She is an Amazon, would even scold her husband, as her husband is talkative. Your backs may bend and ache, but Gangabehn can weave for 8 hours and earns 75-80 rupees per month. Then there is Vasumati who gave away her jewellery worth 15,000 rupees. I was reluctant, was moved to tears, but she insisted till in the end she set aside a ruby worth Rs. 5,000 and laid the heap of the rest before me. They all wear coarse thick Khadi, but women (in general) are so bad that they like sparsely-woven clothes. It is extremely difficult⁵ to make a Gujarati woman wear Khadi. I appeal to you to adopt the simplicity of the sisters I mentioned, wear thick Khadi and become lionesses. Will any man then ever dare to cast an evil eye on you?”

Now let me deal with Gandhiji's speech at the public meeting. The local businessmen collected a separate purse of their own and gave a separate address at the public meeting. That was a breach of good manners. It is self-conceit to ask others to make a separate collection because they cannot contribute big amounts. What really matters is not the figure of a donation, but the attitude, the feeling, that moves the giver. A thousand rupees of a millionaire pale before a single rupee given by the poorest of the poor.



But the businessmen gave a separate purse and a separate address and that compelled Gandhiji to give them a reply that referred to them specially.

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1. The four castes: the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra with the duties of the priest, the warrior, the business-man and the servant assigned to them respectively and the four stages of life, of the student, the head of the family, the retired gentleman and the total renunciant. In his later life, Gandhiji encouraged by his blessings marriages only between an 'untouchable' and a 'caste-Hindu'.
 2. They would put hymns written on paper etc. in a hollow cask and take it that they sang those hymns as many times as they rolled the cask.
 3. An ardent believer in non-violence, Gandhiji is averse to punishment of any kind. But as a practical man also, he makes an exception for big public institutions.
 4. A Brahmin wanted to have a cocoanut at the cheapest price. At his village it cost 3 paisa, but a few miles further 2 and still further 1. He inquired there if he could get it altogether free of cost anywhere. A cocoanut tree was pointed out. In his voracious greed he climbed up but his feet slipped and he had to hang from a branch.
 5. Literally, as difficult as chewing gram-peas made of iron.



(This reply has been summarised in the Weekly Letter d: 3.3.27).

In his talk with the workers Gandhiji said:¹

“This age of aeroplanes (speedy travel) will not last long. Even the West has got tired of it. If we realize that it will not do us good, it is our duty to try to stop its invasion. If the multi-millions of India begin to have a craze for aeroplanes etc., the country will be destroyed. A metamorphosis will then take place in India’s concept of true culture. And if the import of that mechanical civilization is regarded as a boon to India, it would mean that 10 million people want to subsist by killing 300 million compatriots. Of course I do believe that it would be a good thing if there are 100 million lions among men in the place of 300 million subservient creatures in India, as at present. But though we appear to be crawling insects today, we are after all human beings, and nobody can say when our inborn powers will gush out and release us from our present plight. That is why I for one do not wish to be a witness to the liquidation of 290 millions of human beings. If, however, despite my desire, it happens, let it. But to me it seems impossible that such a thing could happen.

“Hence, if we wish the welfare of 300 millions—and not 10 millions only—we must resuscitate our ancient spinning wheel. Not that it must be revived just because it is an old thing and old is gold. For instance, untouchability is an old custom and yet I wish its total destruction. Even in countries wedded to mechanical civilization an attempt was made during the last War to do things by hand. I was in England, when potatoes were planted there. Clothes also were sewn by hand and I too was asked to do the work. That was all done by hand and yet nobody protested that the people had thereby become primitive. Admittedly, we do many things in times of war, which we don’t in peace. But don’t interpret this example as one prompted by the necessities of a crisis. Don’t stretch the meaning of that act to that length. I admit that there are many things in this machine age which we cannot make by hand, for instance, a needle, or a match-stick. But do we ever need to make them at home? No. But you cannot, must not, carry this mass-scale production to all matters. If, for instance, the whole of Europe begins to take bread bought from the market, I don’t think you will dispense with our home-made roti. I cannot feel it possible even in my dream that our cooking-fire in every home would cease to be lighted one day. Since we are as many as 300 millions here, we must not destroy our system of cooking in every individual home. And, I ask, is it even possible to do so?



“Khadi and the spinning wheel is the one and only national activity that goes on developing day by day. If capable young men of good character come forward to give it an impetus, money would naturally flow into the work. And if both men and money are available, it is very possible that it would grow into such a mountainous proportion that, to beat it in competition, Indian mills might give their cloth free of cost to the people. That was what actually happened when the competition between the British India Steam Navigation Company and the German East Africa Company had grown very keen.

“You will ask me, ‘Why all this exclusive emphasis on Khadi? Why not encourage other industries also?’ But यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके² When a whole ocean of Khadi is stretched before us, why should we resort to a pond (well)? It is an economic fallacy to think that other industries also can be profitably developed along with Khadi. That idea side tracks the real point and commits therefore the fallacy of deviation from right thinking. Why should we ever think of other occupations when Khadi satisfies all our wishes and requirements? This digression from our real issue will never do.

“Our daily income today is an anna or two. How is it possible to be satisfied with it? There are women in India whose income is not greater than that. The remedy is the universal spread of the spinning wheel. And what do you wish to aim at by making a long meaningless list of other numerous occupations? You cannot put the handloom in the hands of multi-millions, but you can the spinning wheel. It is therefore an independent entity by itself. There is no substitute for the spinning wheel. It is dog-cheap besides and requires practically no expense for setting it up.

“But I don’t mean to say that people should stick to the spinning wheel, even if they can earn more money from another occupation. But is there any? Is there any occupation which provides (to millions) more money by honest means? I had a very sad experience at Rajmahendri and Barisal. The girls, it was said, earned five rupees each. It was a saucy woman who told me so. A woman in Barisal had the cheek to ask me, ‘How can we carry on with the low income the spinning wheel provides?’ But I explained to even these fallen women the importance of the spinning wheel and some of them have even given up their profession. I know that in Bombay many girls are caught in this snare. We may certainly ask such women to give up their profession, but never to others with honourable occupations on hand. We ask for the use of the spinning wheel as an act of sacrifice and as one where ruthless economics has got to be set aside.



“People may grumble that Khadi is dearer than mill-cloth and is against the law of economics. But economics also is of more than one kind. Ruskin talks of divine as well as devilish economics. He says that economics which ignores the religious point of view is Satanic, while the one that upholds religion is divine. What is the reason behind the protection given to Tata Steel Industries? Steel used to be imported from Belgium and was cheaper. All the same we decided to spend more and use Tata’s product. A protective duty is, if not direct, definitely indirect taxation. With full knowledge, we paid for that taxation. What did George (King of England) say? He wondered why American type-writers should find their way into England. Thus protective duties resemble happiness of the best kind as described in the Gita. They seem like poison at first, but in the result they are like nectar. No doubt, you must discard what is poison both at the beginning and at the end. But Khadi is like happiness of the best kind—unpleasant at first, but beneficial in the end. If you all help, I shall show you even more marvellous results than what we have got yet. It is best to buy Khadi even though it is costly. If you buy cloth that is comparatively of no cost, you will wear a mill-stone round your neck.”

Somebody wondered why there was so much insistence on Khadi for winning Swaraj, when Swaraj was only a political question. In answer Gandhiji said:

“Indian politics today is frustrated by divergent views and parties. These differences cannot be settled even if Khadi is kept out of the discussion. And one who has an aversion to Khadi will find out any excuse to put the blame on it. Alas for Khadi! How much burden can it bear! I was shown the Constitution given by Lenin. Even that Constitution shows this same thing (concern for the poor masses). What was the cause of Danton’s execution? If people want to kill those whom they once adored, there is no remedy for it.

“The poor man’s God is food at present. People will be willing slaves of anyone who provides them food. Some Maulvi (Muslim divine) forbade the women of Bengal to spin. They obeyed, but as soon as the Maulvi’s back was turned, those same women began to beseech the organisers to give them cotton to spin. Do we want to gain our objective by means of arms,—which the Government possesses far more than we can get—, or by the silken chord of love? There is an old woman of 80, living in a village near Darbhanga. Even she does this same work of spinning. When you all get tired, it will be women who will do that work of gaining Swaraj (through satyagraha). It was women in South Africa who had drawn out 40 thousand labourers from mines. That is



why I am going to get this work of Khadi done through women—if I happen to be alive then. All women are not timid. There are lionesses among them also. Valiamma³ remained firm as a rock even in jail.”

Question: “Now that people go to the councils, should they not be Ministers also?”

Gandhiji: “I think, we should not, under the present climate, accept those posts. In the first place, we don’t have proper men. Secondly, the Empire looks down upon us, as we are falling increasingly into degradation. If, however, you may go to the councils, but it is not good to accept Ministerships. I conceded that much about council-entry, but personally I remain opposed to it. My conviction stands that self-restraint is necessary for us in these times.

“It is true that these people (the Government) are oppressing us. But you can’t gain anything of fundamental importance through the councils, though Irwin (Lord Irwin) may say that we should look up to the councils for whatever we want. Imagine me in the position of a Minister. They would be compelled to drive me out. The Government offers help for our ‘go-shalas’ (dairies of cow’s milk), but we don’t want its help, since it is responsible for the terrible oppression going on now. It has, besides, sent an Indian army to China. It is a disgrace if even a single Indian soldier kills the Chinese. The situation is so awful that my brain reels at the sight. The fire raging in my heart is fierce enough to turn me mad. Had I been an athiest, I would have either manufactured bombs or gone mad. I know how to make a bomb, but I know also that I cannot do any good to India by murdering the Viceroy. And I can fire off articles in any number, but I am an economist and would never say anything that cannot be translated into action.”

Q: “Don’t you think it possible to bring about prohibition and spread of Khadi, if a (sincere) man like Jayakar becomes a Minister?”

A: “Even as early as in 1920, I said that it was not true that you could get nothing at all from the Government. But you will have to give up many (minor) things for securing the real thing we want. When Ministers were mere figure-heads, nobody cared to look at them. But today people look up to them, as they are in a position to do some little good. But there their power ends. In spiritual matters also, I would give up many minor gains, in order to have one supreme achievement. If, however, after going to the councils, these people achieve something substantial, I shall congratulate



them. I am telling the British Cabinet also that if they accept prohibition, I shall make up for the loss of 250 million rupees that may accrue to the Government in their revenue receipts. But it loses all its charm and credit to you, if you give up drink only under the laws' compulsion."

Speech after a visit to a *pinjrapole* (institution for feeding old cows and other animals): 'I feel both happy and grieved at the visit of your institution. What I see here is good intentions but what of knowledge to implement them. Every *pinjrapole* should have 4 sections: (1) For maimed animals. (2) For providing an ideal cattle-breeding centre. Our cattle are as rotten today as we men in India. There should be an excellent sturdy bull for improving the breed of cows. One such is enough for about 10 or 20 cows. (3) Arrangement should be made for producing the best quality milk, chhach (curds mixed with water); cream and cheese. Cheese commands a good market. It contains the same nitrogen as you get in pulses. This institution should thus be a teaching centre in cow-protection through right methods. (4) There should be a tannery also. Under the present system we sell off raw hides for a paltry sum. This is highly unprofitable, because raw hides, if tanned properly, can fetch you more than a thousand rupees. What we need to know is the art of skinning a cow. How shall I describe the dirty method our tanner employs? You would feel sick, if you saw it. That is why it is necessary to teach right methods to our tanners also. They must learn to put to good use the bones, intestines etc., in fact everything in the cow's body. After we gave up taking beef, we made milk a sacred object. Similarly we must sanctify hides for the sake of cow-protection. I for one am going to claim that in the Ashram we use things made from the bones of the Ashram's dead cows. If we do all these things, we shall be able to provide milk for our children. And why should we, higher classes, not learn bone-crushing? You are free to use machines⁴ that may be necessary to carry on all these activities.

"Unintelligent love for the cow kills, but wise love keeps it alive. Finished hides worth 90 million rupees are at present imported. Why should we not stop that import altogether? Instead of buying finished hides, we ought to be able to possess a monopoly of selling them. Thousands of our young men today are slaves of Manchester. How can we combat the oppression we suffer from in South Africa, when we ourselves are slaves here? In the same way at present you are helpless against the export of our cows to Australia where they are slaughtered for beef."

Q: "Why don't you take up the *shuddhi* work?"



A: “Between Malaviyaji and myself there is an agreement that inasmuch we differ in many respects on this matter, I should not enter this field of work. Hence though I disagree, I keep quiet and remain aloof from that field. My entrance into that movement would only make a mess of it. But I do render service, though I remain outside. I believe that the good of my religion can be gained only by my wishing well of other religions. Take it therefore that I am not in that field for that reason.”

* * * *

“The situation etc. of this *pinjrapole* is sure to satisfy the visitor. No comment is perhaps necessary if it be regarded as a hospital for disabled cattle. But if it is taken as a means for protecting the cow, the donations the institution receives every year may be regarded as almost wasted. But this criticism applies not only to this but to all *pinjrapoles*. The following changes are necessary:

1. There should be one section for maimed animals. A competent veterinary surgeon should be consulted and his advice must be followed.
2. Another section should look after cattle-breeding. There may be in it excellent cows etc. as well as excellent bulls and the latter may also be sent out for use by citizens.
3. The third section may be reserved for the production of milk etc. It may go on increasing the number of cows it possesses and thus try to supply milk to the whole town.
4. The fourth for a tannery, where hides etc. of cattle dying in the premises as well as those brought from the town may be processed properly.

If men with the technical know-how are engaged for such institutions and a happy synthesis between *dharma* (religion) and *artha* (economics) made, they will gain day by day the capacity to possess more and more cattle.

—M.K.G.⁵

1. Owing to great pressure of time from his multifarious activities, Gandhiji was fond of extreme brevity in his speeches and writings. He left it to the people to ‘dot the *is* and scratch the *ts*’ with the result that his expressions were some times liable to different interpretations. M.D., moreover, used to take down long-hand notes and for it jot down significant words and phrases. Being in the know of things, he himself could expand



them into sentences bearing the right meaning, but it is difficult to do so now. I cannot therefore vouch for the complete correctness of these and such other reports.—Editor.

2. “To the extent that a well is of use when there is a flood of water on all sides, to the same extent are all the Vedas of use to an enlightened *Brahmana* (-one who has realised Brahma)” M.D.’s translation of the above verse (II-46) in his book, ‘The Gita according to Gandhi’.

3. This girl of about only 16 did Valiant work in the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa. Sentenced to 3 months’ imprisonment, she caught fever while still in jail. Under the terms of the Agreement she was released before the expiry of her term, but died only 11 days after her release.

4. Gandhiji was against indiscriminate use of machinery. He allowed it in cases in which it did not create unemployment for the masses.

5. This is perhaps what Gandhiji wrote down in a Visiting Book though there is nothing in M.D.’s Manuscript diary to indicate it as such.



3.3.1927

Weekly Letter(by M.D. in *Young India*)

The following is our further itinerary in Maharashtra:

16th, 17th February

Nasik District

18th February

Ahmednagar District

19th, 20th February

Sholapur District

21st February

Gulbarga

I have little to add this week to my impressions of Maharashtra. Down to south up to Sholapur one cannot fail to notice the same spirit of scepticism and even of apathy, if not antipathy, on the part of some of the intelligentsia. But even they must have had their eye-openers in the general awakening of the masses. Could they have imagined that Khadi purchases would be anything like so spontaneous and extensive as they were in Nasik, Ahmednagar and Sholapur? Our experience has been that wherever there was any opposition, the response to Khadi has been great. In Ahmednagar, Sangamner, Sholapur and Gulbarga practically all the Khadi was sold and some of the intending purchasers had to go back disappointed. In some of the places of the Sholapur District there was not enough Khadi to cope with the demand.

And the collections too have been quite good. Gandhiji himself has noted in some detail the way in which he was tempted to put not only the caskets but even the garlands to auction and the surprising way in which the results of the auction reacted on the enthusiasm of the people who contributed more to the fund which from the original amount of Rs. 2,700 went up to something over 5,000. The experiment has been continued with uniform success, not only in big places like Sholapur and Gulbarga, but even in small places like Akalkot where the garlands were knocked down at Rs. 50 to Rs. 60.

I noted the small but significant contribution from the mill-hands at Amalner. At Barsi where the purse was hardly creditable to the town, the mill-hands of Sri. Yashwantprasad Desai's mills gave a handsome donation of Rs. 101. And at Sholapur, thanks to the efforts of Sri. Shantikumar Narottam, the staff of the Sholapur Mills, as also the millhands of all the mills, and last but not the least the boy scouts (which Sri.



Shantikumar has organised from amongst the mill-hands, as part of the wonderful welfare work that the mills are doing) contributed handsomely.

After this brief account I shall take up some of the speeches of the last week and one or two of them summarize as well as space will permit me. There were six speeches at Dhulia as I have already said. There have been everywhere addresses from the local bodies. Let me summarize Gandhiji's reply to the Local Board address at Dhulia. 'During my wanderings throughout the land I have not yet come across a single local body which has been functioning of its own independent initiative and which I could point out to as an ideal body. Mr. Lionel Curtis remarking on the contrast between an Indian village and an English village said that whereas one gives you an impression of general untidiness and reminds you of a village built on a dung-hill, the other gives an impression of cleanliness and health and beauty all around. Of course he knew nothing of the condition of the Indian villager, he did not know that his daily income was five percent of that of the English villager. But let us not ignore one substratum of truth in his remark. There is no gainsaying the fact that our villager betrays a woeful ignorance of even the rudiments of village sanitation. One could deplore the race-prejudice amongst the South African Europeans, but their attempts to keep their towns healthy and sanitary were heroic and worthy of imitation. Do not say that politics occupy all your time and that you have no time for other things. It is a lame excuse. The capacity to look after the village and town sanitation is included in our capacity for Swaraj and when we demonstrate it, nothing on earth can stand between us and Swaraj. You may be sure that we shall be able to retain only as much as our capacity has won for us. Some of our local bodies keep only those roads clean as are likely to be used by Government officials, but they have no regard for the roads which are used day and night by poor villagers and their bullocks, and which are always and everywhere ill-kept. Can't we make the roads more easy and better negotiable and make the villagers' and the bullocks' lot a little less irksome?' At Sholapur he said he would leave just one thought with the Municipal Councillors who voted him the address. He agreed with Prof. Patrick Geddes that the town planning of a nation was the measure of its civilization, and he would add that not only individual, but communal and civic cleanliness was next to godliness.

The speeches at public meetings at Dhulia, Nasik, Sholapur and Gulbarga I shall have to note in some detail. At Dhulia the merchants had insisted on voting him an exclusive address and an exclusive purse, and in the address claimed Gandhiji as one



of them, as belonging to the Vaishya class. And in his reply they got more than they had bargained for. 'As I said at Jalpaiguri in 1925, it is not the Brahmins, nor the Kshatriyas nor the Shudras that lost India; it is the Vaishyas who lost India, and it is the Vaishyas alone who can regain it. Indian history is replete with instances of Banias (Vaishyas) who helped and served the English shopkeeper to the prejudice of India. The shopkeepers who came here in search of trade became warriors to protect their trade and became Brahmins too to maintain their dominion based on trade. Our *Varnashram dharma*¹ does not say that a Bania may not be a Kshatriya and fight for the honour of his mother and sister, nor does it say that a Bania may not acquire knowledge like a Brahmin and serve like the Shudra. The Englishman combined all the qualities in himself, and dazzled at his feat, we forgot our dharma, we became cowards, we forgot the real work of the Bania —agriculture, cow-protection and trade and became traitors to the motherland. You can retrieve the situation today by becoming true Banias again by capturing again the whole of the national trade. Our black caps, our mill *dhotis* and our women's fine *saris* are the badges of our shame and slavery. Instead of keeping the raw produce in our country and manufacturing it we looked to our narrow interests of the hour, sold the raw produce, and helped the Englishman to tighten his grip on us. We are engaged in our immoral trade today to the eternal ruin of our motherland. Doctors may heal if we are ill, lawyers may help us in law courts, but only merchants can win Swaraj. I want us to be the Vaishya of the Bhagwadgita, the Vaishya whose natural calling is protection of the cow, agriculture and trade, for his own country. If we were true to our calling why should a scrap of foreign cloth come to our country, why should a cow be sold to a butcher, why should nine crore (90 million) rupees worth of hides be sent out abroad? What is it that has so deadened our sense to our obvious duty? We think we must trade in foreign cloth, we refuse to listen if some one asks us to keep our dead cattle and treat their hides ourselves. We turn away in disgust when we are asked to convert our *pinjrapoles* (institutions for feeding old and maimed cows etc.) into good milk-producing centres and tanneries. I cannot tell you the deep agony of my soul. Do you think I am mistaken? Do you think I am in my dotage? I tell you I shall pocket all my pride and fall at the feet of any one who proves to me that I am wrong. Win me over to you, if you dare, otherwise follow me and take up the cause of Khadi and the cow.'

At Nasik a few young men came with a lengthy questionnaire to which Gandhiji replied at the public meeting in language which even more plainly than the speech at Dhulia, revealed the wonderful way in which Gita is becoming part of his daily life. At



Dhulia he expounded the meaning of *varnashram-dharma* and pointed out the duty of the merchant class in the terms of the Gita. At Nasik he gave a still longer application of the precept of the Gita.

“Are you partial to the Musalmans? Why don’t you answer the charges some of the Musalman leaders level against you?” was another question.

“I can do justice,” he said in reply, “to people of other faiths by appearing to be partial to them, and I know that I am protecting my own faith by showing, if you will, a reasoned partiality for other faiths. I do not, I cannot, wish to harm the Hindu religion, for I am after all a drop in the ocean of Hinduism. If Musalmans call me ‘Kaffir’, what then? What can be the answer to it? In South Africa a nephew of mine was staying with me. It was only when people said that I was partial to him, that he realized and I realized, that I was only just to him. The fact that the Musalmans are finding fault with me possibly suggests that I am not yet sufficiently partial to them to convince them that I am just to them. Why should I answer their charges? All my twenty-four hours are consecrated to the service of Lord Krishna who is ever with me, who guides my footsteps, and whom I always pray to do whatever is needed for me. He will answer for me, if there be any need.”

“If you fought for the Khilafat, why do you not fight for the Hindu Sangathan today?” was another question.

“The question is well asked. I had pledged myself to lay down my life for the Khilafat and I know that I was indirectly helping thereby the cause of the cow. ‘How much cow-protection have you achieved?’ you will ask. Very little, I admit. But what does it matter to me? To work you have the right and not to the fruit thereof, says Gita. It was at the bidding of the Lord that I offered my co-operation to Ali Brothers, and rendered whatever help I could. I have never had any reason to regret it. I would do the same thing should another occasion arise. That is the teaching of all our religious books. Let the people rail at me, insult me if they like. I am not going to pay them in their own coin. Mine is the religion of *tapashcharya*, the way of penance taught by the scriptures and by Tulsidas. That is the law of my being and I cannot do otherwise. ‘The whole creation’ says the Gita, ‘follows the law of its being. How will restraint then avail?’ My joy is in the fulfilment of my duty and the confidence that when some day the Musalmans join hands with the Hindus in protecting the cow,



everyone will say that the good result is due to the efforts of that mad Gandhi who died working for the cause.

“In my opinion, there is no sanction in Hinduism, Islam or Christianity for the *shuddhi*, *tabligh* or proselytising (respectively) as it is going on today. How then can I take part in the *shuddhi*? The Gita and Tulsī Ramayana teach me to resort to self-purification whenever I am or my religion is in danger. And what is true for me is true for all. That process of self-purification I am going through all the twenty-four hours of my days. Parvati, Narada had foretold, would have an ominous-looking husband. She knew that only Shiva was as blissful as he was ominous-looking and she performed penance for winning Shiva and won him. So the lesson of penance and self-purification is writ large everywhere in our scriptures and the Himalayas are the living witness to it—the Himalayas where countless Rishis ground their bodies to dust for self-purification. The Vedas, to me, are not the texts writ on paper, but my very conscience and the Indweller. They tell me to observe *yama* and *niyama* (the cardinal and the casual virtues) and trust everything to Lord Krishna. In all humility I claim that all my work is conducive to the service of Hinduism. As a Hindu, I could do nothing else. The way of doing it is of course my own.”

I reserve the Sholapur and Gulbarga speeches for the next letter.

After thus pointing out what everyone ought to do, Gandhiji proceeded further south to Chalisgaon. Then he left Khandesh District, went to Nandgaon and Malegaon and further on through the Nasik District to Nasik city. This city is second only to Poona in representing the culture of Maharashtra. Several young men were waiting for his arrival in order to get answers to questions which they had already framed. Those questions made the meeting at Nasik unusual, perhaps unique. As Gandhiji tackled one question after another, one felt like listening not to lecture on a political, social, or economic subject, but to a man who lived the Gita in his life, that is, one whose being was saturated through and through with Lord and with the love for his Gita.

Gandhiji Said:

“Some young men have handed me several written questions. Their answers themselves will constitute my lecture here.

“Here are the questions:



(Questions not dealt with already in M.D.'s Weekly Letter d. 3.3.1927, are given below.)

Q: “Don't you think that under the present situation, you should lay greater stress on the Shraddhananda Memorial Fund? If you do, why don't you contribute your share to the collection work of fund?”

A: “I am but an imperfect man. There is only one who is all-powerful and that is God. I know economics. I have dedicated to the country all the time and all the energy I have. I am not egotistic enough to feel that I should have a finger in every pie, that I alone must do everything. What more am I going to achieve for that work which engages the best attention of leaders like Pandit Malaviyaji and Lalaji? When 50 thousand rupees were collected in Calcutta for the Shraddhananda Memorial Fund, I was present at the meeting at Malaviyaji's behest. Malaviyaji himself expects from me nothing more. There are defined limits to my field of work. I am but an ordinary man trying to live according to the precepts of the Gita, and I know wherein lies my own part of the work, be it the smallest.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् |

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ||

“Better one's own duty, bereft of merit, than another's well performed; better is death in the discharge of one's duty; another's duty is fraught with danger.” — ‘The Gita according to Gandhi’ by M.D., III-35)

“However charming other's duties may look, my own limited duty is good for me, all others are dangerous.”

Q: “Is the fund you are collecting exclusively for Khadi? If so, how will you utilize it?”

A: “This fund is for Khadi alone, as it is collected for the All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. Deshbandhu's name is associated with it, because just a few days before his demise, he had framed a scheme for village organisation work. He loved Khadi work. The All India Spinners Association has been formed for the sole purpose of collecting, and properly spending, a fund for Khadi. Accounts of the fund are kept to a pie (smallest coin) and are open to the inspection of any member of the public. The Association has a Managing Committee, an Auditor



and Inspectors. It has at present submitted before the country a scheme for the enrolment of Khadi-workers. You will ridicule the Association and blurt out in disgust. ‘Thirty rupees a month! That’s nothing’. Agreed. Ours in an Association of miserable beggars, since it has been established for innumerable starving people. It is certainly not the ‘Indian Civil Service’, so that its servants may be paid in thousands of rupees. The I.C.S. is maintained from taxes imposed upon the people with the sole purpose of ruling over a subject country. Ours is the poor man’s institution intended not for lording it over the people but for serving them.”

Q: “Do you know that most of those who will contribute to your fund today are foreign-cloth merchants, and they will do so out of their love for you, not Khadi?”

A: “I don’t want a single paisa out of love for me. I want people to give me funds after understanding the implications of Khadi. You may give away other things from your love for me, say, foreign clothes. But I don’t want any contribution in money simply from love for me. The fact, however, is that businessmen give me money under the view that both they and the country lose nothing from the expansion of my business. They know that in the end they themselves will have to deal in Khadi. This they realize quite well, but at present they do not have sufficient will-power. They ask me to pray to God that they may gain that strength of will. In the meanwhile they support this activity by giving money for it. They do not give me money with a view to hoodwink me.”

Q: “Why do concentrate on Khadi work at the expense of more important political activities?”

A: “I have already stated that my field of work has well-defined limits. Even Duryodhana had stated the spheres within which his warriors were to fight: यथाभागमवस्थिताः | He asked them all to stay in their respective places and thus to protect Bhishma. Gita’s *Varnashram-dharma* prescribes specific functions and duties (for each caste and age of life) and asks everyone to understand and perform them. If India wants any work from me, it must recognize my limitations. It is quite possible that I can do other kinds of work quite as well, but others are already doing them. I have the firm conviction that Khadi work is *the* work that has got to be done and that none else can do it as efficiently as I.



I am therefore, confining myself to that work. Not that I do not love satyagraha and do not want to launch it, but where is the climate for it? It is through Khadi that I want to create a suitable atmosphere. Satyagraha is for me the breath of my life, but I regard it impossible to start it without this preparatory work for Khadi.”

Q: “Will you kindly state what concrete help you have got from Musalmans in your present tour?”

A: “It’s true I have got very little help from them. So what? My service of my family is not conditional, I do not enter into bargain with my wife or brother and tell them that I shall do this work if they do that. In the same way, I don’t wish to make contracts with either Musalmans or with Panditji (a Hindu nationalist) or with Kelkar (a political Responsivist). And why should we be afraid of Musalmans? Why not fear God instead? One need never fear man, never fear foul play from anybody. Putting the fullest trust in God, having the faith that, He will look after our welfare even if somebody is perfidious, let us go on performing our own dharma, irrespective of the other party.”

The speech had such an electric effect that the adverse atmosphere evaporated immediately and there was a rush for Khadi. As if to soften the shock the audience might feel in suddenly coming down to earth after being treated to such an elevating and profound speech, Gandhiji burst out with a laugh, ‘And now, I am sure, you will duly pay for the long speech you drew out from me,’ he said. Naturally, what he meant ‘payment’, was the Khadi purse and sale of Khadi.

From there we went down south to the Ahmednagar District. The system of selling presents was already established in the Khandesh District, but it reached its climax in Ahmednagar. The casket was sold off for Rs. 100/—, but more striking still was the sale of garlands. It is now many years since Gandhiji has been feeling an aversion to wearing garlands. Even in 1917 he stated at a meeting of Gujarati Jains that it ill became, of all persons the Jains (Jainism lays perhaps the greatest stress on *ahimsa* (non-injury) to all things- sentient or insentient), to pluck flowers and make a garland of them. In addition to this dislike Gandhiji was told in effect: “What can we give you when ours is a famine district, a poor man’s land?” Gandhiji turned this argument against its advocates and exclaimed: “How ever can I accept this (garland) when I am in the midst of such stark penury? Every pice in this land must go to the poor and how



can we pluck flowers from their stems when we know that life pulsates in leaves and flowers just as it does in us? But as these flowers have already been plucked, it would be best to put them to a good use, i.e., for helping the poor.”” And so Gandhiji put the garlands too for auction. They brought as many as Rs. 500/—. This sale of garlands was repeated at the conference of the Marwaris. The audience understood quite well the message of the service of the poor and thus what was originally a purse of Rs. 1700/—, grew into that of Rs. 5200/— through the auction of garlands and casket and through fresh donations by some donors. Thus in two ways the flowers proved that they were animate. There was an excellent sale of Khadi at Ahmednagar as well as at Sangamner, a town in the Ahmednagar District.

1. The four castes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and shudras with the duties of religious study and rites, protection of the land, cow-protection and agriculture and commerce, and service assigned to them respectively. Ashrams are four stages of life, those of the student, the householder, the retired elder and the sannyasi.



19.2.1927

KURDUVADI

After Shri Raimalbhai's introductory speech Gandhiji said in substance:

“How can we take hard drinks through the same lips with which we chant Ramnama? Can that mouth which is thus filled with dharma to some extent at least be smirched with alcohol?”

BARSHI

A purse of Rs. 500/—was presented on condition that the amount was to be spent after village organisation in only their Barshi Taluka. Referring to the condition Gandhiji said: (in effect):

“There was no need to make such a condition. In the first place your purse is very small. In the second, the All India Congress Committee would never hesitate to spend money wherever it finds it necessary. 75,000/—Rs. have been sanctioned for Utkal, though that province's contribution may not have been more than only Rs. 5,000/—, and not a paisa would be given to that place where no Khadi work is being done. Your contribution would be utilized in only your taluka, if there was found in it a village in which women were spinning and Khadi-work done. Even small villages of the district from which I am coming have contributed more than you. Karmala, has given Rs. 751/—. Why then this poor amount in Barshi? Do you know the ramifications of this work?”

Gandhiji then explained the importance of Khadi activity by comparing the average daily incomes in India and Britain.

Referring to the present of a garland, Gandhiji said:

“You cannot please an agent of Ralli Brothers (a European firm dealing in foreign cloth) with the presentation of a garland. He would be gratified only if you give him orders for his cloth. I too am a representative of the Daridranarayan Firm and we want orders for 1,200 million rupees.”



19/20/21.2.1927

Then we went south into the Sholapur District. As we go deeper into Maharashtra, the fear that our Khadi-tour through it will be a flop is belied more and more. Not that opponents do not try make it unsuccessful, but the masses pour cold water on their enthusiastic efforts to make it so. These opponents, poor men, might never have imagined in the beginning that at the end of the tour in this province a hundred thousand rupees would be collected easily and that wherever Gandhiji would go the stock of Khadi would be exhausted. And the beauty of it was that wherever an opposition had raised its head, the sale of Khadi was all the more brisk. At Sholapur a regular propaganda to show the futility of Khadi work and advise people to abstain from contributing to the purse to be given to Gandhiji had been started some time before our arrival. An attempt was made even to impress upon the people that their donation would be used not for Khadi-work, but for removal of untouchability, i.e. for the ruin of Hindu Religion. But the purse at that same Sholapur reached the amount of 6500 rupees—the highest in Maharashtra.

A very large part of the honour for this achievement goes to Sri Shantikumar Narottom. He had started collection for the fund many days before we reached Sholapur. Though the owner of a big mill himself, he loves Khadi very ardently. Not only did he personally contribute handsomely, but got donations from many others—from the clerical staff and labourers of his own and other mills, other mill-owners and Marwari gentlemen. But the contribution of the mill-workers of the district has a special charm. At Amalner they contributed their mites, at Barshi the handful of labourers of Sri Yashwantprasad Desai gave still more, i.e. Rs. 101/-. Then at Sholapur they gave Rs. 500/-. But over and above this contribution from labour, Sri. Shantikumar induced even the children of his labourers to give something. The labour-welfare work of the Sholapur Mills is quite well-known. There may be very few mills that can compare with the Sholapur Mills in its provision for education of the labourers' children, for implements of their play and recreation, for medical aid to labourers and residential quarters for them in fresh-air surroundings. But even more remarkable than all this welfare work is Sri Shantikumar's concern for the children of the labourers. He has organised a *Bal-veer-sena* (a troop of boy-scouts, literally, 'boy-heroes'). They gave Gandhiji a purse of Rs. 51/- from the half-day salary of each Boy Scout.



20.2.1927

After Gandhiji's silence ended at 6 p. m., he explained to the "Bal-veers" the meaning of the word "veer":

"The characteristics of a brave warrior are forgiveness, and mercy. He who is merciful plies the *takli*. You do it, but you must know the significance of spinning. There are many children in India poorer than even those of mill-labourers. You turn this *takli* in order to mentally link yourselves with them."

At a women's meeting Gandhiji said:

"This is my second visit of Sholapur. In this national sacrifice of spinning, women's share is as great as men's. Bharat has caught paralysis, half its body has become completely inactive. Woman is that complementary half. Neither man nor woman can live without the other half. They form an inseparable pair—a two-in-one. Hence, if woman is denied as many rights and privileges as man enjoys or if she does not exercise them as fully as man, it may be said that the society is suffering from paralysis of half its body. That is our present state in political as well as social matters. Hence, if we do not receive our women's full contribution we are not going to achieve our welfare."

In reply to the Municipal Address:

"I am glad that untouchables are allowed to use public tanks and wells here. During my peregrination all over India, I said somewhere, 'I long to see at least one Ideal city'. I wish your town becomes one such. I have not had the chance to see your latrines and gutters. As a rule visitors leave the town after seeing its impressive buildings, but it is my practice to eschew the sight of palatial buildings and visit huts, to see latrines after seeing libraries. I agree with Sir Patrick Geddes in one of his observations. He says, one can get a true picture of the culture of a country from a sight of the structure and management of its cities and roads. That statement contains this nugget of truth, namely, the culture of that country is divine in which latrines, gutters, residential buildings etc. are as clean as its libraries and temples. The outer cleanliness of that people may be a reflection of their inner cleanliness. We must give up our claim of being theists—believers in God—if we do not know how to preserve cleanliness. Our shastra teaches both outer and inner, individual and civic, cleanliness. God dwells in libraries as well as in all other things. I have written somewhere that one can as well take God's name (Ramnama) in latrines also. They afford real solitude.



Solitude may tend to produce a lustful urge also, but if it does not and if we remember God, it may cool down our passions.

“But this is to take you into deep waters. As I talked of cleanliness, I said so much on deeper things of life, but now I end. I wish you to follow the Ahmednagar Municipality in this matter.

“I have no means to keep with me the silver articles you have given me. As, moreover, I have come here as a self-appointed representative of the multi-millions of my sisters and brothers of India. I must not accept them. It is my duty to turn them into cash and give the money to the poor.

“And why should you spend money after these flowers? One cannot be fit for the service of Lord Daridranarayana so long as one cannot very adequately account for the smallest penny. I wish you also are fired with this same burning zeal for scrupulous care for public money.”

In the midst of great difficulties Sri Samant is carrying on Khadi work in Sholapur District. In his small Khadi-shop, there was a tremendous rush of buyers on the day of Gandhiji’s visit. Khadi worth Rs. 5,000/-was disposed off in no time at the public meeting in the evening.

The public meeting at Sholapur may be termed ‘ideal’ as regards order and quiet. Gandhiji took advantage of that silence and answered some of the charges made against him in open letters.

“First of all I thank you for the purse and the picture. I have often stated the reason for collecting this fund. My tour this time is for the spread of the spinning wheel. But the name of the fund is the All-India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, as some of the last words of Deshbandhu stated that village-organisation could be achieved through Khadi alone. That was why the leaflet containing a public appeal for this memorial fund clearly stated that that memorial would be made not in brick and mortar but in the spread of Khadi and the spinning wheel. In answer to the question how that way of spending was a fitting memorial I shall say only one thing. The daily income today of the multi-millions of India is 3 paise, (1 Re.=64 paise) and the question faces us as to what occupation should be provided to this huge mass of humanity in order to increase that meagre income. This spinning activity is going on for the last five or six years. While there have been ups and downs in all other things, this Khadi work is the one that has never known an ebb and is ever rising.



“Now let me answer the accusations that have been made in a letter I have received. Everyone who wants to do public work ought to answer any question put to him, even if it is not framed in a polite language. I am asked, ‘Is there any sense in your Khadi work, when Khadi-wearers are hypocrites?’ (Cheers). (As the earlier part of this answer is given in M.D.’s letter d. 10.3.1927, it is dropped here.)

“I am a businessman all over. Like a representative of Ralli Brothers, I am an agent or servant of Lord Daridranarayana. With the only difference that I am a self-appointed representative. But I have with me the certificate of my national service to prove that I am an accredited agent. If you can believe me let me tell you that more Khadi was sold in 1923 than in 1922 and increasingly more still in 1924, 1925, 1926. Thus 950,000 rupees were given to women spinners alone, not to speak of the different amounts given to washermen, dyers and others. On the authority of the report that is lying with me, I say that Khadi work is going on at present in 1500 villages. There is not a single institution in the country which can boast of or even think of such a vast net-work of village-organisation. The spinning wheel is an activity which can never incur any loss. Multi-millions are dying of starvation today. Does it make any sense to talk of Swaraj, to these people when they are on the point of death? If you want to capture their hearts with love there is no way in at least India except that of the constructive programme.

“This is a work which everyone can do. Young men have joined it in the branches of the Spinners Association. Why do you talk of making them give up such really good and easy work? You can indeed say that you have no aptitude for this work. Well then, I shall show you another—that of cow-protection. I like that activity myself. It has already started functioning. Raw hides worth 90 million rupees are exported. There are 1500 *pinjrapoles* (homes for animals) in the country at present and still you are unable to have a single slaughter-house closed.

“But if that work (of conducting dairies or tanneries) is not to your taste, join me for exclusively Khadi work. All the activities—Khadi, removal of untouchability, cow-protection, all of them—are equal in my eyes. You can contribute money for whatever among them you like. But of course the Spinners Association confines itself to only one work—that of the spread of the spinning wheel and the production of Khadi.

“Then there is another objection raised. In effect it says: ‘You are personally a good man. But what does your work actually tend to? It leads to the destruction of



Hindu Dharma.’ I say, “Dont mix up *Shuddhi* and *sangathan* (activities of conversion to and organisation of Hinduism) with this Khadi work of mine. The human being as such has failings, is imperfect. God alone is perfect and. every individual is cramped with imperfections. I am full of thousands of them. Bear with my faults and accept only the few good qualities I have. If you don’t overlook my defects and don’t put to use my capacity to serve you, what will the future historian say of you? He will say, ‘Once upon a time a good man and true, a blind devotee of God, came to serve the people. Much service was already done through his hands, but then people saw only the defect in his eyes and refused to accept service from even his hands!’”

“Why do you bring in *shuddhi-sangathan* to obstruct my Khadi work? And yet I have never concealed my views on them. At Nasik, I dwelt upon them at great length. I cannot understand the *shuddhi* and the *tabligh* (conversion to Islam) as they are carried on at present. This attempt to make people change their religion is beyond my ken. But that is my own personal opinion. Nobody stops at my instance from doing *shuddhi* or *tabligh* work. I must confine myself to doing my duty as I see it. I must go on doing my own *shuddhi* (purification). When I shall purify myself, people around me will do the same. With the beat of drums our *shastras* proclaim that only self-purification through penance is the means of the protection of Hinduism. Sage Narad said to Parvati, “You will marry one who will have inauspicious signs all about him, but Lord Shankara will set everything right.” So Parvati performed an austere penance and Lord Shankar Himself came to her. It is my firm conviction that Hindu dharma can be protected through austere penance. You organise yourselves to any extent you like, but that organisation should have for its foundation benevolent intentions. There must never be an organisation inspired by malicious motives.

“Then there is another criticism. I see the faults of Hindus only. (This charge was answered at the Nasik meeting also. At this meeting it was rebutted in a different way.—M.D.)

“I am not sorry for my attitude even if it be true that I am partial to Musalmans and blame only the Hindus. But Musalmans don’t agree that I side with them. If they did, nothing so good. But the fact is, I give them only due justice. And even if I were partial to them, is Hindu dharma harmed thereby? If I give anybody something more than I owe to him, God is not going to blame me. He will condemn me only if I paid back even a paisa less than his due. You must not therefore feel offended, if my heart or hand treats Musalmans or anybody else liberally. It will be for you rather a matter



of pride in future that there was among you, a madcap, one Gandhi by name who gave to Musalmans even more than they wanted. Lord ShriKrishna made Pandavas give up everything save only five villages. In order to do anybody justice there is only way—that of giving the other party as much as one can. I asked a boy Scout, ‘What is the meaning of ‘Scout’?’ He said ‘Boy-hero.’ I then told him the first quality of a hero is forgiveness. Udhishthira (the eldest Pandava) said, ‘Forgiveness means giving away to the other party more than his proper share’. That is a characteristic of a brave warrior. Hindu Dharma is replete with examples of forgiveness and compassion.

“It should be a matter not of sorrow but of joy to you that there was among you one Hindu who practised in his life to the best of his ability the great principles of Hindu Dharma and gave away to others the maximum he could.

“But how will the money be spent?” I am asked. ‘Will it be used up for Khadi production? Can you not keep the fund intact and use only its interest?’ I say ‘To keep a fund intact and use only its interest for doing any public work is not the right way of doing the work. When I have a big reserve fund and do my work from its interest only, I shall cease to care for public criticism and get puffed up with pride. I learnt this maxim ever since I was a young man. So I made it a rule not to do any public work from only the interest accruing from a reserve fund.’

“The right kind of interest on the basis of which any public work should be done is the people’s love for and faith in the work. When 10 million rupees were called for and subscribed (by the public in 1921), they were the vital need of the day. True, some people mis-appropriated some amount from it, but such losses are a common thing in every business firm. Regardless of my unworthiness, you all put your faith in me and gave your money to one whom you trusted. From that fund some people stole some amount. But the loss to the All India Congress Committee from such malpractices is not going to be greater than that which falls to the lot of any big businessman, dealing in millions of rupees.

“I am going to continue asking for money from you, so long as I can give you a good account of the money I get. As long as you love and trust me, please have the same faith in my activities and give me money for them. But if you feel that my activity is worthless, forget me and my name (Mahatma) altogether. I am neither proud of that title nor do I possess any extraordinary power to deserve it. I am but a drop. I have the power of only an ordinary man. If you cannot help calling me ‘Mahatma’, well, you



may do so, but remember that my 'Mahatma-ship' is nothing but the reflection of your own power. There was a suggestion that if I could not talk to the people today, I should let them have at least my 'darshan' on this my silence-day. The idea pained me. I don't wish to give 'darshan' to anybody. With what face can I give a 'darshan'? I am not spiritually fit for giving darshans to anybody. I like neither the word 'darshan' nor the word 'Mahatma'. If you are bent upon having a 'darshan' have it of Khadi. Have the darshan of the power Khadi possesses. We are but image of clay—all full of shortcomings. Just as you cannot do without food and water and sleep, so can I not. As there are faults and perversions in you, so are they in me. Where then is the sense in having my 'darshan'? Better have the darshan of God—the Formless, the Faultless, the Detached. He gives His darshan everywhere and always. You can have his darshan in a latrine as well in a temple. Fill up your heart with His darshan. What are you going to gain from the darshan of one like myself?

"I therefore tell you, 'Don't fall into a delusion. Don't give me anything unless you like my activity'. How can I believe that Khadi is a losing business? When I had no other course but to take 17 annas per yard, I used to charge that rate for Khadi. They complained to me that Khadi was thick and did not last long. I said, 'What could I do? I eat whatever kind of roti my mother makes—whether well-baked or ill. But now I sell Khadi in Gujarat at 8 annas per yard'. There is indeed some loss at some places. I do not wish to include the expenses of the officers of the All India Spinners Association for fixing the sale-price of Khadi. But that Association itself would become unnecessary, if all Marwaris (businessmen) take up Khadi work. But today you have become selling agents of Lancashire and Morarji (Indian Mill). You have no reason to fear a loss in Khadi business even if you count the expenses of the Spinners Association in fixing the price of Khadi, as those expenses are not heavy. But donations are requested from you in order to enable the peasant to preserve his cotton so that he can turn it into Khadi for himself. And all the money stays in the country itself. Do you think the nine hundred and fifty thousand rupees that we gave have been thrown into the sea? (Holding up some foreign cloth in his hand:) It is this money that you throw into the sea. If *artha* (economics) does not go hand-in-hand with *dharma* (religious duty), *dharma* is never going to flourish. Take a few quiet moments to think out the profound meaning Khadi bears. You may save as many cows as you like (Marwaris spend large sums to maintain disabled cows), but if you want to save the life of that other cow of India—the human cow, that is as helpless as the animal, only, it has no horns and is a biped—and if you want to save her honour, you must give money for



Khadi. This is a call for 1200 million rupees. It is true the spinning wheel gives only one anna per day, but that it gives to the woman who is unemployed. And this is not giving doles in charity. This is a matter of giving money in payment for work taken. This Khadi work is of that unexceptionable kind—simple and straight. It is such a good activity that people give money out of love for it. You may criticize other things to your hearts' content, but please don't block the progress of this. Help it rather, by wearing Khadi. Take a vow to wear Khadi from now and thus make it a point to help this old man.

“Untouchables too have sent me a leaflet. It is for them that I have become a Bhangi (scavenger). You cannot take Swaraj by merely chanting like a parrot the name of Swaraj. What did he (Tilak Maharaj) who gave us the mantra of Swaraj tell us? He showed that he deserved the people's title 'Lion' by going on writing even at the time of his wife's death. (The fact is that when she died, Lokamanya Tilak was in jail at Mandalay in Burma.—Editor). How are you going to instil potency into that *mantra* without doing any tangible work for it? If that work be charity for the poor, untouchables have the right of first priority for getting education in our schools, drawing water from our wells and entering into our temples. But we have denied them these rights all along. Therefore I say, 'repent and atone for these sins.' There is no sense in praising Shradhanandji. What will you gain by merely uttering his name if you don't practise the precepts of the Bhagwad-gita? It says that the Bhangi (sweeper) is entitled to as much service by you as the Brahmin. If a Brahmin and a Bhangi are both starving, I shall first feed the Bhangi and then the Brahmin. That is really what Hindu culture teaches. If we do not purify the untouchables, i.e. do not purify ourselves, what else do we have to do? If the untouchable is ready to listen to me, I shall tell him, 'Even if I take food pronounced impure by the *shastras*, you at least must desist. Even if I drink alcohol, You must not. For, my faults will be overlooked, not Yours'. But whether untouchables eat uneatable things or not, whether they drink alcohol or not, we (high-caste Hindus) must embrace them with love and pity. To call such people 'untouchables' is as good as becoming untouchables ourselves.”

For a short time, the same atmosphere prevailed as at the Nasik meeting. Everyone was profoundly moved, it seemed. The result was that when Gandhiji began to sell Khadi, it was found difficult to cope with heavy demand.



10.3.1927

(M.D.'s article in *Young India* on Sholapur and Gulbarga)

Two Speeches

As promised in my last letter I summarize the speeches at Sholapur and Gulbarga. As at Nasik the speech at Sholapur was a reply to questions and criticisms made in an open letter addressed to Gandhiji by some people from the town. Their first criticism was that 'those who appeared in Khadi on the occasion of Gandhiji's visit were hypocrites inasmuch as they would shelve it the day he left. Did that indicate the progress of Khadi?'

"Well", said Gandhiji with gusto, "I do not know. I know that I am selling Khadi wherever I go, and there ends my work. Supposing you purchase from me millions of rupees worth of Khadi and sink it into the sea, the sale is not vitiated. But the criticism is unfair. I know that some wear Khadi for the occasion but they do not disguise the fact. They appreciate the message of Khadi, but they say that they cannot exclusively wear it for a number of reasons. Am I to tell them, "You are no good. I can do without your Khadi?' No, no. My duty is to define our dharma in its fullness. Their duty is to follow it as much as they can. People deceive me, you say. I do not understand how they harm me even if they do. I am but a self-appointed agent of *Daridranarayan* and I shall take from you only what you can give me."

The other question was practically the same as at Nasik. "You are good enough," they say, 'but your work has ruined the country.' "I am but an erring mortal and like any one of you I am full of shortcomings, therefore I beseech you to reject them and simply make the best of my capacity for service. Turn my good points to account and reject the bad ones. If you do not pick and choose and reject me wholesale, what will the world say to you? Will you regret the service of a man as a carrier (*sic*) because he is blind?

"As I said at Nasik, I fail to understand the *Shuddhi*, *tablig* and proselytisation as they are carried on today. I cannot understand a man changing the religion of his forefathers at the instance of another. But that is my personal conviction. No one need stop *shuddhi*, *tablig* or proselytisation at my instance. My own duty is clear. I must go on purifying myself and hoping that only thereby would I react on my surroundings. It is my unshakable conviction that penance and self-purification are the only means for



the protection of Hinduism. Do any amount of *Sangathan* (organisation), only let not that *Sangathan* be of the evil forces, let it be only of the forces of good.”

Again in this speech he referred to the usual charge made against him of partiality for the Musalmans, and gave, possibly, a more vigorous answer: “You say I am partial to the Musalmans. So be it, though the Musalmans do not admit it. But my religion will not suffer by even an iota by reason of my partiality. I shall have to answer my God and my Maker if I give any one less than his due, but I am sure that He will bless me if He knows that I gave some one more than his due. I ask you to understand me. If my hand or heart has done anything more than was anyone’s due, you should be proud of it, rather than deplore it. It should be a matter of pride to you as Hindus to think that there was amongst you at least one who was not only just to the Musalmans, but even went out of his way in giving them more than their due. Hinduism is replete with instances of tolerance, sacrifice and forgiveness. Think of the sacrifice of the Pandavas, think of the forgiveness of Udhishthira. Should it be a matter of sorrow for you, that there is at least one man who has tried to carry out the precept of Hinduism to the letter?”

But these to him were nothing before the charge of hypocrisy of the so-called followers which was more serious, and he concluded his speech with a fervent appeal to them: “If there is anything in the charge that you are wearing Khadi just to please me, and for show, I say, for God’s sake do not do so. I am not a Mahatma. If I am one, the Mahatmaship is but the expression of some Shakti (Power). Pray do nothing for my sake. I shuddered when some one proposed that though I was silent, I should exhibit myself for *darshan*. I assure you the words *darshan* and *Mahatma* stink in my nostrils. I am unworthy of giving *darshan*. Even like you I am a vessel of clay, liable to all the affections and passions that flesh is heir to. How can I be fit to give you *darshan*? One and only one *darshan* is necessary, viz., that of the nameless, formless, indefinable, absolute. Try if you can to see Him everywhere, in a poor man’s hut as in a palace, in a latrine as well as in a temple. Have if you will the *darshan* of Khadi and visualise its immense potentialities. Dismiss the mortal frame called-Gandhi from your mind. It’s *darshan* will be of no avail.”

The Gulbarga speech was a more passionate outpouring of the heart agony. Though no reference was made in the addresses given or the speeches made at the meeting to the “Gulbarga gone mad” of 1924, (reference to Gandhiji’s article on the communal riots at Gulbarga) the memory of it was not absent from any one’s mind,



not at any rate from Gandhiji's mind. In the course of a speech that must have thrilled both the Hindus and Musalmans gathered in the vast courtyard of the famous Sharana Basappa Temple which still bore the marks of the mob-fury of 1924, Gandhiji said:

“My heart burns in agony when I see young men dressed in foreign caps and clothes. It is surprising that they do not see that whilst the rupees that they spend on foreign caps are wasted, the annas that they need spend on Khadi caps go to the pocket of the poor. The man who shuts his eyes to the poor of his land and seeks to befriend the poor of the world must be mad indeed. God will find him guilty of arrogating to himself His function. The Hindu who recites his *Gayatri* regularly and the Musalman who says his *namaz* five times a day are doing so in vain, if they have no corner in their hearts for the poor of their land. This is the message I would leave with the Hindus and Musalmans of this place.”

Turning to the Hindu-Muslim question he said: “Much as I would like to pour out my agony before you I know that it will be a cry in the wilderness. I therefore daily send out my prayer to God: ‘Lord, do something to deliver us from this conflagration.’ But I should be untrue to my creed if as a believing and Satyagrahi Hindu I disguised from you the feelings within me. When I went into the temple I was shown the spot where the idol was removed and the *Nandi* (holy bull of Lord Shiva) was desecrated. I tell you the sight pained me. You may call me an idolator if you will. I see God everywhere and in everything. I tell you God would never approve of those acts of desecration. While in Yervada jail, I read Maulana Shibli's life of the Prophet. I also read *Usva-e-Saheba* and can say that those who did the acts were wrong, that Islam never sanctions such things and that they were guilty before God and man. When I heard of these things I was convinced that the matter had passed out of my hands. If there were men who devoted all their time and energy to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, I at least was one of them, but when my efforts did not seem to bear any fruit, I threw myself on God. When the saints and God-fearing people of Islam saw that there was discord and strife after the passing away of the Prophet, they dissociated themselves from them, migrating to Egypt, Persia and other lands and there retired into seclusion and sent up their prayers to God. It is these that have kept Islam alive. How often have I wished to retire thus into seclusion! And though I know that history will take note of my efforts as those of one who was a servant of God, who committed Himalayan blunders but who had also the courage to confess them and repent for them. I know that today I can do no better than be silent on the question.



“But if you will not listen to me in that matter, you certainly will not disdain to think of the millions of the poor amongst you. Do you know that many of the spinners in Bihar, Bengal and the Punjab out of the 50,000 spinners in India for whom the A.I.S.A. finds employment, are Musalmans? Have you read the heart-rending tales of woe of some of them? One of the workers in Gujarat asked a Musalman woman aged 65 as to why she bothered to spin when spinning brought her only one anna per day. She said that the fact that there was some one to give her an anna in return for the yarn she spun convinced her that there surely must be God somewhere. Fight therefore as much as you wish, but when a man like me appeals for help, pray, forget your quarrels and your hostilities and do some-thing for the cause he pleads.”



(Repetition of some sentiments has always been allowed to appear in the reproduction verbatim of M.D.'s letters in English and translation of his Gujarati articles in view of the variations also that they contain.—Translator).

22.2.1927

(M.D.'s article in Gujarati)

From Sholapur we went to Gulbarga. Who does not know Gulbarga? Gandhiji's speech seemed replete with the recollection of the recent events (Hindu-Muslim riots) there. The people of Gulbarga gave him a purse of 2,500/- rupees and showered deep love on him. Here are a few extracts from that memorable speech:

“When young men wearing foreign caps and clothes approach me, my heart bleeds with anguish. It passes my understanding, why young men cannot understand that the one and a half rupees they spend on a foreign cap are thrown into the sea, while the five annas of a Khadi cap go into a hut of the poor man. That man is a madcap who, forgetting the poor of his own land, seeks the poor of other lands for serving them. Khuda will call him brain-sick. He will tell him, ‘First mind the naked and hungry of your own land then think of those of the world outside. For the latter, I am there to think of them.’ It is not your business to neglect your neighbour and feel concerned about others. Vain are the prayers etc. of that man who chants the Gayatri Mantra if he is a Hindu, or does Namaz five times daily and has a sore forehead by doing *sijda* if he is a Musalman, if he does not help the poor in any way. Do you know that the thing that saves from a life of shame thousands of Hindu women in Madras and thousands of Muslim women in Bengal and Bihar is Khadi? But how is it possible for you to know that fact, when you had become tigers and started cutting one another's throats? That is what I call downright ignorance, beastliness. I have come here to pour out anguish of my soul.”

That last sentence brought him to the Hindu-Muslim question: ‘I have washed my hands on this affair. Who is there to listen to my cry? There is only one left for me to pray and appeal to and that is God. I go on praying to Him, ‘O, God, save India from this calamity.’ But there are many Musalmans sitting here today. Why may I not make them hear the cry of my heart, when I am their well-wisher, when I am a believer in Khuda and Satyagrahi? ‘When I went to the temple, I was told that the idol was destroyed and the Nandi shattered to pieces. I am an idol-worshipper and at the same time one who bends his head in reverence at every holy place. Khuda never imprisons



Himself in any particular place. I read the life of Mohammad the Prophet by Maulana Shibli in Yarvada Jail, and read *Al-kalam* also. And I for one saw the same thing, in both Vedanta and *Al-Kalam*. I read *Sirat* and *Usva-e-Saheba* too. After reading all these books I say that you had no business to break the idol. Musalmans have become culprits in God's eyes by breaking it.

“I am fed up at the sight of such fights. If there was any individual who used to spend his whole life in trying to end these quarrels, I was definitely one such. But when I saw that my efforts were washed, I gave up, resigned myself to God's will and sat quiet. I am reminded of one event in Islamic history in this context. When after the demise of the Prophet, His true followers saw that quarrels had broken out for possessing power, they said, ‘We can't take part in these bickerings.’ Some of them went away to Egypt, Persia and Turkey and some resorted to the solitude of the caves—just as our rishis (sages) used to hid to the solitary caves of the Himalayas. It is these spiritual men who have kept Islam alive, till now. I too feel like saying to myself: “O soul! Thou too should find out a cave and pray to God.” But I believe firmly that when in future the history of the Hindu-Muslim question is written, it will state about me ‘He was a man of God; though he committed Himalayan blunders, he performed penances for his redemption.’ Today I am sitting quiet in resignation to God's will, but I have come here to tell you this much at least: ‘Think of the hungry and naked of at least your own community.’ Hundreds, nay, thousands of Muslim women are being helped by Hindu workers and there nobody has any time to spare for these communal feuds. How can that man quarrel whose stomach cries out in gratitude? When an old dame of 60 was asked, ‘Do you feel highly gratified with this pitiful one anna for all your yarn?’, she remarked, ‘For certain there is God on earth, as He feeds my mouth with roti worth one anna.’ Hence I tell you, ‘Goon fighting, if you must. But when a man like myself comes to you, forget your quarrels, forget your enmity and animosity and do at least something to help me in my work.’

Gandhiji then toured through some places in Sholapur District and went to Pandharpur. He proceeded from thence to Sangli, Fultan and other Indian States and reached Satara.



25.2.1927

SATARA

A ladies' meeting was held. Gandhiji said: 'Mrs. Gandhi never claims her right as a woman.' That nudged an English missionary lady to observe 'That's better than having no rights at all.' Gandhiji remarked, 'The heart of a holy woman never fails to express itself through her behaviour—as I had seen in the case of one of my clients, Sita's (Rama's spouse) purity impressed itself upon others also.'

Opening the Chhatrapati Shahu Hostel for students before a meeting of untouchables, Gandhiji said:

"I am highly delighted to hear of the sacrifice and work of Bhaorao. I thank you for asking me to perform the naming ceremony of this building. If the devil of untouchability is not destroyed, revival of Hinduism is an impossibility. Know, however, that untouchability is being destroyed more and more every day."

Address to the members of the Municipality and the Local Board:

"I thank you for your addresses. Please do not expect a long reply from me, attend the public meeting, where I will say whatever I want to. I shall regard your purse of Rs. 501/- as a token of your love for me."

There was a public meeting where untouchables presented their address to Gandhiji. He replied:

"30 minutes at the most have been fixed for this meeting. I want to do some permanent work within that time. Mere speechifying will do good neither to you nor me. What the untouchables have said is true. If we have faith in what Shraddhanandji said, let us believe that Hinduism will be destroyed if untouchability is not rooted out.

"But my present work is confined to Khadi and spread of the spinning wheel. We must earn the fitness to make fruitful the mantra which Lokamanya Tilak taught us. Deshbandhu Das taught us another mantra. He said, 'As long as we do not reconstruct our villages, we cannot gain Swaraj.' It was in the last days of his life that he came to the realization of this truth. Shraddhanandji gave us the mantra of *Shuddhi* (purification.) It is impossible to gain Swaraj without the implementation of this triple programme suggested by that trio. How can you think of getting Swaraj, without bringing about a spiritual contact with the poor of India? How can he do any good to



them, who rides on their shoulders? Hunger is unbearable. When Vishwamitra grew hungry, he committed the double sin of stealing and eating forbidden food. (This sage, when he awoke from his long trance, found nearly all his disciples gone away owing to the famine that was raging then. He decided to perform a sacrifice to bring down the rains, but first he ate a dead dog's flesh to get sufficient strength after his long fast during the trance).

“I do not ask for alms for the poor. On the contrary I say, ‘Give them money only after taking work from them.’ The man who provides an activity that adds one single anna (1/16th of a rupee) to the poor man's daily income of only 3 paise (3/4th of an anna—the average income being 1 anna, the poor's average is taken at 3 paise) bestows heavenly bliss on the poor.

“I said to the gentlemen there (at the meeting of the Municipal and Local Board members) that I would deliver my speech here, I have come here as a representative of Lord Daridranarayan. What will you give him?”

The meeting at Satara was excellent, but the purse given did not become the district. Only Rs. 500/- from the whole Satara District! A lot of Khadi however was sold at Satara. And the garlands, the casket and the small box containing the auspicious substances, vermilion and turmeric, were auctioned.



10.3.1927

Weekly Letter

(by M. D. in *Young India*)

Readers of *Young India* who also read daily newspapers will see that I have not been able in my weekly letters to keep pace with our rapid itinerary. But they will also see that it was inevitable. I could not possibly take up more space than I have been doing and I could not omit to note, however briefly, the many speeches that the intellectual gymnasts in Maharashtra compelled Gandhiji to make, and as regards impressions it will be recognised that I have followed a very severe process of selection.

A brief paragraph about Pandharpur and Satara is necessary before I take the reader to Karnatak. At Pandharpur the people in charge of the temple had somehow got the report that he was going there with a European friend and they were terribly exercised as to what they should do if Gandhiji insisted on entering the temple with the friend as he did at Benares. They must have been relieved to find that there was no such friend in our party. But Gandhiji made a pointed reference to this matter in his speech, "I am sorry," said he, "that neither the Buddhist friend who was with me at Benares, nor the 'untouchable' girl I have adopted is with me. But you may be sure that I should not have visited the temple without them if they had been with me. Had I left them out, I should have been guilty of insulting Vithoba Himself. I would not mind even an athiest entering our temple, for I know that God can take care of Himself. Who is there in the world who can insult the God in the image? But the lady-friend who was with me is a Buddhist and therefore a Hindu. If she had no right to enter the temple, who else can have it? I have visited many places of pilgrimage and I have been pained to see hypocrisy and cupidity there. It is necessary first to purify the drunken and dissolute worshippers in charge of some of these temples. If the things continue as they are today, if we do not bestir ourselves and go through the necessary penance and cleansing and self-purification, I tell you that not even the 22 Crores of Hindus can keep Hinduism alive. The Himalayas are spotlessly snow-white in virtue of the spotless glory of countless sages who laid down their lives performing penance in their caves. Only such penance can save us and our religion from perdition today."

At Satara there is a good national school working for the last six years. I wish the friends in charge of the programme had left some time to Gandhiji for a quiet chat



with the teachers and the students. But that was not to be. It was with difficulty that Gandhiji could steal a few minutes to auction the garlands and sell Khadi. An American Missionary lady was the successful bidder for a yarn garland, and at the end of the meeting she presented Mrs. Gandhi with a ring, evidently as her contribution to the fund.

From Satara we went to Belgaum *en route* to the Konkan districts—a part of India which has never been visited by our political leaders, more or less because of the long distances and inaccessibility of places. It is a beautiful strip of country on the West Coast, studded with fine ports all over the coast and sea fortresses still reverberating with the valiant deeds of the founder of the Maratha Empire-Shivaji. We began with Savantvadi, thence going to Vengurla and then went north along the coast to the Konkan district up to the point from where you have a distant view of Bombay. Here is the itinerary, the heaviest we have yet had:

26th February	Mahad
Savantvadi	Kasu
27th February	3rd March
Vengurla	Nagothne
Malvan	Pali
28th February	Pen
Kasal	Chari
Kankavali	Vashi
Kharepatan	Alibag
Rajapur	Sasavane
Lanje	4th March
1st March	Sarole
Ratnagiri	Uran
Sangameshwar	Panvel
Chiplun	Chowk
2nd March	Karjat
Khed	

Though the country is beautiful with green verdure everywhere, it has neither the rich beauty of Bengal with its mighty rivers, nor the fertile beauty of Travancore with its wonderful play of land and water everywhere. The soil is mostly rocky and mountainous and produces a scanty crop of rice and nuts and cocoanuts in certain



parts. And yet there is no place but has its history, not only its proud past, but also its proud present. Everywhere there are some lingering associations with Shivaji and the Peshwas, every place is the birth-place of some maker of modern Maharashtra—Ranade, Tilak, Karve and Gokhale, of Chiplunkars and Aptes and Patwardhans and Savarkars, of all Chitpavans whose name the fertile imagination of Sir Valentine Chirol¹ has invested with terror for the European reader.

The middle classes have taken to the clerical profession and the lower classes have of recent years flocked to Bombay in search of employment in mills and of service as peons and servants in public offices and private houses. One can imagine what an unfavourable field that is for Khadi. ‘We have no cotton here’, some one would say. ‘The vakils (lawyers) and the clerical class do not need Khadi and the lower classes are not in want of employment, thanks to Bombay. Labour is scarce and for those who have stick to the soil it is not difficult to scrape out a living’, some friends would say. And yet Appasaheb Patwardhan, an M.A. and a brilliant Elphinstonian, has been trying his mighty best, walking up and down the land with his beggar’s bowl, propagating the message of Khaddar and Charkha. He has evidently not made much headway but his example has been catching and in every place there are solitary but brilliant examples of self-spinners and Khadi-wearers. The vakils, even the Responsivists among them, joined in the reception and contributed to the purses. Though the programme was very heavy, even Monday being not excluded as day of rest and quiet work, one was inclined not to be angry with Appasaheb when one saw the enthusiasm of the people and the unexplored regions where he took Gandhiji in the future interests of his propaganda.

At Savantvadi the Chief greeted Gandhiji at late hour in the night when he reached there from Belgaum, engaged him in an interesting talk about the Charkha as he was doing his daily ritual of spinning at midnight and showed intelligent appreciation of the message of the Charkha. Next morning Gandhiji and Mrs. Gandhiji were invited to the royal palace where a purse of Rs. 1000 and *saubhagya chihnas* (symbols indicating wishes for long life) were presented to them. There were the usual auction sales of garlands and caskets and other presents, and brisk Khadi sales everywhere. The places in the itinerary where small purses were given are very small villages where Gandhiji halted just for a few minutes. As it is a country of long distances some of the villages were reached at midnight and even later. One can easily imagine Gandhiji’s exhaustion and fatigue after frightfully long motor drives, but his



irrepressible good humour saved him and others from prostration. At Lanje where he reached after midnight there were people anxiously waiting at the place of the meeting. 'I do not know', said Gandhiji, 'whether I should pity you or myself for keeping you waiting until this hour. But you know we have done what the Yogi of the Gita does. 'The night of sleep of the ordinary mortals is a day of wakefulness for the Yogi.' I congratulate you on your Yoga, but you will better deserve my congratulations if you show that you are true Yogis by contributing for the poor, and by purchasing our Khadi.' And a peal of laughter woke up the audience who were half-asleep.

I come to Ratnagiri proper and the Kolaba district in my next letter.

1. Reference to his book 'Indian Unrest'.



27/28.2.1927

MALAVAN

This townlet is famous for its sea-castle. At a charming quiet meeting Gandhiji said:

“You see that I am delivering my speech, even as I am turning my wheel. I do this purposely, as I can’t find time for spinning! That is how I wish to show that if we wish well of Bharat, we must not waste a single moment. There is an English proverb: ‘Time is money.’ And it is a truism to say that without utilising time we cannot earn a paisa. When we say that so-and-so worked for 8 hours, we mean to show how valuable time is. Where unemployment is awfully widespread, it is good to be always engaged in work. Spinning is that great sacrifice of the present age.

“The Municipal address says that you also are doing something in this matter (spinning). My congratulations to you on your pains to give a fillip to the spinning wheel, on your efforts to remove untouchability and on the absence of any tension between Hindus and Muslims here.

“You should know what has made me mad after Khadi, Millions in our land are dying of starvation. The reason is, they have no occupation that can feed them. There is no remedy whatsoever for this shocking unemployment except the spinning wheel. Arguments are hurled against the spinning wheel, but they leave me unshaken in my resolve. If you want to feed the hungry in India, the only way is the spinning wheel. It is neither a strange, novel remedy nor a product of my own whim. It is sheer self-willed indulgence to wear foreign cloth, while it is both self-restraint and clean behaviour to wear Khadi.”

The sales of Khadi and garlands in Malvan brought excellent returns.

28.2.1927

Gandhiji started from Malvan on a long motor journey the next day, though it was his silence day—the day of rest and recuperation—and though even the expression ‘terrible exhaustion’ fails to give a true picture of Gandhiji’s physical state on that day. Gandhiji manages to snatch a siesta even during motor rides. At one place he woke up suddenly and, forgetting in semi-consciousness that it was his silence day, asked Kasturba, ‘What is this village called?’ Kasturba ejaculated: “But why? Is this not your silence day?” That remark roused Gandhiji completely. He gave up his evening



meal and ended his silence two hours later. It was thus that Gandhiji reached Lanje at the dead of night, where in order to forget as best he could the ever-present crowds around him and the overbearing strain of his tour, he cracked that joke: 'I don't know whether I should pity myself or you for having to address you at this very late hour.'



17.3.1927

Weekly Letter

(by M.D. in *Young India*)

We were at Ratnagiri at last—Ratnagiri which every man that spoke to us had described as the birth-place of Lokamanya. I had gone to the meeting a few minutes before Gandhiji and taken my seat among those seated on the dais—mostly vakils and members of the Municipality and Local Board. My *takli* attracted the attention of an American missionary who was sitting a few feet away from me and he asked his neighbour what I was doing. The gentleman seemed to know and so he described the process. The missionary friend was very glad and turning to me said: ‘That’s very good, you are turning your spare moments to good account. But it must be slow work.’ ‘Yes’, said I, ‘it is slow work, but it is all gain and no loss.’ ‘Why do not the common people utilize their spare hours thus?’ the friend asked. ‘That is why we should all spin.’ He nodded assent and said: ‘I understand why Mr. Gandhi puts such an emphasis on spinning by the educated classes.’ A gentleman seated near him put in: ‘That is the only point in his programme.’ ‘Yes’, said I, ‘truth also is the only point in his programme.’ Some friends winced at the retort and said apologetically no reflection was intended in the remark about spinning being the only point. The missionary friend had a hearty laugh at the expense of friends sitting round him practically all in mill-cloth or foreign cloth. The missionary proceeded to talk about conditions in America before the advent of industrial civilization and our talk would have been more lively had not Gandhiji’s arrival been announced by the stir of people around us.

Gandhiji’s speech here was, as expected, the most important in Konkan. ‘Lokamanya’s birth-place is a place of pilgrimage not only for me but for the whole of India,’ he said and recalled that his old friend Shri Savarkar¹ whom he had known well in England and whose sacrifice and patriotism were well known was also residing at Ratnagiri. ‘We had our differences then’, he added, ‘we have them now, but they have not affected in the least our friendship. Differences of opinion should never mean hostility. If they did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another. I do not know two persons in the world who had no difference of opinion, and as I am a follower of the Gita, I have always attempted to regard those who differ from me with the same affection as I have for my nearest and dearest.’ But I must summarize the speech separately. The caskets fetched Rs. 200, and considerable Khadi was sold.



After the meeting he had a note from Sri. Savarkar to say that he had been ailing for some time, and Gandhiji called at his place on his way to the women's meeting. There was a little incident before he left for Sri. Savarkar's place which I think is worth recording. Appasaheb Patwardhan introduced a friend as a staunch *Khadiwalla* and supported his request to have Gandhiji at his place for a minute. 'Why?' asked Gandhiji. 'He is a good worker and he deserves it,' was the reply. 'Multiply the process and I should be visiting the houses of every Khadi-weaver and Khadi-worker. Instead I should expect them to forego their desire and leave me free to visit those who have no faith in Khadi and whom I would like to convert. You must understand my principle of *Satyagrahi pakshapata*—righteous partiality.'

The meeting with Sri. Savarkar was a pleasant one. He emphasised that Gandhiji was there not as a political leader, but as a friend, and that he would not therefore engage him in a discussion, as some of his friends had desired. But incidentally he asked Gandhiji to clear his attitude about untouchability and Shuddhi. Gandhiji cleared some of the misrepresentations and said, 'We cannot have a long talk today, but you know my regard for you as a lover of truth and as one who would lay down his life for the sake of truth. Besides, our goal is ultimately one and I would like you to correspond with me as regards all points of difference between us. And more. I know that you cannot go out of Ratnagiri and I would not mind finding out two or three days to come and stay with you, if necessary, to discuss these things to our satisfaction.' The conversation was all in Hindi. 'I thank you' said Sri. Savarkar, 'but you are free and I am bound, and I don't want to put you in the same case as I. But I will correspond with you.'

The women's meeting was one of the best we have seen for many a long day. There were about a thousand ladies, all seated in perfect silence, not even the cry of a baby disturbing it. They had collected a purse and they gave again in response to Gandhiji's appeal.

But I must pass on to other places. There were little items worth noting at all places—Sangamner with a population of less than 1,000 giving a purse of about Rs. 500/-, Mhad with hundreds of Shivaji's Mavlas anxious to have a glimpse of Gandhiji, Alibag where something like 15 garlands were presented and auctioned,—but I must pass on and come to Sasvane. Sasvane would not have been in the programme but for a model residential school that is run there by a few selfless workers of high character. The institution is called Vaishya Vidyashram, being mainly for Vaishya boys (though



other boys are not excluded and 12 out of 104 are non-Vaishyas) and maintained out of funds donated by a Vaishya merchant and those contributed yearly by the community. It is ideally situated on a plot of ground of 21 acres full of trees and palms, far enough from public haunts, and with its outskirts ever being lapped by the waves of the Arabian Sea. On a quiet evening you may sight the Colaba light-house at a distance of some twelve miles as the crow flies and on a clear day the prominent buildings in the Fort, Bombay, are fairly visible.

The visit was an agreeable surprise. From what little we could see of the Ashram during the few hours we were there, we could see that it was an institution run on original lines and had features which it would be difficult to surpass. It is the result of the combined efforts of Sri. Dhavan and Sri. More, the one an educationist non-co-operator and the other a businessman who supplied the principal part of the funds to help his friend in the realization of his dream. Being an institution mainly for boys of the commercial class the instruction is principally vocational, but the greatest emphasis is laid on the moral, religious, and physical training, the ideal being to turn out healthy and self-reliant servants of the community of high character. Only unmarried students are admitted, Khadi wearing and spinning are compulsory and prayers and bhajans (hymns) are an essential part of their daily routine. At a quiet meeting in the evening the boys presented Gandhiji with 1,60,000 yards of yarn spun during the month, with a piece of cloth woven out of their yarn, Rs. 501/- collected from the Vaishya community, Rs. 190/- from the neighbouring village, and last but by no means the least, a contribution of Rs. 63.3.0 being the value of ghee (clarified butter), sugar, milk and wheat that the boys had denied themselves for one week, especially for the Deshbandhu Fund. 'I had come entirely unprepared for these tokens of love—love not only for me but for the poor' said Gandhiji, 'and my greatest joy is due to the shape these tokens have taken. The donation of Rs. 63.3.0 reminds me of sacred donation that I received from the late Swami Shraddhanand for my work in South Arica and which represented the value of the labour of love rendered by his *brahmacharis*. It is worth more than millions to me and it makes my responsibility for utilizing the fund all the greater. Your yarn also is worth its weight in gold, for what is the value of gold, but the price of labour spent in obtaining it? Is your labour any the less? And it is more sacred inasmuch as it has been all done in the spirit of sacrifice.' The rest of the speech was as a Vaishya talking to Vaishya boys. 'With *brahmacharya* as your shield and buckler you should find no difficulty in entering any walk of life, and if you will follow the vocation, and commerce—in the right way, you will serve both



your community and the country. But beware that your pursuit of these professions may not become synonymous with exploitation as it is today. If you desire to take off the sinister aspect of greedy commerce, you will have to make it centre round the Charkha (spinning wheel). There are exploiters enough on this earth. If we follow suit, we shall have to seek for our victims on other planets. Khadi is the only wholesome national trade that we can pursue and as Vaishyas I ask you not to neglect it.'

It was a unique meeting. There was pin-drop silence. There were garlands of course, but Gandhiji did not auction them. Nor did he make any appeal for collections. 'I had not come on a business visit here. But you have given me more than enough,' he said.

In the early hours of the next morning Gandhiji had a heart-to-heart chat with the teachers. He was not quite satisfied with the kitchen and conservancy arrangements, and the whole talk turned upon the best way in which both departments should be so arranged as to subserve the ends of brahmacharya. 'Life after all hovers between the two functions of consumption and evacuation,' said Gandhiji, 'and you will make your institution ideal if besides giving your students a literary education you have made finished cooks and sweepers of them.' That is just the drift of the inspiring talk.

I must not omit to mention the evening and morning prayers which were as unostentatious as their other programme. The devotional songs accompanied by rapturous music seemed to fill the whole atmosphere. Hardly ever before have we attended a prayer function so ennobling and uplifting.

In the morning Gandhiji performed the installation ceremony of the image of Maruti as part of their gymnasium. Gymanasia are an almost indispensable feature of Maharashtra schools, but the thing worth special notice was the uniformly fine physiques of the boys and their Khadi uniforms. 'I instal this image of Maruti here,' he said, 'not merely because Maruti had the strength of a giant. Even Ravana had that strength. But Maruti had the strength of soul, and his physical strength was only a manifestation of his spiritual strength which in its turn was the direct fruit of his exclusive devotion to Rama and his brahmacharya. May you therefore be like Maruti of matchless valour born out of your brahmacharya and may that valour be dedicated to the service of the Motherland.'



Thus came to an end perhaps the happiest few hours that we have ever had in our tours.

1. Barrister Savarkar sacrificed his brilliant prospects to become a revolutionary leader. He was awarded a life-sentence and transported to the Andamans—a penal colony, but owing to ill health was later on interned at Ratnagiri, his home-town.



17.3.1927

The Ratnagiri Speech

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

After describing Ratnagiri as a place of pilgrimage for the whole of India, as it was Lokamanya's birth-place, and after a feeling reference to Sri. Savarkar, Gandhiji said:

“You know Lokamanya's Swaraj Mantra. I do not think there has been any follower of Lokamanya who has tried to carry out the Mantra more than I. There may be many whose efforts are equal to mine, but no one can claim to have put forth greater effort. For I know that not only is Swaraj our birthright, but that it is our sacred duty to win it. For, in so far as we are removed from Swaraj, we are removed from manhood. A proper manifestation of all our powers is impossible without Swaraj. And the Swaraj that Lokamanya had in view was not the Swaraj for Ratnagiri people or for Maharashtra, but for the whole of India, poor as well as rich, and Swaraj has no meaning for the poor unless they have enough to eat. ‘Why should we not serve our mills,’ ‘you ask. Seth Narottam Morarji, the owner of the Sholapur Mills is a friend of mine, and I was the guest of his son who showered his affection on me. But does that mean that I must use cloth from the Sholapur Mills and serve that ‘poor’ Seth Narottam and his son? Even they will not say that I would be serving poor by using their cloth. “I have been told everywhere that Konkan is poor. If you are poor, the situation must be unbearable to you. You say that poor people from your parts go to Bombay and earn a living there. Do you know the price that they have to pay for that living? They live in hovels without light and air, a few feet by a few feet, where several men and women are huddled together without regard for their bodily cleanliness or decency. Are you ready to send your mothers and sisters to live under such conditions? Do you not agree that the women that go to the Bombay mills are your mothers and sisters and the men your brothers? Are you prepared to see your brothers and sisters take to a life of drunkenness and shame and return home and spread the infection of their vices? Is it worth while paying this terrible price for the eight annas they manage to earn there?”

‘Our cattle are destroyed because we do not know true cow-protection and our villages are ruined because we do not know true economics and sociology. The Charkha can stop that ruinous process. Do you know the daily income per head of our



country? Our economists say that it is one anna and six pice, though even that is misleading. If someone were to work out the depth of a river as four feet from the fact that the river was six feet deep in certain places and two feet in others, and proceeded to ford it, would he not be drowned? That is how statistics mislead. The average income is worked out from the income of the poor man as also of the Viceroy and the millionaires. The actual income will be hardly three pice per head. Now if I supplement that income by even three pice with Charkha, am I not right in calling the Charkha my cow of plenty? Some people attribute superhuman powers to me, some say I have an extraordinary character. God alone knows what I am. It is also possible to disagree with the efficacy of Satyagraha, but I do not think there is any reason for disagreement on these obvious facts about the Charkha. If some one convinces me today that there is no poverty in India, that there are few in India who starve for want of even a few pice a day, I shall own myself to have been mistaken and shall destroy the spinning wheel.

“I ask you therefore to bear in mind what you mean when you say that Konkan is poor. If you are really poor there is nothing like the wheel which can cure your impoverishment and which is a safeguard for the honour of your women. Seek first the Charkha and its concomitants and everything else will be added unto you. How can you disregard a thing which is of such a national and universal character? Does it behove the followers of Lokamanya to deride or reject the wheel?

“But you will ask, as a youth who tried to heckle me asked, ‘If Lokamanya liked this thing, why did he not ask the country to take it up?’ Well, I cannot be taken in by your question. Whether or not Lokamanya had Khadi in mind when he defined Swadeshi, surely his Swadeshi cannot but include Khadi. I am but the heir of Lokamanya, and if I do not add to the patrimony he has left me, I would not be a worthy son of a worthy father. I pondered well over Lokamanya’s message, applied my many years’ experience to it and came to the conclusion that Lokamanya’s message must mean Khadi. Do you know what he used to do? I am telling you of an incident that happened a short time before his death. When Maulana Shaukat Ali approached him as regards the Khilafat question, Lokamanya said to him: “I shall put my signature to whatever Gandhi signs, for I trust to his better knowledge in this matter.’ Supposing therefore Lokamanya had not Khadi in mind when he advised Swadeshi, what does it matter? Supposing we were manufacturing spectacles here and some one were to say, ‘we cannot use them, Lokamanya did not advise the use thereof’ would it be proper?



We would dismiss him as a literalist *Vedavadarata* as Gita would describe him. As the literalist interpreter of the Vedas does not grasp the infinite meaning of the Vedas, even so these literalist interpreters of Lokamanya's message miss its infinite power.

“But someone comes and says, ‘When Musalmans are converting us, who is going to listen to your Khadi?’ Have you, I ask, become so impotent that you will be Musalmans because some one compels you to embrace Islam? If you have true *Dharma* in you, no one dare violate it. But I want to protect even our *Dharma* by means of Khadi. For Khadi means the service not only of Hindu but also of Muslim women. A Maulvi (Muslim divine) in Bengal went and asked some of those women not to spin on the ground that Khadi movement was a Hindu movement. They listened to him for a couple of days, but the third day they came asking for cotton. For what could they do? They could not go on starving and the Maulvi had no food to offer them. The learned author of the Mahabharata has described Vishwamitra the sage as ready to eat what was forbidden to him and even to steal, when he was oppressed by the pangs of hunger. One cannot say what a hungry man or woman would not stoop to. I therefore tell you that you must take to Khadi if only to alleviate the poverty and safeguard the honour of your women.

“I am asked to take part in the *Shuddhi* movement. How can I, when I wish that its Muslim and Christian counterparts should also cease? It is unthinkable that a man will become good or attain salvation only if he embraces a particular religion,—Hinduism, Christianity or Islam. Purity of character and salvation depend on the purity of heart. I therefore say to the Hindus, ‘Do whatever you like, but don't ask a man like me, who has come to his conclusions after the maturest thinking, to take up what he cannot.’ Man's capacity is after all limited. I can do what is within my power, not what is beyond it. I cannot do a hundred or even half a dozen things at a time. If you agree with me that the Charkha is the best *sangathan* (organization) that is possible, give me as much help as you can render.”



3.3.1927

The following is a more detailed account of Gandhiji's speech at the Vaishya Vidyashram in Sasvane given by M.D. in Gujarati. (Some repetition has been found unavoidable.)

“The Principal and students, sisters and brothers,

“When Appasaheb said that we were to come here I had no idea that I would get something from this place also. I did not even dream that a purse would be ready for me for the service of Daridranarayan. I had indeed hoped that the residents of Sasvane might give me something, but I value your gift of 1,60,000 yards of yarn more than money, as it shows what the need and duty of the present times is in India. What is money? A study of the exchange question shows us what money is after all. It is labour that makes a thing valuable. A gentleman has stated that coal by itself has little value. It is the labour in digging it out that gives it the value it has. The value of gold, of diamonds, depends upon the labour it takes to exploit them. What otherwise, is the intrinsic value of gold and diamonds? On the same ground this yarn by itself is nothing, has no value. And yet the labour undertaken to spin it makes it precious.

“It is true that I spend away at once the money I get, but I use it in making yarn. Your purse of 63 rupees is a very valuable and sacred gift since it contains your sacrifice for a week. This reminds me of Swami Shraddhanandji. He sent me money for South Africa by exhorting his students to undergo a sacrifice for sending their mites to me. My joy knew no bounds when I got from him a letter stating the fact. It is not usual for me to shed tears. I have made my heart proof against them, but when I received this news, it overflowed with tears of joy. The letter told me that Shraddhanandji's boys had approached a contractor with a request to employ them as regular labourers on the usual daily wages and that their average output of work was twice as much as that of an ordinary labourer. Ratan Tata had then sent me as many as Rs. 25,000 but to me this 400 rupees of these boys was more valuable than that amount. How shall I spend your 63 rupees? I remarked to my colleagues, “Is this a small thing, this amount sent with such pure good-will and equally pure self-restraint!” A week's self-restraint in daily food! ‘That is nothing,’ you may protest. But do you know that wicked men get furious on their wives and children, if they don't get the food they like even at one meal? That is why I am so full of gratitude to you and tell you that your gift makes my



responsibility heavier. I am sure that the work these 63 rupees will produce will be more precious in quality than what a hundred thousand rupees can.

“I congratulate the Vaishya Samaj (Association of Vaishyas) for building such an Ashram at this lonely spot and in these beautiful surroundings. This school reminds me of the Upanishad days.¹ I hope that this institution will have a long life and prosperity, both internal and external. If the children learning in this institution possess high character, it does not matter if they don't earn wealth. I am glad to note that the institution has no connection whatsoever with the Government. In not a single item of the non-co-operation programme has my faith abated. The sight of a national institution, whether small or big, whether it has 4 students or 104, lights up my eyes. Thus you have the necessary negative qualities (of the non-co-operation programme). You must now add the positive qualities of a better knowledge of your mother-tongue and the study of Hindi. I am told that Hindi has been introduced in your curriculum for the last 2 years. This study of Hindi must be systematically increased.

“Have no fear about how these boys will fare in future. That boy cannot become a Brahmin² who nurses fear of any kind. These boys on the contrary are going to teach the lore of Brahma to others, they will not hunt for a petty clerkship. You must therefore have no fear about your son's future. He who has preserved brahmacharya will never find any difficulty in getting his livelihood. One having the power that brahmacharya brings can never, must never entertain any fear on the score of his livelihood. The type of education, besides, that we impart must be such as would make it impossible for the student even to think of taking up any such supplicating service.

“If you have faith in Khadi, I appeal to you just to think over its possibilities and implications. Khadi work has gone on consistently expanding. All these boys can become members of the All India Spinners Association. The chief business of a Vaishya is commerce. Khadi is the biggest commercial undertaking in India. Those who live in Konkan are mostly Vaishyas. But though you may be a Vaishya, you must not fail to wish to be a Brahmin. The stay-and-support that a (true) Brahmin provides in life is an indispensable need. I am myself a non-Brahmin, but I would become spineless if I did not have in me the Brahmin spirit. Verily he is a Brahmin who knows Brahma. In the same way the help of other communities is also essential. If you want to make this Ashram an ideal institution, the powers and capacities of all the four Varnas must be pooled in it. And if you do that, the institution will bring about the prosperity not of one community alone, but of the whole country. And in the prosperity of Bharat lies



the prosperity of the world, since we refuse to raise ourselves at the expense of any other people. If all the 300 millions of India take up any activity that exploits others, it will destroy the world altogether. When there are others who devour us at present, whom shall we, whom can we think of devouring? China? Japan? Europe? We must be true to our tradition and take up only that work which eschews exploitation of others. If, therefore, you want to water the root of such a beneficent activity, you must not forget this Khadi.

“And this is my next advice, you should do the three things for which a Vaishya has a natural aptitude, namely, ‘agriculture, cow-protection and business.’³ You must spend your life in restoring these occupations to their pristine grandeur. All the three of them have moved away from their straight and narrow path. Khadi supplements agriculture. यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके?|⁴ Don’t therefore, I ask you, remain indifferent about Khadi. Give the Charkha the prime place, make it the great national sacrifice of the present day, and let other activities revolve round it like planets round the Sun. Don’t tell me that you can’t spin as this your Colaba District does not grow cotton. Does cotton grow in Manchester? Cotton does not grow in each and every place in our country where Khadi-work is being done. You must hold before you the goal of making every home a spinning mill and every village a weaving centre. Here you can grow *Devakapas* (a variety of cotton called ‘God of Cotton’), You may if you like, establish industrial plants, but agriculture is indispensable. Agriculture alone, moreover, cannot be depended upon (for our maintenance), as Madhusudan Das says. Without a supplementary industry, we are crippled.

“I am pouring out my heart as this is a small group collected here. I wish to wander among genuine farmers. As our peasantry is being destroyed, I give you just an inkling of the anguish my heart is filled with. Have complete faith in your own selves. Don’t feel that you cannot do without some help from the Government. If you want to follow an honest virtuous (Sattvic) occupation, you should regard the spinning wheel as its pivot and if you want to follow a devilish occupation, you can go along the present rut of business. We are out to make our business grow into one of 1,200 millions rupees. That means we have undertaken a Himalayan task. That could be achieved only if we take to a righteous profession.”

Everyone heard this discourse in pin-drop silence. Somebody then suggested that the garlands might be auctioned and contributions begged from the audience as usual. Gandhiji demurred. ‘I have not come here on business. I had never thought I



would get here something for my work. And yet you gave me things that I had not hoped for. I don't want either to auction anything or beg for funds here.'

Everyone joined in the prayers held late at 11 p.m. There may be other institutions which can stand comparison with this in other matters, but in the sacred atmosphere created by the hymns sung here, it stands unrivalled.

We attended both the evening and morning prayers of the Ashram. The pronunciations and intonations of the students, the profound peace that prevailed at the prayer times, the rapture that the melodious singing of the hymns created in the heart were all in-comparable. Once one began to listen to them, it was very difficult to wrench oneself from the spell that the atmosphere cast.

Gandhiji chatted with the teachers in the morning. The talk began with the institution's latrines, kitchen, residential quarters etc., but finally it settled down into a talk on kitchens and latrines only. In essence Gandhiji said that both of them should be planned in a way that helped in the observance of brahmacharya.

"There are no latrines here. People go to the sea-shore to ease themselves and depend upon the waves to wash off the dirt.

@ "It is a serious defect. You multiply the process and see what a terrible thing you would be doing. But apart from the insanitation, as the Chinese would say, you are wasting millions of worth of golden manure which we poor people can get. Again *a la* out of nothing, evacuation is the richest manure. You should know well how to treat the evacuations.

@ "Cooking ought to be taught to the boys. Ba (Mrs. Gandhiji) is a finished cook. She is sweetness personified on occasions, but she has temper also. Shankar is an exceedingly good young man. He has improved himself on the Brahmin cook. Now I have developed the idea that just as I cannot give up the institution of spinning so is the common kitchen essential for control of the palate, i.e., for brahmacharya. You must remain in society, in contact with women, and yet observe brahmacharya. Error is mighty—ineffective, if it is acted up in the belief that it is true, as Tulsidas says. If I am in error the world will lose nothing, for it will take it to be the truth. Swaraj is simply wading through error to truth. So I must stick to the common kitchen. But I told him⁵ that I must have the qualities of a true warrior.⁶ Outward observance must be in consonance with our inward convictions. The kitchen should thus be an echo of brahmacharya. For brahmacharya, you have to create an atmosphere which is



conducive to it. Manu⁷ has glorified *grihastha*-life (a householder's life) on the basis of the desire to have children. Our rishis have glorified brahmacharya, but made it absolutely impossible, whereas it should be as easy as pro-creation. Not that it is easy for me, but I am mentally developing it. At the best, I can give it to *Young India* and to the nearest and dearest to me in a certain measure. There is that secretive process with me which is just as natural to me as this way of blurting out. You must be a finished cook like Nala⁸ as you are giving out to your boys what you may never have given them otherwise. You will observe the boys also. We are puppets in the hands of nature. Whilst we are outwardly acting in a mechanical manner, the inner being is acting in its own way in a mysterious manner. Let the outer thing be an expression of the inner being. In the course of my rigorous self-analysis I observe others and can say to them 'You have given me what you could not help giving me.'

@ "I see that you are striving after perfection. You must perfect the two processes. Life after all hovers between evacuation and taking in. If a man is a constipative he is ill, if he performs his functions naturally, he is healthy. Don't care for the world in your attempt at perfecting the washing out process. So long as the boys are here, let them restrain themselves and when they go out to the world, a few of them at least will follow brahmacharya. At the same time you may not forget that if you restrain yourselves outwardly only, there is indulgence inwardly.

@ "I can never be dazzled by the American successes in their fantastic trade. It produces quite the contrary effect on me. You can say to the Vaishya boys: 'Your trade must be conducive to the welfare of mankind. You must have trade consistently with the spiritual growth of the world, i.e., your boys will not carry on a distillery or an opium den. I remind you of that story of the butcher⁹ in the Mahabharata. Mahabharata is a mine and not a treasure-chest. Vyasa (the author), a versatile genius, has put everything that he could. He has given gems in mountains of rubbish. A man may go on with his father's profession, but for you who are trying to regenerate India, you will have to bring out the best in the boys. A man who is carrying a house of prostitution, well knowing that it is bad, will be idiotic if he quotes the Mahabharata in defence of his practice. What is nectar for the Englishman is poison for me. The English may kill cows not knowing that it is bad for them, as a man may lie in his bed—so long as he does not know that there is a snake under the bed. You will thus have to awaken the conscience of the boys. I would not argue like this to an unsophisticated woman who



is carrying on a trade in tobacco. It is the elasticity of intellect and originality of intellect that we have lost.”

@Q: “But these boys will break up abruptly and go home.”

Gandhiji: “Yes. Bhagwadgita asks what will happen to a man who fails in Yoga (and answers that that man sets himself again on the Path). Your duty is to foster the best in them. One step is enough for me. Your horizon is three miles and you have endless vistas within that horizon. I can get endless pleasure within that horizon.

“Here you have to be rigid like a rock. Otherwise in a few years’ time what looks best will topple over and be a sink of iniquity. You must, like the ocean, go through a cleansing process constantly. Ebb and flow is its natural order. And the ocean is after all 3/4ths of the globe. You will have to be on the watch-tower incessantly. ‘What about their *sanskaras*¹⁰?’ You will ask. You will have to strive with the boys’ parents. You will meet together, take your bearings and impose your thoughts on the parents. Your rock-bottom terms must be before the parents. You must take the donor (also) through all the internal stages of conflict. I had that struggle when we appointed a Committee of Management (for his Satyagrahashram in Ahmedabad).¹¹ The parents may consider that the teachers are wrong, but (ultimately) they should understand.”

Q: “At every stage we have to compromise.”

Gandhiji: Yes, you must have your bearings and you must set a limit beyond which you will not go. You must have sufficient reserve strength for it.”

Q: “What about the properties and buildings we have acquired, if people don’t agree on our stand?”

Gandhiji: “Properties and buildings are playthings. You cannot be a *brahmachari* unless you have the strength of Hanuman.”

Deva:(a colleague of Gandhiji): “Don’t turn the Ashram into an institution.”

Gandhiji: “Democracy we may not take from Europe. The *Kulapati* (the Head of the Ashram) will be a fraud and a myth if he cannot efface himself. The “I” must know how to become a cipher.”



Q: “The Ashram should not belong to a community.”

Gandhiji: “The Vaishya community must be able to think that it belongs to them and yet really they belong to the Ashram. The European people have mechanical institutions. They are self-deceived. They (institutions) are an ocular demonstration of *Maya* (- Illusion or creative energy of the Absolute). But we would go to perdition if we imitate them, knowing that it is bad.”

Grihapati (Head of the Ashram): “As yet there is no constitution and there are six people who have dedicated their lives to the Ashram.””

Deva: “It should never come.”

Gandhiji: “It will have to come some day.”

The next morning Gandhiji performed the installation ceremony of Maruti. In consonance with his powerful imagination, Sri. Dhavan had selected the stone for this image from the rock on which stood Raigarh, the fortress where the coronation ceremony of Shivaji¹² was performed. After the performance of the ceremony Gandhiji said:

“Do you know Maruti? He was the son of the god of winds (and hence very strong). Why do we instal his image? Is it because he was a brave warrior? Undoubtedly he had immense physical strength. But physical strength is not our ideal. Were it so, would we not have installed an image of Ravana?¹³ But Hanuman’s physical strength was the outward manifestation of his inward spiritual strength. It was the result of his constant, unsullied, *brahmacharya* and of his single minded love and devotion for Rama. We are not installing today a piece of stone. What we have installed is the idea and the ideal behind our veneration for Maruti and, holding that ideal ever before our mind, we wish to become Maruti ourselves. Like Maruti we wish to observe *brahmacharya*, develop soul-force thereby, and to use that soul-force for the service of our country. It is my prayer to God that you all may acquire Maruti’s physical and spiritual strength and for it the strength to observe *brahmacharya*.”

1. Sages of the Upanishad times had their ashrams for teaching boys not in towns, but in forests amid beautiful natural environments.



2. i.e. one who knows Brahma. Allusion to the famous scriptural saying: 'He who knows the joy of Brahma is never afraid of anything or anybody!'
3. Gita, XVIII—44.
4. When floods have spread all around, where does the need for a pond remain?—Gita II—46.
5. It is not stated to whom this 'him' refers.—Editor.
6. Gandhiji probably means "Happy Warrior" of Wordsworth.
7. Author of Manusmriti i.e. Manu's code of conduct. He is perhaps the first author in the world of such a treatise.
8. This king lost his all in a dice play and was exiled to a forest. A cobra bit him there and he was transformed into an ugly man. Another king, Ritiparna, however engaged this ugly-looking creature as his cook and trainer of horses, as he knew both these arts to perfection.
9. A butcher used to remember God with every stroke of the heavy knife with which he cut the animals he had slaughtered. He stuck to this profession and yet obtained spiritual wisdom and salvation. A Brahmin-Yogi was advised to make that butcher his Guru. He was shocked at first, but become self-realized soul through the butcher's guidance.
10. Every soul according to Hindu thought takes birth in an environment which is in consonance with its sanskaras, i.e. impressions and tendencies gathered from its past births, actions etc. and selected for fructification in the present birth. 'Consciousness' may perhaps be the nearest meaning—Translator.
11. The Committee once refused to give their contributions as Gandhiji had admitted an 'untouchable family' in his Ashram.
12. Founder of the Maratha Empire. When the tradition of tolerance towards Hinduism was dispensed with by the fanatic Emperor Aurangzeb, the last great Mogul Emperor, revolts sprang up all over India. Shivaji was the greatest of these rebels who rose in defence of Hinduism and freedom.
13. The opponent of Rama. He is described in Ramayana as a demon with 10 heads and 20 arms, to symbolize the tremendous physical strength of evil as opposed to the apparently smaller force of good which Rama represents.



4.3.1927

TALEGAON

Unveiling the portrait of Principal Bijapurkar, Gandhiji said:

“I regard it an honour to be asked to perform this unveiling Ceremony. I visited this town during the life-time of the revered Guruji. I was amazed at his indefatigable industry. I had my first contact with him at the Servants of India Society (Its members bound themselves for life to serve India on very modest honorariums) in Poona. Introducing him to me Sri. Gokhale¹ said: “If you want to know a man rooted in truth, you must meet this gentleman. He is Prof. Bijapurkar.” I know how deeply pained he was when ‘Samarth Vidyalaya’ was closed.

‘You are very fortunate in being his disciples and students of this institution (‘New Samartha Vidyalaya’) which he has founded. But you must adopt in yourselves the sterling qualities of self-sacrifice, truthfulness and courage that he possessed. You may not be able to be like him a profound scholar. You cannot imbibe the powers of a *Shatavadhani*². You cannot cultivate the retentive memory of Lokamanya Tilak. But we all can acquire the qualities of renunciation and industry that he possessed. It is not at all necessary to go through a number of big religious books in order to attain truth. You may, if you desire, become learned men, but I wish to emphasize, on this sacred occasion, the sterling qualities of the revered Principal.

“You may send me your yarn, but not simply because I love it. Bharat has nothing to do with my personal likes or dislikes. Prof. Bijapurkar never blindly followed anybody. Like a child, he would immediately accept anything that he felt was good. But otherwise, he would not be dazzled into submission by the most awe-inspiring personality. If your heart realizes the great power of the spinning wheel, you may certainly accept it. Sri. Bijapurkar had given away his body to the service of India. He did so in order to serve the poor. But we are only children. What can we do for the poor except spinning in sympathy with them?

“You want indeed to live like poor people. But what is your poverty in comparison with theirs? You have your food and also your education. Does the poor man get either? He must therefore be provided with an occupation. Is there no other way for India to give one rupee to the poor, except that of starting the occupation of robbing millions of other people³? We don’t wish to exploit others like that. I ask you therefore to provide our unemployed population with an occupation that adds one



paisa to its daily income of three. The man who provides it will deserve our hearty thanks.

“It is my advice to the principal and professors to see that nobody copies me blindly. Besides, I don’t want you to spin out of pity for me under the feeling that you must do something to gratify the senility of this old man. I don’t want even Swaraj out of pity for me or the country. That is why we are cherishing Hanuman’s valour. We want neither any service under this Government, nor Swaraj that is given us gratis. We want to earn Swaraj by our own power, by our soul-force. As that is my view, do you think I have come here to beg for your pity? If you understand the implications of the spinning wheel, I ask you to compete with Gujarat and beat it. I would wish you to put Gujarat to shame by your heroic spirit and self-sacrifice.

“It is the body of Sri. Bijapurkar that is dead. Does that mean that his spirit also has died? An English poet states that so long as his friend’s body was alive, he was incomplete, imperfect. He became perfect after the body fell. It is then that we think exclusively of his good qualities till he grows into perfection in our eyes.

“May you live long and work without feeling the need to lean upon others.”

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1. Hon. G. K. Gokhale, a stalwart economist, mathematician and patriot, whom Gandhiji called his political Guru, was the founder of the ‘Servants of India Society.’
 2. One who can attend to a hundred things simultaneously. Shri. Rajachandra, a Jain spiritual leader who once solved Gandhiji’s religious doubts, used to perform this feat when he was still very young.
 3. If the millions of India are employed in mills, India would be compelled to exploit other people in order to sell its huge cloth production.



24.03.1927

Weekly Letter

(by M.D. in *Young India*)

The last place in the Maharashtra tour was Poona, and it is well that we should have ended with it, rather than begun with it. It is possible that when the rest of India has made up its mind about adopting Khadi, Poona will also fall in, chronologically last, but not the least heartily.

The workers had an up-hill task collecting a decent contribution for the Deshabandhu Memorial, but they had succeeded in getting about five thousand rupees before Gandhiji reached Poona, and whatever scoffers might say, considering the amount and the class of contributors who made it up the Khadi workers may be said to have scored a success. Five hundred rupees were collected from the women of Poona by those indefatigable ladies Mrs. Kuvalkar and Mrs. Joglekar who have carried the banner of Khadi aloft through fair weather and foul. Rs. 2,500 was the amount of the policy that Haribhau Phatak gave away as the last thing that was physically possible for a selfless man to give away. If only for these two contributions, the Poona purse was worth many times more than its amount.

But I confess that the meetings in Poona were necessary not for those who were already convinced, but to convert the unconverted, and Gandhiji's speeches both at the Reay Market and the students' meeting burnt with the consuming fire of his love for the millions as whose self-chosen representative he is touring the land. "Hanuman", he said, "tore open his heart and showed that there was nothing there but Ramanama. I have none of the powers of Hanuman to tear open my heart, but if any of you feel inclined to do it, I assure you you will find nothing there but love for Rama whom I see face to face in the starving millions of India."

The students had gathered in their thousands, some of them possibly to have the fun of it, others to listen to the message, but they waited patiently until, thanks to the faulty arrangement of the programme, Gandhiji could appear before them at about midnight. The cry for 'English', 'English' was there—heard for the first time from students during our tour this year. And Gandhiji, pained as he was by it, acceded to the demand because of his overflowing love for the students, "If I cannot make my misfortune of my country, and shall I say your misfortune?" But he acceded to the students' clamour for English only so far as he had to express his regret for being late



at the meeting. Even that little concession had won over the audience to him, and they had begun to listen with rapt attention. When he saw that he had succeeded in gaining their ear, he delivered the message itself in Hindi.

“It is possible,” said he, “that my message if delivered in English might get more silver from you, and it is probable that you might understand me better. But I hold my message to be far superior to myself and far superior to the vehicle through which it is expressed. It has a power all its own, and I hope it will produce an impression on the youth of India. Whether it will produce an impression in my lifetime or not, I do not care, but my faith is immovable, and as the days roll on and as the agony of the masses becomes prolonged, it will burn itself into the heart of every Indian who has a heart to respond to the message. You must understand, that at a time of my life when I should be enjoying my well-earned rest, I am not going about from one end of the country to the other for nothing. It is because I feel within myself with increasing force every day the strength of my conviction that I must try until the end of my days to reach it to as many ears and hearts as possible.” The rest was a brief history of the Charkha movement—which he had conceived as early as 1908 before he had actually seen a charkha, and the duty of the student world to those at the cost of whose moral and material ruin they were receiving their education. “You may, if you will, go on receiving it. I know you have not taken to Khadi, not because you are perverse, but because you lack the knowledge of the stupendous problem of poverty and unemployment, whose existence I have been declaring from the housetops. The King of Siam refused to believe Lord Curzon when he said to him that he was coming from a country where rivers were frozen for a part of the year. I assure you I am describing to you conditions I have seen with my own eyes when I say that 30 million people in our land have to go without a decent meal a day.”

The rest of the speech was on *brahmacharya*, a thing that comes uppermost to Gandhiji’s lips whenever he finds himself amongst students. ‘It is as easy as it appears to be difficult,’ said he rubbing the thing home into them. “For brahmacharya is a quality of the soul and your souls are not dead but slumbering. They are only waiting to be aroused. It seems difficult to arise them because we have become unbelievers. It will be easy as soon as you have faith, for with faith comes God’s grace. Then it no longer remains a matter of effort and trouble, but of joy and peace. I tell you this as I have known the joy of it.” The students responded to appeal for funds as well as they could at that late hour and in the noise and bustle that a few funny remarks of their



professor who had presided at the meeting had managed to create. One of the students gave away his gold medal and another took the garland away of which he declared he would send the price in the shape of collections from students of the Fergusson College.



5.3.1927

M.D. gives in Gujarati the following detailed report of the public meeting at the Reay Market in Poona:

“I thank you for the purse you have given for the service of Daridranarayan. This purse is to be used for Daridranarayan, i. e., for the spread of the spinning wheel, as both of them mean one and the same thing. The Memorial for the late Deshbandhu (C.R. Das) begins through the spread of Khadi. He remembered Daridranarayan in his last days, thought deeply of only the poor and saw in his meditation that there cannot be a strong nation-wide organisation in India by any other means than the spinning wheel. In the presence of his wife and friends, he asked me to make the spinning wheel the centre of a scheme for village organisation. After his death, therefore, an appeal for funds was issued under the signatures of leaders. I know both Marwaris and Gujaratis (leading business communities) quite well. I have taken huge chunks of money from them, but have given them thousand-fold returns also. Not a single Marwari or Gujarati gave me a paisa merely to oblige me, because I am a businessman, not a beggar.

“I tell students and businessmen that they gain their education and wealth by riding on the shoulders of the poor. Students, you get your education from the excise-revenue. (i. e. from the Government’s monopoly of liquor consumed by the poor largely), but can the poor man have an access to the education you get? The fire in my heart burns so fiercely, that if I do not keep up my life by making the most strenuous efforts to quench that fire, it would consume me to ashes. Whence does the businessman get his earnings? Definitely, not from outside India. It is not possible for us to exploit foreigners. We possess neither a navy nor an army on the might of which we can rob other people. I do not want India to possess naval or military power to back any foreign trade we may carry on. I wish that kind of business for India which does not require physical might for keeping it up. Gujaratis went in the past to Delgoa Bay, Eden, Africa and other places and certainly did business there, but they carried no guns with them. They made friendship with local people and thus brought home money. But what is your way now of earning wealth through business in India itself?

“I am a self-appointed representative of India’s poor. I ask for money for them. Give up smoking and drinking and give me money. I ask for only a small share from the money you can thus save from misuse. You may exact from me an account for every



piece you give me, but after satisfying yourself on the matter, you must slake my thirst for money and ask me to save the honour of Indian women through it. I don't mind any woman, even my wife, breaking stones and cleaning latrines, but I certainly want no overseer whatsoever to cast a lustful eye on my sister or mother.

“You may be wondering why you should unloose your purse. I ask you to pause and think. Tulsidas says, **दया धर्म का मूल है**—‘Mercy is the root of all dharmas.’ And Gita speaks of *samadrishiti* (seeing everybody with an equal eye). What is *samadrishiti*? If a serpent bites a scavenger and I say to myself ‘I am a Brahmin. I must not suck out the poison from that scavenger’s body,’ Gita tells me ‘You are not a Brahmin. You have no right to read the Gita.’ A deadly cobra in the form of hunger is biting every hour and every minute the multi-millions of India. Have you got an antidote? If you haven't, let me show again the remedy I suggested five years ago. (A vigorous campaign for the spinning wheel was carried out in 1921.) That is the second half of Lokamanya Tilak's mantra: ‘Swaraj is my birthright.’ They tell me, ‘You are a cipher in politics.’ I counter them with the question: ‘What is the meaning of Swaraj, so long as a single woman is dying of starvation, so long as she can be robbed of her honour by any common man?’ I am right in claiming that that man who shows a woman an honourable means to satisfy her hunger, provides the material to win Swaraj. Women in India are crippled. What work for Swaraj can you do as long as you do nothing for them?

“That was why I was glad to learn from Dr. Phatak that all (political) parties had contributed to the fund. However, there is this large number of students here. What a world of difference between students of the Benaras University and Poona! They gave 900 rupees. What have the students here given? Students of Sasvane suffered privation to donate their mites. What have you done? Why do you want me to be content with the 5000 you have collected? Will you not understand the fire that is raging within me? They say Hanuman broke the pearls (gifted to him by Sita). He said he had nothing to do with a thing which had not Ramanama in it and tore his heart open to show Ramanama carved in it. I don't possess the power of Hanuman, but if you want to know it, take a dagger and tear my heart, you will find Ramanama there. I don't understand Haribhau's donation of his ‘policy’. The man who can see that India is on fire cannot get his life assured. But I can understand the contribution of 63 rupees by those Sasvane boys. Their contribution of 160 thousand yards of yarn is valuable. The sight of the Khadi-work going on there with such faith heightened my hope. Appa Patvardhan (a highly educated worker in Ratnagiri) had expected only Rs. 2000/- from



his destitute district, but I got Rs. 13,000/-. Who can stop the work of Lord Daridranarayan? It is certain to go on. But I want your share in the contributions I get.

You will question me, 'What have you done for Shraddhanandji?' This is my answer. 'Get down from the shoulders of the poor on which you are riding.' It doesn't matter today if a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra indulges in wine and women. I admit, they don't eat carrion, which untouchables do. But to wean them from these habits you must mix with them and then acclaim Shraddhanandji's name. (Shraddhanandji was a most ardent champion of untouchables.)

"The All India Spinners Association is working for the good of all, regardless of caste or creed. Let me tell both Hindus and Musalmans 'Fight with one another to your heart's content; but don't fail to do at least this much help to your sister's.'"



5.3.1927

Speech before Students in Poona

(From M.D.'s. Mss. diary)

@ “I would like all students to observe perfect silence. It is no good. If you want to listen to me, you will have to have mercy upon a man straining his voice to the utmost only an hour ago in order that he may drive home his message to that green audience, opposite Reay Market. I know and you know that I have a fairly audible voice, though not powerful. But the incessant strain put upon it and specially tonight’s strain has proved a little too much. I would urge upon you to listen to the message of a self-appointed representative of starving millions to hold silence until the last moment.

“In response to shouts for English, with the greatest pain I have commenced in English, but I do not propose to end in English. If I cannot make myself understood to students in Poona where I have already spoken in Hindi, it is my misfortune, the misfortune of the principals here and shall I say your misfortune? It is too late in the day now for a single student to shout out ‘English’, when the National Congress has been repeatedly passing resolutions that Hindi should be the national language, when statistics show that by far the largest number of Indians understand Hindi and if you do not want to strain them, it is necessary for us to speak and understand Hindi. You ought to know that it is the easiest language for every student who knows Marathi, Gujarati etc. It offers somewhat of a difficulty in South India, where the grammar of Dravidian languages is so different from Indo-Aryan languages.

“But I had not come to speak to you of our knowing Hindi. I had come in the first place to show my regret that you have been kept waiting for a long time. It is a tragedy and a comedy that I knew nothing of this meeting. Had I known I should have hastened. As I was driving to the place, I was told there might be a meeting. My limbs are certainly tired as my voice also is, but as I heard that all of you were waiting, I came away as fast as I could.

“And now that you have listened to my English, I shall ask you to listen to my Hindustani. And what I shall like to say has very little bearing on the language in which it is spoken. The message in English might get more silver. It is probable you would understand the message better. But I hold my message to be far superior to myself and far superior to the vehicle in which it is given. It bears a power all its own and I hope it will produce an impression on the youth of India. Whether it will produce an



impression in my life-time, I do not care. I have immovable faith in it and as days roll on and as the agony of the masses becomes prolonged, it will burn itself in the heart of every Indian who has a heart to respond to the message and if you will be as patient and as silent as you have been, you will follow some-what of the spirit of the message.”

Gandhiji then continued in Hindustani:

“Don’t you think there must be something in it, when at the age of 56, instead of taking rest, I am roving all over India from one corner to another on a definite mission? I have at my back 40 years’ experience. Nobody said till now, rather till 8 years ago, that I was a mad man. It is from practical experience, not fancy that I tell you there is a definite well thought-out idea behind every programme I have put before Bharat. The thing I am at present calling upon the country to take up is not a new-fangled theory born of a passing moment’s whim. Way back in 1908, before I had even seen a spinning wheel, I got the idea of its revival. I read Ramesh Chandra’s book, went through Dadabhai’s.¹ That opened my eyes and I realized that whatever others may do for their country’s uplift, for India the resuscitation of the spinning wheel was the one and only remedy. All the 300 millions of India are not living in cities like Bombay and Calcutta. 250 millions out of those 300 millions live in 600,000 villages. We are living a life of abject destitution. 30 millions of people do not have one square meal a day. What will you do about them, about these so many millions? What shall I do? What is your duty in the matter?

“You should know that you are receiving your education out of the labour of those same wretched people. It was from the wealth produced by their labour that I became a barrister. It is on the labour of those self-same poor that multi-millionaires have filled their treasure-chests. India does not bring money from outside. It is just the reverse. Money is drained out of India. The multi-millionaire earns his hoard from his commission of 5% of the fabulous wealth he sends abroad as the foreigner’s agent. And from the discussion going on at present in the Central Assembly I find that our internal trade is 15 times as much as our trade with foreign countries. We may grow rich, get our education provided from the wealth of our 250 million brothers, but what shall we, what must we do for those from whose labour, from whose immorality (to which they are reduced from grinding poverty), from the destruction of whose souls we do all that? Lustily we sing ‘Bharat is our country.’ What then shall we do for it? Lokamanya gave up his life for the sake of his mantra. We too should undergo self-sacrifice and austerities for the fructification of that mantra. At the time of his wife’s



death, his pen did not stand still. He curbed the flow of tears and went on writing. “Victory to Lokamanya” we shout out repeatedly. Why, I can teach that cry even to a parrot. But how does that help you? What would Lokamanya’s soul say if it were here and saw us doing nothing?

“That is why I always say that for Bharatvarsha, for both its men and women, this is a great national sacrifice. If these so many students become experts in the science of the spinning wheel and join the All India Spinners Association, it will do good to all of us. What has Mahabharata made Vishwamitra² do? He was not undergoing a penance at that time. The epic has made him commit theft, and that too of forbidden food, as he was dying of hunger. When millions of men are starving to death as at present, who can keep clear of sin? If my son is dying of hunger, if my wife too is suffering from the same pang even though I possess the wherewithal to feed them, who, do you think, will listen to my cry of Swaraj? If you accept my statement as true, if you can see clearly the picture that I have painted, you cannot sit at ease even for a moment—just as I can’t.

“But Tulsidas has told us we are certain to take a sea-shell shining under the sun for a silver piece, so long as our eyes are deluded. In the same way, though untruth remains untruth for ever, we shall regard it as truth, so long as the veil of delusion has not been removed from our eyes. That is your present state. That thing (the need for the spinning wheel) is clear as crystal to me but you can’t see it. As you can get milk easily, you take it for granted that, like you, every-body drinks milk. That misconception is due to your want of experience. When (Lord) Curzon said to the King of Siam that in his country rivers got frozen into ice and sledges slid on them, the King dismissed it as tall talk since he had never seen a river turned into solid ice. You too may not believe the story of death from starvation, because you may not have seen a man die of it. But I am telling you what I have actually seen. If you don’t believe me, take the train to Jagannathpuri and see it for yourself. The eyes of those famished people are not eyes but glass-balls, life-less, lustre-less.

“Will you provide for such people a *sadavarta*³ or some work? Can these *sadavartas* solve the problem of their unemployment? If you have found out some other means for their employment, it’s a different matter, but if the spinning wheel is the only means, and I am certain that it is, let me tell you from self-experience that they will not spin, so long as we ourselves don’t take to spinning. Spinning is not a difficult art. If you, men of understanding and education, regard it irksome, how will



the poor accept the wheel? What is necessary here is proper organisation. Khadi, if you adopt it completely, protects the rich and fills the stomach of the poor.

“You may go on with your studies if you like, acquire degrees, become Collectors also. But, I insist, you must give at least some return to the poor for the education that you get at their expense. That return you can give in only one way—by wearing Khadi. You may complain that Khadi is thick and coarse. But should you not wear the thing your mother’s hands have made? I wonder why you find it unpleasant to wear Khadi. College students of Benaras, Muzaffarpur, in fact of all colleges, have contributed money for Khadi. The least you must do is to wear Khadi and give something to the poor.

“Correspondence develops into personal contact. From that contact I have learnt that the life of the student is morally going down. I too had a hand in the establishment of Shradhanandji’s *gurukula* (a national residential school-and-college on the lines of the ashramas of old). His object in founding the *gurukula* was to produce men like Maruti (Rama’s disciple Hanuman). Maruti was not a demon, he was a monkey. He possessed soul-force, was a brahmachari. What did he want to do? Unlike Indrajit⁴ he did not want to fight Rama but serve Him. The other day I unveiled the portrait of Bijapurkar and installed the image of Maruti. Why do we go to the darshan of Maruti? The image by itself was a piece of stone. I don’t know what Maruti was—whether a monkey or what else. But I worship only his (spiritual) power and spirit of service. You must hold him as your ideal. Don’t soil your body and mind. If you don’t make your mind steady and free from lust, you will lose your originality, though you may have acquired scores of degrees. You will then deprive yourself of independent thinking, righteous action, self-restraint. Our country is at present flooded with Western literature. Students think that the winds from the West carry fragrance with them. Let me, a man of 40 years’ experience, tell you that their literature is a mine set for our destruction. Whatever that literature may be for people in the West, for you it means nothing but your doom. There are some things which one must not put into words. They must be understood from just a hint. So I say, control your senses, if you wish well of yourself, if you want to serve India. If you can’t do that, India heads for destruction.

“My voice has regained its tenor. That is what always happens, when the smouldering fire within me flares up. I am but an old man. I don’t know whether I shall be alive tomorrow morning. But you belong to the future generation. You are in the



van. You must understand your responsibilities. What our sages say is not a babble. Brahmacharya is the first duty. I have with me letters from Europe and America. I have talked on this matter with Manikrao⁵ also. Observance of brahmacharya is as easy for you as it is difficult. It is soul-force. Your soul is not dead, it lies dormant. Awaken it. It has become difficult these days to manifest the immense power of the soul because we have become unbelievers, athiests. But if you have the faith, brahmacharya will be easy for you since one can gain God's grace through faith. When God deigns to shower His grace on us, it is not hard to conquer our passion for sense objects. One must have faith in order to have the darshan (vision) of God. If you feel convinced that there is something that imbues everything, that thing (vision of God or brahmacharya) becomes easy to gain. Far from being arduous it then becomes for us a path with an indefinable charm. May you have that vision and that experience!"

1. Ramesh Chandra Datt, an Indian Civil Servant, showed statistically how famines increased in incidence and savagery in India under the British regime and Dadabhai Naoroji, the 'Grand Old Man of India' in his book 'Poverty and un-British rule in India' disclosed how India was systematically impoverished by Britain. He put the average annual income of India at 23 Rupees.

2. Sage Vishwamitra specially well-known for his austere penances. But he ate a dead dog's flesh under the self-principle that preservation was a duty that overruled all other considerations.

3. A hoary institution in India, where people are given free food, sometimes cooked.

4. Son of Ravana, Rama's arch-enemy, he had the powers of rising into the sky and becoming invisible. He therefore harassed Rama's army perhaps more than even Ravana. He even killed Rama's brother Lakshmana, who however was brought back to life with a potent herb.

5. A well-known Maharashtrian athlete in Baroda.



9.3.1927

An address to the students of the Gujarat Vidyapith (National college and University);

“There are so many sweet reminiscences of the tour that their number may satisfy even a pessimist. My visits to all these national institutions have raised my faith in non-co-operation in education to unimaginable heights. Man has the capacity to see something bright in any situation however dark. I saw national schools at numerous places. Bihar University, Benares University, Jamia Milia (National Muslim University) where there is a night school with 250 boys, Tilak Vidyalaya with 3 stalwarts who are its soul and some others who adorn it,—I saw all of them. All these institutions cherish a particular ideal and make tremendous efforts to realize it. All of them find it very hard to meet their expenses, but somehow they carry on. It is only in Gujarat that we have never felt the want of funds. Maybe, we get enough, as we deserve to get it. That may be our feeling and those others may be feeling that they don’t get enough funds because they are not sufficiently fit. There is this kind of healthy discontent among them.

“I feel extremely happy, if for nothing else for the sacrifices these many teachers and students are undergoing, and regard it an excellent thing that these institutions are going on. My pride for Gujarat was humbled when I compared it in self-sacrifice with other parts. During my tour I was amazed at the sight of national schools conducted by workers at a terrific sacrifice. They find it difficult even to maintain themselves. A teacher of the national school at Nagpur could discern my fear that they were living from hand to mouth. I was told by a worker in the Nagpur national school that there was among them one, Sri. Tijore, who is even a T.B. patient. These people may be said to have opened all these Gandhi’s shops. How great are their sacrifices and loyalty in carrying on these national institutions? They are giving increasing importance to the spinning wheel. Loading their shoulders with Khadi, these teachers and boys roam in the streets as hawkers. I have seen such schools at numerous places. That is a good augury. At Khamgaum particularly, the spinning wheel has become the centre of all other activities. The same is the case with Nagpur. Slivers are supplied by the schools themselves. All the nation-building activities begin from the spinning wheel. There is not a single school in Maharashtra which has not a gymnasium. In a sense their whole training is concentrated though not very successfully, on moulding their students into real brahmacharis. Then there is another excellent institution – the



Vaishya Vidyashram at Sasvane. It is impossible to forget the charming music of their prayers. All these institutions ought to yield a rich harvest and we shall develop tremendous power through them.”



24.3.1927

In a Gold Mine

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

Let not the reader startle at the title. I may tell him at the outset that I have had yet no occasion to be down a gold mine, but I have heard of it and know what it costs to find gold. Here, however, I mean to talk of a gold mine, which is far richer than an ordinary gold mine, which calls up to your mind none of the ugly associations of, and which is exhaustless in its possibilities unlike, the other mine.

A few miles from Bardoli of ephemeral worldfame is Vedchhi, where Chunilal Mehta settled with his wife and daughters, some years ago, amongst the Kaliparaj people,—now called by a truer name 'Raniparaj' (Hill-men)¹—not in a patronizing spirit, but in a spirit of service. The wife, like the husband, knew all the processes of clothmaking from the picking of cotton to the weaving of yarn into cloth, and she with her girls shared in her husband's work. It was here that three years ago Gandhiji was called to preside over a Conference of these people and he charged them to abjure drink and to take up the spinning wheel, and they in their turn pledged themselves to follow his advice. A few miles from Vedchhi they met again this month on the 16th instant under auspices that Gandhiji himself had not expected. Chunibhai's word had gone forth that only those could be members of the Reception Committee who were dressed in homespun Khadi, and men, women and children mustered strong to be enrolled members. On the day of the Conference their number was 1,100 and the way they had arranged the Conference was something of an education even for their more fortunate brethren who attended the Conference. The pandal had cost them not a farthing, the President's Camp was a little beautiful shed of bamboo thatched with green leaves, and the latrine arrangements were as clean and good as the staying arrangements. The Hillmen themselves had come in their bullock-carts from far and near, with their coarse bread in their bundles and some with rice and dal to make *khichri* with, in the vast river-bed which was their camping ground. There were no kitson lights and no gas lamps. 'There were a few hurricane lanterns and for the rest Nature's great lamp—the moon—was enough.

But I have digressed. I come to the gold mine again. I have not lightly given that title to my article. To the men, women and children thus assembled Gandhiji asked: 'Those who pledged themselves to wear Khaddar, raise their hands'—All. 'Those who



pledged themselves to abjure drink’—All. ‘Those who have kept their vows’—All. ‘Those who have broken their vow—None. It was astonishing. They were questioned and cross-questioned, but not one out of the brave 1,100 raised his hand to show that he had broken the covenant. There was no one among the guests that did not wonder if this could be true. But this was God’s truth, and my eyes, which have year after year seen the sad spectacle of proud Congressmen anxious to interpret and revise and retract and question the value of vows solemnly taken, wept tears of joy to see this solid army of convenanters. Chunibhai and his wife who have cast in their lot with them, and Jugatram who threw up a journalist’s job to live a real life with them and to weave live poems and dramas out of them, have worked in this mine and discovered unalloyed gold. Rather than have that expensive show of a Congress, I said to myself, why should not the members of the A.I.C.C. be asked to walk barefoot from Bardoli to attend one such Conference, share the poor repast that the Hillmen can give them, and catch a spark of the fire through which they have passed who are proved to be pure gold? It is to these covenanters, trusted and true, that the Conference appealed to carry on the propaganda of Khaddar and temperance.

They had their little exhibition too, where they had exhibited the results of their labour, the wheels and spinning appliances that their boys educated at the Bardoli Ashram technical school had made, and their yarn spun during the past four years, showing the progress they have made.

There were instructive charts prepared by Chunibhai from which I cull the following figures:

Spinning appliances sold				
Samvat ²	Wheels	Spindles	Gins	Carding bow
1980-81	388	466	23	14
1982	70	103	14	26
1983(4 months)	349	360	9	12
	Number of Wheels		lbs. of yarn	
1981	110		550	
1982	504		2,736	
1983(4 months)	537		2,460	
Self-spinners Families				



	Wheels in 1982	Wheels introduced in 1983	Total	Villages
Bardoli Taluka	198	99	297	16
Mandvi ”	10	69	79	17
Vyara ”	242	126	368	32
Mahuwa ”	271	226	497	86
Songadh ”	13	13	3
	734	520	1,254	154

The figures speak for themselves. The progress during the four months of this year has been wonderful, the work being practically equal to that turned out during the whole of the last year.

The resolutions, so far as they were concerned, were two, urging the covenanters to carry on the Khadi and temperance propaganda, and the other two concerned the workers, from amongst whom committees were formed to inquire into the oppressive regime of the forest officers and suggest remedial measures, and to consider changes in the existing revenue law to protect their lands from the exacting sahumkars.

I shall not attempt to summarize Gandhiji’s speech. I shall note just one or two points. The earlier part was by way of an appeal to the moneylender and the liquor-seller, the Bania and the Parsi, to reform their ways, and the latter part was one of congratulation to the Hillmen and urging them to carry on self-purification more extensively. There was a quaint appeal about the way in which he commended to them their new appellation of ‘Hillmen’:

“Why should you be called ‘black’ people? We are all black, the God who coloured our skin being the same, and his brush being the same. You will be called ‘Hillmen’ from today. Be you brave as the lions and tigers in the hills, so that none may cheat you, or oppress you, or violate your purity. The denizen of the forest is either a wise man, a Rishi, or a dacoit or a beast of prey. You are neither of the last two, so you have to become Rishis. And there is no lack of opportunity for you. None of the wicked temptations of the towns lies in your way. You are fitted by nature to live on fruit and root and to eat in order to live, not to live in order to eat, and therefore best fitted to teach us that healthy way of living. Learn our sacred lore and with your innate purity



of heart tame the lion and the tiger, as did the Rishis of old. To the women I would say just a word. I am glad you have taken to Khaddar, I now want you to give up your ugly ornaments which disfigure your limbs, are receptacles of dirt, and badges of slavery.” And so on and so forth. And there were not a few women who unburdened themselves of their heavy ornaments, not of gold or silver, but of brass and lead, but no less dear to them than gold ones which their more civilized sisters still hug to their limbs. It was a lesson to the better situated ladies who attended the Conference.

In the evening we had a play which fitly capped the programme of the day. It was composed by Jugatram who had dipped his pen in the ink of love for these Hillmen, who has lived with them and who knows them to the fingertips. But it was more. It was that type of play which Romain Rolland has called the ‘People’s Play’. It needed no theatre, no scenes and no dresses, the beautifully swept ground with the starry canopy with the moon being the stage and the boys and teachers acting in their daily dress, with slight modifications. The play, called ‘The Blind Man’s Cart’, was a merciless satire on both the Hillman blind even to his interest, and on the sahuakar, the liquor-seller, and the policeman, the unholy trinity, who blind to all else excepting their narrow self-interest, are making a hell of the Hillman’s life. It was as cleverly performed as it was conceived, and bore testimony not only to the consummate skill of the people’s playwright, but to the wonderful way in which he had made himself one with the people.

Well, we were in a veritable gold mine, and no mistake.

1. ‘Raniparaj’ means foresters rather than hillmen.

2. Samvat 1980=1924 A.D.



(Additional Notes in Gujarati by M.D.)

15 to 17.3.1927

The workers among the Kaliparaj (black people) castes, now more aptly called raniparaj (forest-dwellers), had secured from Gandhiji a three days' programme, for them from 15th to 17th. The beginning was made in the Mandvi Taluka (county) on the 15th. Uplift work has been carried on among 400,000 people sprawled in Vyara, Mahuwa, and Songadh Talukas. Workers first entered the Mandvi Taluka in response to the cry of distress of the Raniparaj people there. Coming to know of the atrocities inflicted by the Forest Department officers on the Raniparaj, some workers went there, sang the song of the spinning wheel and invited Gandhiji to give them the potent charm of fearlessness.

People collected in large numbers at Shathvay. Gandhiji put the spinning wheel before them as their saviour from drink and fear terrorism. He exhorted the women to discard the heavy ornaments on their noses, ears, necks, hands and feet as they were all signs of slavery. A large number of these simple innocent women immediately took them off. The response was so splendid that the upper caste women present there were wonderstruck. After Gandhiji's speech one of the Chaudharas (a sub-caste of the Raniparaj community) stood up and explained Gandhiji's whole speech in the patois of his community without missing a single idea. That illiterate-looking Chaudhara friend's retentive power and eloquence astonished everybody.

But this was not the last of our pleasant surprizes. We were to visit a place where there was waiting for us an even more delightful and unexpected scene. We rested for the night at Madhi Ashram. The Ashram was at first located in another village, Varad, but as the building proved to be inconvenient and as Madhi was more favourably situated for work among Raniparaj people, the Ashram was afterwards removed to Madhi. As any monetary help from the local (highcaste) people for an Ashram to raise the suppressed Raniparaj castes was out of the question, the Gujarat Provincial Committee gave the money and founded the Ashram. Sri. Makanji, a worker originally in Varad, has firmly embedded himself there. Could there be any 'Opening Ceremony' for a very modest institution of this sort? But the workers escorted Gandhiji to the Raniparaj Conference, via Madhi, in order to have his blessings for the Madhi Ashram. Gandhiji's speech on this occasion was so full of sadness that it could move even the stones to tears:



“From the very moment I entered this Taluka, countless thoughts have been thronging my mind. I shake off my blues by indulgence in humour, but the fact that I have to resort to humour is itself an indication of my inward grief. There was a time when not only the province of Gujarat, but the whole of India looked up to the Surat District with respect and regarded its work in the struggle for Swaraj as the highest in every item—in contributions, in money, discipline and efficiency in the Swaraj army, national education, and service of the untouchables. A healthy competition was going on between the two advanced districts of Surat and Kaira and even among them Bardoli Taluka had taken the foremost rank. It is impossible to forget that bracing rivalry in love. It was then that for the first time Bardoli was put on the world’s map. Look at that picture and this of today! When we enter Bardoli now, we find a few white caps here and there and a very few friends of untouchables. And immediately then the tragic incidents at Sarbhon¹ come back to our minds and we wonder how the advent of Swaraj is at all possible. Is it possible moreover to forget the oath we had taken under the tree yonder, and the solemn assurance that, keeping God as their witness, 43 men had given me and the ultimatum I had sent to the Viceroy on the basis of their assurance? And now I have to come here not to ride on the waves of enthusiasm, but simply to declare this Ashram open. What we have to learn from it all is that we must never accept defeat, never lose faith till the last, never beat an ignominious retreat. That is the meaning behind the establishment of this Ashram. That we established this Ashram from the money the Gujarat Provincial Committee gave us is no matter of pride for us. If you want the Ashram to be here, you must never stint in giving money for its upkeep. You should on the contrary provide the Ashram fully and then ask me to supply you workers. The present arrangement of throwing the burden of the Ashram’s maintenance on the Gujarat Provincial Committee is bad. It will not do, if a man imposes on the blood in his brain only all the work he does. He ought to utilize the blood of his whole body. The Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee, which is really our brain has also become our legs to stand upon and we are here trudging on by the power it supplies. That is a sad thing.

‘Whenever at any other place I see a national school, or the suppressed classes, my mind goes back to Gujarat. I sometimes wonder if Gujarat has withdrawn altogether from that bracing contest. But I am an inveterate optimist, a man who can see a silver lining in the darkest cloud. One of those hopeful signs is certainly this toddling babe, this Ashram. It possesses one good thing at least—men endowed with



faith. May it grow and this crippled Bardoli² (Taluka) and this Surat devastated much earlier regain their lustre even now and enlighten Gujarat and the country.”

After leaving the Madhi Ashram the scenes we met with on the 16th, were so heartening that it seemed as if they were purposely designed by other than human hands, to dispel all our gloom in a moment. One could not but see God’s hand in them. Brothers bearing the new dignifying name of ‘Raniparaj’ had collected at Khanpur. But before having the ‘darshan’ of these people, let us cast a glance at the Vedchhi Ashram where live those who believe that service of the lowly is service of God and have therefore been living among them day and night for years past and thus instilled new life into them. We may as well call this Vedchhi Ashram located in a small cottage a ‘Power House’ that supplies ‘power’ to villages all around. Sri. Chunilal Mehta and his wife as well as Sri. Jugatram, who all have identified themselves with the suppressed people there and seen the image of Lord Rama in their service were present at the Vedchhi Ashram. At the request of Sri. Chunilal Mehta and his wife Gandhiji laid the foundation stone of the Weaving Section and at Sri. Jugatram’s request attended the wedding ceremony of a Chaudhara youth, Jugatram’s favourite old boy. Gandhiji blessed the couple, better say ‘initiated’ them into the marriage ceremony, because he first impressed upon them the solemn purpose underlying the system of marriage. He told the couple that their marriage was performed in order to lead them to a life of self-restraint and then made them take the sacred vow of marrying, not in order to lead a life of sexual pleasures, but in order to bring about a constant co-ordination between the pair in a life of service.

1. This village was in the forefront of preparations for mass civil disobedience which Gandhiji was going to launch early in 1922. But after Gandhiji cried halt owing to the outbreak of violence in one place in U. P. (not Gujarat), there was a terrible set-back. Sri. Narhari Parikh, an old colleague of Gandhiji, had to go on a week's fast to save the serfs there from the oppression of landowning peasants. There was severe depression in Khadi, untouchability and other programmes also.

2. After about only a year, Bardoli retrieved its prestige by successfully offering civil disobedience against the enhancement of land revenue. The Taluka was sorely tried, but stood the ordeal and so inspired the whole country with hope that the cry ‘Bardolise the country’ became popular.



17.3.1927

Speech at the Raniparaj Conference

“Why use the formal polite language of thanking me? Would I not, if it were possible, spend all the 24 hours of my life in the work for the suppressed? I am by birth a Vaishya (Bania), but I became a Shudra (servant) also, ever since I came to know you. I hear that Kaliparaj (black community) is and remains ‘*kali*’ (black) because of the Banias and Parsis here. The Parsi also is by profession a Bania. He cannot be admitted into the fold of the Brahmin—cannot be called a Brahmin, though he has been termed a quarter (=pa) sage (=rsi=rishi) and rightly so. He is definitely not a *shudra*, as the Parsis are not servants of anybody by profession. But that community has made its name world-known owing to its skill and extent in business. No business community has equalled or even approached the Parsi community in its magnificent charity. Englishmen say that the Parsi can match the Jew. With all such sterling qualities, I am ashamed to say, these same business communities have made the suppressed classes ‘suppressed’. I know that without the Vanik (businessman), the world cannot function, but the word ‘Vanik’ in that sentence is the true Vanik as described by the poet Shamal Bhatta.¹ ‘वणिक तहनुं नाम, जेह जूठुं नव बोले...’ But at present there are many *Vaniks* who know only one thing: how to make two rupees from one. They are prepared to sell for money, even their wives, mothers, fathers, and their souls. I would love to fly from such people and live among you. If I actually don’t, it is due to my fond belief that by living away from you, I can render you better service and exercise my capacity to do good to you to a greater extent. But if I myself don’t live among you, I have at least the consolation that my colleagues are doing so.

“Why should you feel it necessary to thank me? You are entitled, you can claim the right, to take service from me and it is but my duty to give it. I am, in fact, a leader of the community of volunteer servants. I therefore thank you, and also, my colleagues, who live and work among you. Though I am wandering all over India, I am working for you through them. What is that work which I am doing for you? It is the work for the spinning wheel. I am glad to see here this large number clad in Khadi. I request those *Kaliparaj* friends who are not wearing Khadi to start wearing it right from now. I am more and more convinced that no other means can bring about the good of the suppressed classes as much as the spinning wheel. The spinning wheel raises us from poverty, prods us to give up idleness and be active, is a dear friend of the widow, and has the very great power of weaning a person from drink. It is possible that other



occupations may have as much power as a spinning wheel has to make a man give up drink, but no other occupation can be learnt up as easily as the spinning wheel. Besides, the question that stares us is this: ‘What occupation is there which can provide employment to multi-millions?’ The answer is, only that occupation that produces an article required by multi-millions. Cloth is this universally needed article. Food also is such a universal necessity, but agriculture depends upon forces, such as rains, which are beyond human control. Then again, agriculture is not an occupation which can keep you in work all the year round. All these considerations show that we have to depend upon extraneous factors in agriculture, but we are our own masters in the matter of the spinning wheel. That shows how the spinning wheel is the cow of plenty, is the means of everybody’s uplift. In view of all these advantages, the question how much we earn from the spinning wheel does not, ought not to, arise. It is immediately dismissed as irrelevant.

“The next thing now, liquor. But before I come to it, let me ask you a question ‘How many among you had come to Vedchhi? How many had taken Ramanama on the bank of that river? The Sun was of course a witness, but let those among you raise their hands who had kept Rama as a witness of their oath. Remember, this talk is going on in the sacred name of Rama who watches all your acts. Let those raise their hands who have not kept the oath. (Not a single hand was raised.) If what you indicate is correct, I regard it as a wonderful achievement. One of the items in that resolution refers to the use of liquor. If these so many of you abstain from drink, it is not a difficult thing to make the few remaining others give up drink. 20-25 hundred thousand rupees are squandered in drink. If such an alarming amount is spent on drink, it may as well be said that each one of you pays an excise tax of 6 rupees. And what cannot 500 men and women dedicated to prohibition achieve? And if you awaken your fellow-brother, you will awaken the whole country. There is a story about Sita.² Before Rama went out to catch the deer, he drew a round line in front of the cottage. Ravana crossed it and had to die eventually. In this way he, who binds himself with an oath and then breaks it, is destined to be destroyed. To keep one’s vow is to follow God’s commandment. God is nameless and present everywhere and yet in the heart of the drunkard there can be wine only, not God.

“Government has passed new laws about you people. On the ground that you have reformed yourselves and are better-off, a resolution has been passed by the Government to enhance your revenue dues. The law moreover that your lands cannot



be alienated has been rescinded. 6000 *bighas* (about 3430 acres) of land have therefore already passed out of your hands into those of Banias. Why are you so inert that you allow your lands to pass to other people's hands? There are so many white-capped people here. I presume they have grown conscious of the danger. You all must agitate strongly to get the regulation (of inalienation) re-imposed. There are no Blacks and Whites among us. We are all dyed in the same ink and God's pen also is one and the same. God does not take different pens to write. Lions and lionesses live in jungles. I ask you, sisters and brothers, to become lions and lionesses so that nobody can rob you, persecute you or dishonour you. 'Rani-paraj' means forest-dwellers. Only he can dare to roam about in forests who is either a rishi (sage), a dacoit or a wild animal like a tiger or a lion. You are neither robbers nor wild beasts. The course open for you therefore is to become rishis. You are far away from the stinking gutters, liquor shops, foul-smelling vegetables and tempting but pungent dishes of Suratis (citizens of Surat). Keep yourselves always away from them. If you become forest-dwellers in its right sense, weak and thin people like myself will come to seek your protection. We, city-breds, live to eat. Teach us how to eat to live. Let your forest resound with your chant of the holy Vedas, and thus purify it. Drive out tigers and leopards infesting it or charm them into submission by the mantra of Ramanama which you can do by realising the truth that the world is but the manifestation of Vasudeva (Omnipresent Lord). You live in the cottages in which your ancestors lived, but as a community you are among the suppressed classes. If you become true forest-dwellers you can certainly observe all the 'dharma's' (duties) and 'karma's' (actions, religious and secular) of the Hindu Dharma.

"I ask the women present here, 'How can you protect yourselves or others, when you are loaded with ornaments? Did the wives of rishis ever wear ornaments? You are mothers. A loving heart is the ornament that really adorns the mother. You wear nose-rings. You can be led and pulled by the ears with your ear-rings. You wear a thick ring round your neck. Even I, an old man, can catch hold of it and drag you. These are all fetters. Throw them away. Spin yarn and wear daily new ornaments from it. Wear new bangles. If you dye your yarn-bangle with golden or silver colour, nobody will be able to make out that it is not made of gold or silver.

"Resolutions must never be made without invoking the Sun to be the witness thereof. Spinning and propaganda against drink were the two chief resolutions passed here. Under the third resolution, a Committee is to be formed with Messrs.



Vallabhbai,³ Amritlal Thakkar, some other workers and two workers of your Raniparaj Community as members. It will make a study of your social and economic conditions and of the oppression inflicted upon you by the Forest Department. It will then publish an account of your disabilities and point out the ways and means of helping you. The fourth resolution similarly requires the same Committee to probe into your hardships from some of the practices of the Revenue Department and suggest remedies. The sixth and the last congratulates those women among you who have discarded ugly and unhealthy ornaments now in vogue and appeals to all others to give up all ornaments except those that are regarded as auspicious.”

After the evening prayers, there was a dramatic performance. And what was this play in essence? Who were the actors and what the theatre in which they performed it? That play was a graphic disclosure of the present plight of the Raniparaj people. It centres round a village-cart that is ultimately thrown into a pit and shattered to pieces by racketeers who felt no qualms in robbing the poor of the last rag with which they were hiding their shame. The play is a graphic picture of this Raniparaj community blind to its own interests, of the ‘White’ communities—Parsis and Banias—who too have gone blind from vested interests and of the henchmen of the Government who encourage these ‘White’ communities in squeezing the ‘Black’ people. The actors were some students of Sri. Jugatram’s school of Raniparaj children and some dedicated teachers of the National School at Surat. The accessories needed for the performance consisted of hardly anything more than a cart and a round piece of ground that looked beautiful under the silvery beams of the moon. It required no raised stage, no curtains, no back-ground scenery, no foot-lights. The beautiful ground that Nature provided and the moon that, with its soothing beams, brought peace and coolness to the heated earth were all that were necessary. The performance took exactly an hour and at the end of the play the following round dance song of the spinning wheel that brought back the blind to the right path of wisdom was sung:

This frail unbroken thread of yarn
Breaks shackles even of steel,
Blunts the sharpest edge of the sword,
Gags a thousand guns,
Unites the weak with the strong,
The Blacks with the Whites,
The blind with those that see,



The lame with those that walk,
The pauper with the prince,
The human with the Divine.
Spin, spin, my dear sisters,
Spin, my brothers, with love and zest
And spread that love in every house and hut
And thus relieve my Mother, Bharat, of her heavy load.
Give us, we pray, such countless wheels,
And let the frail thread of Bapu⁴'s life
Remain for long unbroken.

1. “He is a businessman who never tells a lie, never gives false measures” etc.

2. The Ramayana story is different. When Sita insisted that Rama should catch the golden deer, they were seeing from a distance, Rama pursued the fleet deer. Unable to catch it, Rama shot it with an arrow. The dying deer which was in fact a demon, cried out ‘Lakshmana’ (Rama’s brother). Sita then sent Lakshmana to Rama’s rescue. Lakshmana drew that charmed line to protect Sita, so that whoever came within the limit would die automatically. Rama’s enemy, the demon Ravana, who had planned all this, then came as a Brahmin beggar, enticed Sita to step out of the protecting line and thus kidnapped her.

3. Later, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who as ‘Home Minister’ amalgamated all the ‘Native States’ into the Indian Union without shedding a drop-of blood.

4. Bapu = father—Gandhiji.



19.3.1927

Principal Ramdevji had invited Gandhiji a long time ago to be present at the Silver Jubilee Celebration and bless the students of the Kangri Gurukula, the best creation of Swami Shradhdhanandji. After the demise of Shradhdhanandji it became for Gandhiji an even more sacred call to keep his promise to go there.

You have to alight at Hardwar station, go to Kankhal, proceed 4 miles along the bank of the Ganges, and then cross it to reach the Gurukula. Right from Hardwar, we could see a sea of man moving towards the Gurukula. The scene looked like a countless number of pilgrims proceeding to a religious fair. Both the annual convocation and the celebration of the Silver Jubilee were held concurrently. Only men devoted to learning would ordinarily attend such functions. But most of these pilgrims were unsophisticated men and women of no note and no learning. ‘Where may all these cartloads of women be going?’ one would not fail to wonder. It was the martyrdom of Swami Shradhdhanandji that was drawing that vast mass of humanity towards the Gurukula. True, some may have been drawn to the place from Gandhiji’s would-be presence, but the whole scene resembled the march of a number of pilgrims to a holy place. And the rows of shops and tents, pitched at short distances, inevitably reminded one of a session of the Indian National Congress. The attendance in the pavilion which was covered up beautifully with greenery both on the sides and the ceiling was not a whit smaller than at a Congress session.

When we arrived at the Gurukula, on the third day of the Silver Jubilee celebration—, the Convocation ceremony was going on and the Principal was giving his blessings to the students. When he ended, Sri. Rajendra Babu, the President of the Convocation, rose to deliver his speech. Owing to the hubbub, he was hardly audible beyond the few sitting around him. He said that there was a difference between Western and Eastern civilizations. While the trend of the former was for outgoing activities, that of the latter was for searching into the Self. He was reading from a printed speech. But he took it as read and sat down in only a couple of minutes. Here are some extracts from that speech:

“I don’t mean to say that we must discard Western sciences, but we should see that they serve and not harm mankind. We must give the first place to people’s good in all our thinking. But so long as our fondness for enjoyment of sensual pleasures is not kept under proper checks, so long as we do not attain control over the senses and



regulate our life accordingly, so long as we do not generate soul-force by means of love and service, it is impossible to make physical sciences render service, not disservice, to the people at large. The aim of our Gurukulas and national educational institutions should be to initiate us into a life of self-restraint, renunciation, and service, side by side with the teaching of physical sciences.”

Defining a national educational institution he said: “No institution of Bharat is entitled to call itself ‘national’, that does not impart the knowledge of the present political situation, of the needs of the present day, the degradation, wretchedness and stark poverty of the people, and does not show the way to remove that wretchedness, to conserve and canalise the country’s dissipated energies, breathe a new life into it and turn out students with the fitness to traverse the path it shows with firm resolve, spirit of enterprize and one-minded persistence... The census report of 1921 puts people living in villages at 90% of the whole population. From 1891 to 1921, the growth of the town population is hardly 1 percent. At this rate it will take 3000 years for all Indians to become town-dwellers. For this reason, it is but necessary for us to accept the theory that we should regard village-life as the basis of our civilization and form an education policy that is village-oriented.”

Dealing with the question of maintenance he said: “We know that at present hundreds and thousands of graduates and matriculates send in their applications for a post carrying a paltry salary of 20-25 rupees. The claim that education imparted in Government or Government-recognised institutions provides certainty of employment is altogether untenable. I ask the strongest champions of Government schools and colleges and of the system of education provided by the Government, whether they can prove that each and every student, turned out by those institutions, is able to secure a job or that the problem of his maintenance is solved altogether. If that problem is not solved by that system, what right have these champions to ask us how the students trained in national schools — including Gurukulas — will maintain themselves? If the question of bread is equally difficult for both national and government institutions, why do not people opt for national schools and colleges, specially when students from national institutions get the chance to serve our country and society, whereas, by remaining in Government institutions they have to tow the Government line and help it to perpetuate its slave-rule?”



Sadhu Vasvani then stood up. He simply joined his palms, and turning in all directions one after another bowed to the audience and got down from the rostrum. That silence was as effective as a speech.

Though Sri. Malaviyaji had gone there in connection with the Silver Jubilee celebrations, it seemed as if he had done so with the set purpose of serving the cause of Khadi. When he blessed the students, he talked of Khadi to them and begged the audience also to take the pledge to wear Khadi. His powerful voice silenced the meeting in no time:

“Munshi Amarsingh supported this institution by his donation and Shraddhanandji began to develop it since 1902. Many people are sad at his loss to us. Our grief may linger long with us, but his soul is ageless, immortal and beyond the reach of harm. You will see the light of that soul during your studies here. Be always ready to keep this institution alive and help it. Make that resolve right today. Now that Swamaji has given up his mortal coil, you, I hope, will look after this institution. He alone is the son worth the name who preserves and raises his ancestral line (स जातो येन जातेन याति वंशः समुन्नतिम्). It is not possible to impart an education higher than what was given by our rishis (sages) in the past, as the Principal has reminded us.

पठकः पाठकश्चैव ये चान्ये शास्त्रपाठकाः |

सर्वे व्यसनिनो ज्ञेयाः यः क्रियावान् स पंडितः ||

(All those who study, who teach others and who teach Shastras are only professionals. Only he is a truly learned man who implements his learning in life.)

“I ask you to keep your vows in accordance with the teaching of rishis. I do not agree with the object for which Dayananda¹ established the Arya Samaj, but undoubtedly he lived a life that won the adoration of patriots and brahmacharis. Dazzled by the flashy splendour that has come from the West, we forgot our purpose. When Bharat was at the top of civilization and prosperity, England did not even know what prosperity was. But things have gone topsy-turvy now. With all these assets, why are we not able to be masters of the Englishman and are on the contrary his subjects? Everyone who has read the 11th chapter of *Satyarthaprakash* (gospel of the Arya Samaj, written by Swami Dayananda), knows how deeply pained Dayananda felt at the plight of our country. People have gathered here today with a view to have the darshan of Mahatma Gandhi also. But they have not put into practice the precepts either of



the Mahatma or of Swami Dayananda. Though all these years we took the dust of Mahatma's feet to our head, we did not discard foreign cloth and did not wear Khadi. We are worthless people, if we do not put into practice the precept of one who did not give up spinning even in jail and has no equal in the admiration he receives from the whole world. A veritable stream has gushed out from the bowels of the earth, a stream that never dries up. Shall we, in our lethargy, remain thirsty all the same? I am glad to see you all gathered here, but if you go back without taking any lesson home with you, my joy will turn into sadness.

“No pilgrim leaves this holy town without taking one pledge or another. Gandhiji himself, when he came to Hardwar 12 years ago, returned home with the pledge of abjuring cow's milk.² You (graduates of the Gurukula) have already taken the pledge of devotion to the country. I want you to take on the bank of the holy Ganges, another pledge—that of discarding foreign cloth altogether and wearing only Khadi. There are quite a number of people who say that Gandhiji has lost his senses. I say, his advice to the country to spin comes from mature experience and wisdom. The fact is, India's freedom, tied in strings of foreign yarn, was bundled out from the country, when cloth began to be manufactured in England and dumped into India. Do you see on my body a single thread made from Indian or foreign mills?

“Let it be only a penny that you get, but it must be a penny honestly earned. If you have lived upon interest from your father's property, if you have become a doctor, a lawyer and grown rich from that special knowledge, if you have amassed wealth from business, all this that you have done is worth nothing, if you have not earned your bread honestly. Let me give you an example of wealth honestly earned.

“There was once a poor Brahmin. He was both a scholar and a man of principles. He required money to arrange for his daughter's marriage. His wife always nagged him: ‘Why don't you sell your knowledge and bring some money?’ At last he went to his King and narrating his circumstances begged for money. The King ordered the grant of one hundred gold mohars—(sovereigns). The Brahmin said he would not accept it. Thinking that the Brahmin wanted more, the King raised the grant to 500. Even then the Brahmin said, “I don't want it.” He refused the offer of even 1000 *mohars*. The King lost his patience: ‘How much then do you want? Out with your demand!’ The Brahmin said, ‘I don't want a single penny dishonestly acquired. I want only a single anna (penny) but one that is honestly earned. That untainted penny is worth a million sovereigns and millions of sovereigns sinfully obtained are worth nothing.’ The King



now saw the Brahmin's point. He asked him to wait for a week and then one evening he set out in disguise for a round in the town. Even at a late hour he saw a blacksmith working. The King approached him and said, "Friend, you must be tired. Let me take a turn. Give me whatever you like for my labour." The blacksmith agreed to give him one anna and entrusted the work to the King who sweated and toiled for the whole remaining night. The blacksmith was beside himself with joy. He said, 'O labourer, you have worked well and hard. Take these four annas.' The King refused. "No, friend, my wage was fixed at one anna. I don't want a paise (1/4th anna) more." So there was a friendly tussle. The blacksmith pleaded: 'But, you see, you have shown how very honest and good you are. Why don't you let me return your kindness in same measure at least?' The King at last relented: 'Well then, give me one cowrie (smallest coin) more.' The King went back to his palace with those four paisas and gave them away in charity to the Brahmin. He thanked the King heartily and went home. But his wife took him to task. Then, annoyed at her husband's foolishness, she threw away the four paisas and cowrie in her courtyard. In course of time four trees bearing silver fruits grew from the four paisas and one tree bearing gold fruits from the one cowrie. The King had forgotten the incident altogether and not cared to inquire who the Brahmin beggar was, but one day in his wanderings he happened to come across these trees and was amazed at the sight. He stopped and made an inquiry. The Brahmin said, "Your Majesty, this prosperity is but the fruit of your grace. The four trees have grown out of the four paisas and the fifth from the one cowrie you gave me."

"So, you see, whether you are a millionaire or somebody in particular, you must take your meals only after earning a few coins honestly. Resolve, therefore, to spin and not to light your evening lamp before spinning. That self-exertion will make your yarn pure enough for your sacred thread. (Arya Samaj invests everybody, even a Shudra, with a sacred thread.) Get cloth also woven out of your yarn and give it away in charity. Never let a single day pass without spinning. High-class ladies in England produce fabrics from spinning and weaving at home. Why may you not do the same? My daughters, sisters, mothers. Don't leave this place without taking the sacred pledge of spinning. Let everybody take the pledge. My brothers also must do the same. Like water running unused to the sea, many minutes of our time pass away without use. Put them to a good use. That thread, that frail thread, will make India free again.

"Take the straight and narrow path.

'O mind! Do all you can



“And don’t blame Rama afterwards.”

(Showing the cloth he wore:) “This is ‘pure Khadi.’ Devi (Goddess. A term of respect for women among Hindus. Here for his wife) spun the yarn. I wanted a sacred thread made from hand-spun yarn, but couldn’t get it. If Khadi is not available, wear cloth made in the country. Even Devasharmaji, who has left the Gurukula for his yoga practices, continues to spin at his new place.”

The new graduates were then given their degrees and prizes. Sri. Dharmpalji, who had the courage to catch hold of Swami Shraddhanandji’s murderer, was awarded 3 medals and Dharmasingh who risked his life to save Swamiji’s was given Rs. 500. After receiving the prize-money Sri. Dharmasingh gave the amount back to the Gurukula.

Gandhiji then rose to speak. As in spite of all his efforts for a while, his voice was not audible to the meeting, he took some hot water and that cleared his throat somewhat. I give this speech at some length.

“Today I feel like following Sadhu Vasvani and after bowing down to you all sit down without uttering a word. But. I cannot imitate everybody like that. Imitation is helpful when you are impelled from within. You can’t force yourself to imitate. Swamiji is not dead. He would die only when we shall make an attempt to bring to an end his true body, i.e., this Gurukula, his real self. But the fact is that no effort can succeed in putting an end to his life. Swamiji is definitely alive, so long as this Gurukula exists, so long as even a single graduate continues to serve it. The physical body of Swamiji was inevitably destined to fall one day. But Swamiji’s biggest work is this Gurukula. He poured all his energy into it. He went through the most rigorous spiritual effort in creating this institution. I call this an original creation since, at the time when we had become slaves of Western education, Swamiji held that our education, thinking and living must be along the lines laid down by the Vedas. You have taken the vow of adhering to truth. If you observe that pledge, nobody dare bring the Gurukula to a close.

“But in order to keep the Gurukula alive for ever, it is necessary for us to imbibe that bravery, that insistence on brahmacharya, that forgiveness which we saw in Shraddhanandji’s life. Ravana was brave, but his was the bravery of a demon. We call the heroism of Rama and Lakshmana (Rama’s brother) as divine bravery. Its characteristics are forgiveness and brahmacharya, i.e., conservation of the vital fluid.



By bravery and preservation of your vitality, you will be able to fully protect your dharma and country.

“I know it is a difficult thing. I have with me letters from many students, some full of praise, some others of abuse. Praise is a useless thing, it does not affect me. But when a student loses his temper and abuses me, I feel concerned about him, since anger destroys the vital fluid. I had given Swamiji my definition of brahmacharya and he had agreed with it. Brahmacharya does not mean refraining from physical contact with the opposite sex. It starts from there indeed. But the true quality of brahmacharya is forgiveness in its highest form. When Swamiji came to see me on his way back from Tankaria, he told me that there is only one method of protecting Hindu dharma and that is high moral character. Since you want to protect Vedic thought and way of life, you must bear in mind the fact that even though donations in millions of rupees pour into your Gurukula it will go to dogs if it does not stand on the foundation of morality, of brahmacharya. This campus has no soul of its own. It is you who are its soul. If you lose your soul-force and be like the sannyasi who struts about with an impressive ochre robe only to fill his belly (उदरनिमित्तं बहुकृतवेषम्) all your education goes to nought.

“I have not come here today to speak to you on the spinning wheel and Khadi. Your first and primary duty is to cultivate brahmacharya and bravery which includes forgiveness. If you forget that, you take Swamiji’s life. Rashid could not take it, his shots only made Swamiji immortal.

“The other work of Swamiji was uplift of untouchables. It is impossible for me to improve upon Malaviyaji’s advocacy of Khadi. But I will say this much: That thread (of hand-spun yarn) is sacred, because it removes poverty and we cannot put the teaching of the Vedas before a famished man. The Principal stated that this Gurukula has not been built from the money of the rich. The poor should be the constant object of our contemplation and concern. If you want to preserve your culture and your villages, you should accept Khadi. If you wish to preserve your enterprising spirit in order to do some really effective work, there is no work that can come up to Khadi. The Gurukula definitely requires monetary aid. But it requires moral help also. I cannot join Swamiji’s name with the work for Khadi, for that was not his chief work. But I can affirm that if you want the teaching of the Vedas to be a permanent feature of the Gurukula, you can do that not by delivering speeches but by cherishing pure thought and action. Let not the graduate of this institution adorn his body with attractive foreign clothes, as a prostitute does. Its graduate would wear clothes just for



protecting himself from heat and cold. Beauty lies not in your outward look but in your acts of goodness. If you forget this fundamental truth, the Gurukula will be wiped out. If you want to raise the untouchables, I must show you how Khadi helps them very much. I know what a beastly life the mill-worker living in city-slums leads. I am linking Khadi work with untouchable-uplift in order to give a push to Khadi. But if you can serve untouchables by dropping Khadi, you may certainly give it up. A day is sure to come, when my voice will be still. In the end, it is silence that achieves all ends. If I do not become quiet on my own, there is God above and He is certain to gag me soon or late. But even after my death the work I am speaking of will not stop,—if behind it there is honest striving, not lip-service, and heart's desire.

“May God protect brahmacharya, truth and the pledge you all have taken; may He bless the Gurukula and continue all the good activities of Swamiji.”

There was a special gathering for collecting funds for the Gurukula. The attendance there also was quite as big. Principal Sri. Ramdev dwelt at length upon the books written by the graduates of the Gurukula and on their share in the non-co-operation movement. He added: “One of the graduates to be conferred the ‘Vidyalankar’ (a gem of learning) degree is born of Muslim parents.” He gave two interesting chains of cause and effect that are worth reproducing here. “Gandhiji says that Swaraj will be attained by the spinning wheel alone. I say it will be by brahmacharya alone. Spinning is impossible without self-restraint and self-restraint without brahmacharya.” “But”, he added, “brahmacharya too is impossible without rigorous spiritual discipline and spiritual discipline without the system of education imparted in the Gurukula.”

Cash-collection then began. It was an unforgettable scene. As the coins were collected in buckets and they fell noisily in very quick succession, it seemed as if a mint was working in full swing. This rain of rupees continued for quite a long while, currency notes also were given away in heaps. As if to turn this rain into a downpour, Gandhiji was requested to make an appeal for funds. He gladly responded in a remarkable speech:

“I don't know what success my appeal will have. I see today the same sight I saw 12 years ago. If this scene is repeated anywhere else, the credit for it goes to the Arya Samajists and the Punjabees. I criticize the Arya Samaj indeed, but I praise it also and one who offers his admiration sincerely, gets the right to criticize the institution for



what he does not like in it. Before the British rule came upon us, the only way to procure millions of rupees was that of approaching the masses and winning their favour. But after its coming, that former healthy contact has been cut off and now our link with the masses is of a devilish kind. As I am a faithful and true Sanatani Hindu, I know what good and bad qualities the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra betray through their behaviours. Their strength and power are wholly dependent on the Government's power of the sword. At present I am in a position to bring my debtor to rack and ruin. That was not so in the past. A healthy relation then subsisted, between the creditor and the debtor. I regard the Arya Samaj as the regenerator of that old healthy relationship.

“Hardly anywhere else can we meet with a sight we see here today. I am imitating your example, but rather feebly. I can't require buckets to go round for collecting donations given me. People with handkerchiefs only go about for them. And while I get only small coins, you secure rupees! Not all the Punjabees are rich. Certainly there are poor people also among them. But your hearts are generous. I criticize the Arya Samaj, call you quarrelsome people, but today I have come here with the set purpose of working for you. I say to the generous-hearted Punjabees, 'Even if you have contributed your mites already, give something more', because I want to publicly proclaim here that the whole country, India, is served through the Gurukulas of the Arya Samaj. Don't be under the delusion that because I find fault with you in some matter, I do not understand and appreciate your spirit of sacrifice. Undoubtedly you possess it, but don't be content with its present quantum. The spirit of sacrifice which you exhibit through your acts is far below the demand of the situation. All the same I praise it because others do not possess even that much. India is (*karmabhumi*) a field for action, not for enjoyment of sensual pleasures (*bhogabhumi*). That is action which is performed in a spirit of dedication, every other is mere self-willed indulgence. But today Punjabees have fallen into the snare of sense-pleasures. Women³ give me a smile and provide milk for me, but when I ask them 'Why this fine silken wear (and not khadi)?' they go away in shame. But some have the cheek to be outspoken: "But its weaver is a Musalman (so it helps Hindu-Muslim unity?)"

“But let us, not, as I said, be content with the amount of our sacrifice. Let not my praise throw you off your hinges. Don't you imagine that you have given as much as you could. Looking to the stupendous work we wish to do, you should, if you can, give still more. That is charity in its real sense which impels you to give your maximum.



You must therefore give your utmost to the institution to which shraddhanandji had dedicated his all.

“It was the students of this Gurukula who taught me this amplified meaning of *daan* (charity). Swami Shraddhanandji—then Munshiramji—and his students sent their contribution for the South African struggle by earning it by their own physical labour. Malaviyaji told us just now the similar story of a king giving in charity one anna which he had earned with the sweat of his brow. In the same way the boys of the Gurukula sent me Rs. 500 and they were quite like the cowrie given by the king. Money rained on us then. God bless the souls that sent them. But these people gave their thousands out of the crores (ten millions) they possessed, whereas the Gurukula boys toiled and moiled for their collection. Even if this institution has done nothing more, is it a small thing that it has been functioning for the last 25 years, that it is the fruit of the total self-dedication of Swami Shraddhanandji, that it does not waste the fund it gets and that it has immortalised Sanskrit by giving it a prominent place in its curriculum? Whenever I see a Punjabee reading Sanskrit script, immediately I guess that the man must have been educated in this Gurukula. And can there be any institution that has no drawback? With all its faults, the fact stands that this institution has rendered great and glorious services. That is what makes me ask you to serve and support it. Shraddhanandji’s soul will have solace and peace when it finds that this institution is not only not to be closed but will go on progressing. If you want to make your boys and girls *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* (virgins) you must patronize and protect this Gurukula. If anybody imagines that he observes *brahmacharya* by his own spiritual strength, he is an egotist living in a fool’s paradise. He is certain to fall. God has made our flesh weak. If we don’t become humble before Him, we cannot become *brahmacharis*.

“You may fondly think that since you have given your money you have done all you could by way of a tribute to Shraddhanandji’s life and work, but an homage to Swamiji lies in your being always vigilant about your character and in making your children copies of Hanuman (Rama’s devotee known for his prowess from brahmacharya). Varnashram in its sense demands that the Brahmin has no need to pile up money. People themselves supply all his needs. That is why I appeal to you to give money for that man’s work who regarded me as his younger brother, though we differed in views.



“Not only should you help this institution but also the work in which his (Shraddhanandji’s) son, Indra and Ramanand Sannyasi are engrossed. If you think you cannot do both the things, give as much as you can to the Gurukula. Among the many activities of Shraddhanandji the chief were these two. This Gurukula was so to say his physical frame and the other was the uplift of untouchables. His work for ‘shuddhi’ (purification) reached its climax in the latter work.”

This exhortation produced an immediate effect. People cried out that buckets might be sent round again and there was again a shower of money into them. Many say that the collection grew nearly double after Gandhiji’s speech. Principal Ramdevji told us the next day that out of the appeal for three hundred thousand rupees, nearly two hundred thousand had already been received.

As a part of the celebration, a National Educational Conference was also held. It is not proper to call it a ‘Conference’, since no discussions were held and no resolutions passed. It was rather a symposium in which different speakers expressed their own views on national education. The Jamia Milia (National Muslim University) was represented in the gathering by Sri. Ramachandran. It was by itself remarkable that Milia, a Muslim University, sent representatives to this gathering organised by Arya Samajists (a reforming and proselytising sect of Hinduism). But even more significant were the speeches of its representatives. They covered the speakers as well as the institution they represented with honour. As soon as he got up, Sri. Mujib expressed, as a Musalman, his heartfelt grief at the murder of Shraddhanandji and called the deed one that should make the whole Muslim community feel ashamed. He stated further that much self-purification was necessary for Musalmans in order to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. He sat down with the expression of the hope that an exchange of views should continue between his and other national institutions and that the Muslim University should regard an institution like the Gurukula as a sister institution. The speech produced an excellent impression. Principal Ramadev profusely thanked Prof. Mujib and declared that the Gurukula would try henceforth to develop greater contact with the Jamia. But Sri. Ramachandran’s speech may be regarded the best. He said that there were two essentials of national education and that no institution should be regarded as ‘national’, if it did not possess those two essentials. They were: (1) There should be a synthesis of the many cultures and sections of the nation; (2) It should make service of the poor and the oppressed the central feature of its curriculum. He claimed that his institutions made a very serious effort to bring about that synthesis



and that though a Hindu himself he had not only never found his stay in his Muslim institution uncomfortable but always positively enjoyed it.

Gandhiji was the President. But as he had to finish the proceedings at the fixed time, he got hardly five minutes for his winding speech.

“You have heard the essential condition of national education. By and large I agree with it. Nobody need feel disappointed with regard to national education. As the Gurukula was founded before the start of non-co-operation, we must gladly yield the palm to it for initiating national education. There is a good influx of boys into the Gurukula. Why do they not flock to other national institutions? National education flourishes where teachers are men of sterling worth. There is paucity of funds in Bihar, but as the Professors there are men of faith and self-confidence, they manage to carry on. ‘National education’ has no meaning, if we are unable to unite the hearts of all divisions of our people through it. That institution deserves to be destroyed which breeds hatred for other communities. Hate-fever does no good to any religion whatsoever. The definition of Tulsidas is true here. He says, ‘Mercy is the root of religion and pride the root of sin.’⁴ Where the name of Khuda exists, there is no room for hatred. Even if the people of any faith are ignorant, it is our duty to conquer their folly by love. If we give up these fundamental principles of all religions, we cease to be men and become beasts. If we wish to unite ourselves with the poor of India, charkha is indispensable. Charkha is the ‘yagna’ (sacrifice) of the day since it is a means of realization of God or the Self.

“It is the duty of every Indian student to learn Sanskrit. It is certainly the Hindu student’s duty, but it is the Muslim student’s also, since Rama and Krishna were after all their ancestors also⁵ and it is necessary to know Sanskrit to know them rightly. At the same time it is the duty of the Hindus also to know the language of the Musalmans in order to maintain cordial relations with them. It is because we have gone mad at present that we keep ourselves miles apart from each other’s language. I assure you that that institution is anything but national which teaches hatred and fear for another community.”

Is there any wonder that Gandhiji should request Malaviyaji to open the Khadi Exhibition after the latter’s exuberant praise of Khadi at the Silver Jubilee celebration? And Malaviyaji immediately accepted the request. Gandhiji expressed his delight at being on the same platform with Malaviyaji and speaking on the same subject:



“I am in the heaven of happiness today. Both of us are standing on the same platform. I have always cherished reverence for my father and elder brother, even though at times I may have differed from them on principle. For the same reason, I have kept myself away from you (Malaviyaji) but my soul has never been away. But as we have met on the same platform today it is for me a red-letter day. I am not going to call Khadi or Charkha as my pet subject; it should be regarded as your favourite also.

“The talk common for both of us is the one of Daridranarayana (God, in the poor man’s form). I have come here as a representative of the poor. Nobody should feel at ease so long as there is a single human being who has no food to eat. When Malaviyaji himself has come forward here to give an impetus to my work, it is no longer necessary for me to move your hearts. May Malaviyaji relieve me of that burden and may that work go on for ever! That is my prayer to God.

“I request you, Malaviyaji, to open this Exhibition intended for the hundreds of thousands of people attending the Kumbha Mela (a monstrous religious fair held every third, sixth and twelfth year) and teach the people.”

Malaviyaji:

“This is an auspicious, blissful moment. We have collected here in this holy pilgrim-centre for a holy cause. Cloth used to be sent from our land to Egypt 2000 years ago. Till the coming of the machine-age, the whole world wanted to buy cloth made by us. So late as only a hundred years ago, we used to export cloth to foreign countries. But today cloth worth 600 million rupees is imported into India and we are put to a loss of Rs. 2 per head. (The population of India was then 300 millions). The Englishman established and developed his business here and the result has been our slipping along the inclined plane of misery and starvation. Every country ought to have its own Government, but we have lost our freedom, because our business of *swadeshi* (of one’s own country) cloth has been destroyed. We have been talking and talking of *swadeshi* cloth and *swadeshi* industries for the last 50 years, but have done nothing tangible so far. God granted my brother Gandhi the intelligence to understand the real meaning of *swadeshi*. It was he who first put before the country the idea that hand-spun and hand-woven cloth is the only real *swadeshi* cloth. Our masses will earn something only if they can go on spinning. It is the one business that has the essential feature of giving scope to everyone for earning money. Formerly, the bride was presented with a charkha to enable her to make a living, but now out of our one



hundred and fifty million women, not even one hundred and fifty thousand are spinning, with the result that our women are wearing foreign cloth. Why, even our sacred thread is made from foreign yarn! There are countless women who complain that they have to pass their days wearily, for want of work. Why may they not spin as a form of worship to God or to their country?

“There are one hundred fifty million women in India. How many out of them, I ask, go out to earn wages as labourers? I assure you 90% of them keep to their homes. If God awakens in their hearts the urge to spin in their leisure hours, prosperity would enter numberless homes.

“But I admit I am wearing quite a heap of clothes.

“Love is not love that lasts till the loved one is alive:

मुँह देखे की मुहब्बत रहा करती है सभी को,
मुहब्बत तो तब मैं जानूँ, मेरे पीछे मेरी याद रहे !

“That is love which remembers me after I am no more.

“What I want is the rule of Indians by themselves, i.e. Swaraj. But even after its advent, clothes will not rain from the heavens. We ourselves will have to produce them even then. Even in Swaraj unemployment does not become altogether impossible. In self-governing countries like England, U.S.A. etc., there is unemployment. But that is due to their *rajasic* Swaraj (where money matters most). What we want is *sattwic* Swaraj (where emphasis is laid on man and morality) and that you cannot have without employment-oriented economy, i.e. without Khadi.

“Food to the stomach; Khadi to the body; God’s name to the mind, what more can you want? It is only after earning the untainted ‘cowrie’ that you can fruitfully worship Saraswati (Goddess of learning), Dharmalaxmi (Goddess of wealth earned honestly), and God.

“Do you know what tremendous work the women of England put in during the War? Nobody wasted her spare time. Everyone spent it in sewing, knitting etc. What are you going to do in our present state of dependence? Don’t leave this holy town without taking the solemn vow to spin in your spare time and to wear Khadi exclusively. To beg of you a small thing, to announce his indomitable faith (in Khadi) before you and to tell you what remarkable progress Khadi has achieved in three years,



tapasvi (one who performs austerities) brother has come here on the bank of the holy Ganges. The spinning wheel is the wheel of Laxmiji (Goddess of Wealth) Herself. Have no doubt that the dust of Her holy feet is certain to purify and prosper all those homes where that wheel is worked. I now declare this Exhibition open in compliance with my brother's desire and as an act of my own worship to God. It is my prayer to God that our cloth-business may regain the place it once occupied and our poverty may be rooted out through it."

In conclusion Malaviyaji made a stirring appeal to the *sadhus* (recluses): "Take the vow to wear and propagate Khadi on this holy occasion of the present Kumbha fair."

His appeal for money met with a warm response. From the time when Malaviyaji gave his blessings to Khadi, a new age may be said to have dawned. He is going to spend 10 days at Hardwar, during the period of the Kumbha fair, for singing hymns and other religious exercises. Gandhiji took his leave with the request to push his new work Khadi during these days.

1. A fearless monk who championed the cause: 'Back to the Vedas'. His forthright denunciations of idol worship etc. and condemnation of a Hindu ruler for leading a loose life, brought about his death from poison. But he forgave the murderer and even gave him money to let him escape. His Arya Samaj was (and is) a more or less militant religious cult buttressed both against Christian and Muslim conversion-movements and Hindu orthodox customs. The speaker was an orthodox Brahmin.

2. Gandhiji did not take that vow but the one of restricting his food to things containing 5 ingredients only. Thus a boiled vegetable with salt was taken as 2 ingredients.

3. Right upto the end the sense is not quite clear in Gujarati. — Translator.

4. 'दया धरम का मूल है, पाप मूल अभिमान |
'तुलसी' दया न छाँड़िये, जब लागि घट में प्रान |'

5. A very large majority of Indian Muslims are descendants of Hindu ancestors.



Appendix

Appendix I-1: Shraddhanandji—The Martyr

The expected has happened. Swami Shraddhanandji passed a day or two at the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati, now about six months ago, and told me in the course of his conversation that he often received letters threatening his life. Where is the reformer who has not a price put upon his head? There was, therefore, nothing untoward in his getting the letters. And there is nothing untoward in his assassination having taken place.

Swamiji was a reformer, he was a man of action, not of words. His was a living belief. He had suffered for it. He was bravery personified. He never quailed before danger. He was a warrior. And a warrior loves to die, not on a sick-bed but on the battlefield.

Shraddhanandji became seriously ill about a month ago. Dr. Ansari was, as his physician, giving him all the loving attention he was capable of giving. The telegram I received from his son, Indra, in reply to my enquiry at the beginning of the month, was that he was better and that he wanted my 'love and prayer' both of which he had before the asking.

God had willed for him a martyr's death and so though he was still on the sick-bed, he died at the hands of an assassin who had asked to be admitted to the Swamiji's presence for the purpose of holding a religious discourse on Islam, who was admitted at the Swamiji's instance, and who under pretence of wanting water to quench his thirst, had Swamiji's faithful servant, Dharam Singh, sent out to fetch water, and who, in absence of the servant, deposited two death-wounds in the patient's breast, as he was lying in his bed. We have not the last words of the Swamiji, but if I knew him at all, I have no doubt that he prayed to his God to forgive him who knew not that he was doing anything wrong. In the language of the Gita, therefore, 'happy the warrior who achieves such a blessed death.'

Death is at any time blessed, but it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, i.e. truth. Death is no friend, he is the truest of friends. He delivers us from agony. He helps us against ourselves. He ever gives us new chances, new hopes. He is



like sleep, a sweet restorer. Yet it is customary to mourn when a friend dies. The custom has no operation when the death is that of a martyr. I cannot, therefore, mourn over this death. He and his work are to be envied. For Shradhanandji is dead, he is yet living. He is living in a truer sense than when he moved about in our midst in his giant body. The family in which he was born, the nation to which he belonged are to be congratulated upon so glorious a death as this. He lived a hero. He has died a hero.

But there is another side to the shield. I regard myself as a friend of the Musalmans. They are my blood brothers. Their wrongs are my wrongs. I share their sorrows and their joys. Any evil deed done by a Musalman hurts me just as much as that done by a Hindu. This foul deed has been done by one who bears a Musalman name. As a friend of the Musalmans, therefore, I deeply regret the event. The joy of the death is thus tempered by the sorrow that an erring, misguided brother has been the cause of it. Martyrdom can, therefore, never be wished for. It becomes a thing of joy only when it comes unsought. May we not gloat over the errors of the least of our fellows.

But the fact is that an error often refuses to become patent until it becomes atrocious. It dies only after being completely disgraced.

This tragedy has a national importance. It draws pointed attention to an evil that is eating into the vital of the nation. Both Hindus and Musalmans have the choice before them. We are both on our trial.

Hindus may, by being resentful, disgrace Hinduism and postpone the unity that must come. They can by self-restraint show themselves to be worthy of the message of the Upanishads and of Yudhishtira who was the embodiment of forgiveness. Let us not ascribe the crime of an individual to a whole community. Let us not harbour the spirit of retaliation. Let us not think of the wrong as done by a Musalman against a Hindu but of an erring brother against a hero.

Musalmans have an ordeal to pass through. There can be no doubt that they are too free with the knife and the pistol. The sword is no emblem of Islam. But Islam was born in an environment where the sword was and still remains the supreme law. The message of Jesus has proved ineffective because the environment was unready to receive it. So with the message of the Prophet. The sword is yet too much in evidence among Musalmans. It must be sheathed, if Islam is to be what it means—peace. There



is danger of Musalmans secretly endorsing the mad deed. It will be a calamity for them and the world. For ours is after all a world problem. Reliance upon the sword is wholly inconsistent with reliance upon God. There should be, on their part, unequivocal mass condemnation of the atrocity.

I wish to plead for Abdul Rashid. I did not know who he is. It does not matter to me what prompted the deed. The fault is ours. The newspaper-man has become a walking plague. He spreads the contagion of lies and calumnies. He exhausts the foul vocabulary of his dialect, and injects his virus into the unsuspecting, and often receptive minds of his readers. Leaders 'intoxicated with the exuberance of their own language' have not known to put a curb upon their tongues or pens. Secret and insidious propaganda has done its dark and horrible work, unchecked and unabashed. It is, therefore, we the educated class, that are responsible for the hot fever which possessed Abdul Rashid.

It is unnecessary to discriminate and apportion the blame between the rival parties. Where both are to blame, who can attribute with golden scale and fix the exact ratio of the blame? It is no part of self-defence to tell lies or exaggerate.

It is too much to hope, but Swamiji was great enough to warrant the hope that his blood may wash us of our guilt, cleanse our hearts and cement these two mighty divisions of the human family.

I must deal with the life of the Swamiji as I knew him, in the next issue of Young India.

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M.K. Gandhi.



Appendix I-2: Swamiji as I knew him

My first acquaintance with Swamiji was when he was Mahatma Munshiram and that by letter. He was then Governor of the Kangri Gurukula, his great contribution to education. He was not satisfied with the orthodox Western method. He wanted his boys to be saturated with Vedic teaching, and be taught through Hindi, not English. He wanted them to be and remain brahmachari during the training. He had inspired his boys to contribute to the fund that was then being collected for the Satyagrahis of South Africa. And he wanted them to do so by themselves labouring as coolies for hire; for was it not a coolies' fight in South Africa? The boys rose to the occasion, earned full wages and sent them to me. The letter he wrote to me about this incident was in Hindi. I was addressed as 'My dear brother'. It endeared me to Mahatma Munshiram, we had never met each other before.

Andrews was the link between us. He was anxious that whenever I returned home, I should make the acquaintance of what I used to call his trinity – the Poet, Principal Rudra and Mahatma Munshiram.

From the time of the receipt of that letter, we became brothers-in-arms. We met each other in 1915 at his favourite Gurukula and with each meeting we came closer and knew each other better. His love of ancient India, Sanskrit and Hindi was remarkable. He was undoubtedly a non-co-operator, before non-co-operation was born. He was impatient to gain Swaraj. He hated untouchability and was anxious to raise the status of the 'untouchables'. He could not brook any restriction upon their freedom.

When the Rowlatt agitation was started, he was among the very first to hail it. He wrote a warm letter to me. But the suspension of Satyagraha after Amritsar and Viramgam tragedies he could not understand. From that time our differences commenced, but they never once disturbed the brotherly relations that subsisted between us. The difference showed to me his childlike nature. He blurted out the truth as he knew it without regard to consequences. He was daring to a fault. I observed more and more the temperamental differences between us as time progressed but they only proved to me the goodness of the soul in him. To think audibly is no crime, it is a virtue. It is the hall-mark of truth. Swamiji thought audibly.



The Bardoli decision broke his heart. He despaired of me. His open protest was energetic. His private letters to me were still more so, but with the emphasis on the differences, there was an equal emphasis on love. He was not satisfied with an avowal of love in mere letters. He sought me out as opportunity offered and explained his own position, tried to understand mine. But the real reason, as it seems to me, for seeking me out was to assure me, if any such assurance was necessary, of undiminished love for me as for a younger brother.

My remarks about the Arya Samaj and its great author and my references to him hurt him deeply; but our friendship was strong enough to bear the strain. He could not understand that it was possible to reconcile my general estimate of the Maharshi (Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj) with the quality of forgiveness that he had in a boundless measure for personal injury. His devotion to the Maharshi was too great to brook any criticism of him or his teachings.

He has been severely criticised and maligned in the Musalman press for his Shuddhi movement. I myself could not accept his standpoint. I do not even accept it even now. But in my opinion he had a complete defence of his own position from his own standpoint. Shuddhi is entitled to the same toleration that is claimed for Tabligh, so long as either remain within moral and legitimate bounds. But this is not the occasion for entering into an examination of that highly controversial question. Both the Tabligh and the Shuddhi, which is a reply to the former, have to undergo a radical change. Progress of liberal study of religions of the world is bound to revolutionise the existing clumsy method of proselytising, which looks to the form rather than the substance. It is the transference of allegiance from one fold to another and the mutual decrying of rival faiths which gives rise to mutual hatred.

Swamiji's assassination can be turned to good account by us, if we both Hindus and Musalmans could possibly realize the deeper meaning of Shuddhi.

I cannot close the reminiscences of the life of a great reformer without recalling his last visit to the Satyagraha Ashram only a few months ago. Let me assure my Musalman friends that he was no hater of Musalmans. He undoubtedly distrusted many Musalmans. But he bore them no ill will. He thought that Hindus were cowed down and he wanted them to be brave and be able to defend themselves and their honour. In this connection he told me that he was much misunderstood and that he was absolutely innocent of many things that were said against him. He told me he had



several threatening letters. He was warned by friends not to travel alone. But this man of faith said, 'What protection shall I seek but of God? Not a blade of grass perishes without His will. I know therefore that nothing can happen to me so long as He wishes me to serve through this body.'

During this stay of his he spoke to the boys and girls of the Ashram school. He said the best protection of Hinduism must come from within, from self-purification. He put the greatest emphasis on the need of brahmacharya for the building of character and body.

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M.K. Gandhi

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