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# Post Prayer Speeches – Part I

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M. K. GANDHI

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## INTRODUCTION

These prayer discourses belong to the most critical and testing phase of Gandhi's life. On 20th February 1947, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced in London that Britain would grant independence to India and withdraw by June 1948.

While Jinnah was kindling among Muslims the aspiration for a separate Pakistan, Gandhi and the Congress were striving earnestly to preserve the unity of India.

It was a time when Hindu-Muslim tensions had reached their peak, threatening to tear the nation apart.

Amidst this atmosphere of deep unrest, Gandhi was ceaselessly endeavouring to resolve the crisis through the path of truth and nonviolence—so that harmony might be restored between Hindus and Muslims, and peace might return to the land.

These discourses bear witness to his untiring moral efforts. And it was while engaged in this very mission that he met with a tragic end. Gandhi's prayer discourses have often been criticised for being too political. But Gandhi's religion was grounded in ethics. He had entered the political realm so that public life could be governed by the dictates of dharma—that is, by moral principles. To that end, he was in constant pursuit of truth.

Seen in this light, these prayer discourses are worthy of close and thoughtful study. In a world increasingly swept by the flames of discontent, if peace is to be attained, Gandhi's essential message remains as relevant as ever: truth and nonviolence—that is, love—is the only way. This was the essence of his philosophy, and the soul of his politics.

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## 1. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, February 17, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

DEVIPUR,  
February 17, 1947

Gandhiji drew attention to two things that had been brought to his notice. The first was that a complaint, in sending which he was unfortunately an instrument, had been found on enquiry by the officers to be without foundation. The articles which were reported to have been looted were mostly found in the very place from where they were said to have been looted. This was a serious matter. It was the second case that had come under his notice. Yesterday some Muslim friends had come to him and admitted that the Muslims had undoubtedly gone mad in October last but though they had not been so bad as the Hindus had been in Bihar, the Hindus were making up for it by putting the Muslims to inconvenience by lodging false complaints against some of them. They said that false complaints were far larger in number than true ones. That was not the way to bring the two together. He said that all those who lodged false complaints should be prosecuted and severely punished on conviction. If he was the Superintendent of Police or a Minister, he would certainly institute proceedings and bring the perjurers to justice. As for himself, as a citizen desirous of serving his country he would only be able to do something if the names and addresses of perjured complainants were given to him. So far he had received no such names. The only case that was sent to him could not be supported when the complainant was requested to support his complaint. Generally he would say that the Hindus who lodged false complaints injured themselves, their co-religionists and the whole country.

The other thing he wished to draw attention to was a letter he had received from a responsible person who was doing the work of bringing about peace between the two, that a Hindu lad was molested by some Muslims and that the latter had threatened the Hindus that they were to expect more drastic measures than last October’s after he had left Noakhali or, which was the same thing, after his death. He would like to think that this statement was untrue, but he feared it was not. But he did hope that the poison was restricted to a few ill-mannered persons. Whether, however, it was restricted to a few or whether it was a widespread trait, he ventured to think it was wholly against Islam. This he said with apologies to Fazlul Huq but no less firmly on that account. It would be an evil day for Islam or for any religion when it was



impatient with outside criticism. He did not believe himself to be an outsider. He respected Islam as he respected every other religion as his own and therefore he claimed to be a sympathetic and friendly critic. It was up to every good Muslim to take up a firm and unequivocal stand against what he believed to be vicious propaganda.

Harijan, 16-3-1947

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## **2. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, February 18, 1947**

(Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

ALUNIA,  
February 18, 1947

Q. Do you support evacuation of the Hindus from the affected areas if the League Government or the majority community agrees to give us due compensation?

A. He had supported the proposition from the non-violent standpoint. It was applicable to all Provinces whether the majority was Hindu or Muslim. What could the Government do if the majority had become so hostile that they would not tolerate the presence of the minority community? In his opinion it would be improper for them to force the majority into submission, nor could they undertake to protect the minority at the point of the bayonet. Suppose for instance that the majority would not tolerate Ram

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### 3. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, February 19, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

CHARDUKHIA,  
February 19, 1947

Q. What should a Hindu worker do when he is being deliberately misrepresented by interested parties in Noakhali?

A. The answer in terms of ahimsa, generally, would be that acts should be allowed to speak for themselves. Whilst this was good as a general proposition there were occasions when to speak and explain was a duty and not to speak would amount to falsehood. Therefore, wisdom dictated that on occasion speech must accompany action. Of course, one could conceive the possibility of mere thought taking the place of speech and action. Such was the attribute of the Almighty and might be almost possible for one in a billion, but he knew no such instance.

Q. You have advised (Vide the preceding page.) evacuation if the majority become irrevocably hostile. But you have also maintained that a truly nonviolent man should never give up hope of converting his opponent by love. Under these circumstances, how can a nonviolent man accept defeat and evacuate?

A. As to this question, it was perfectly correct that a non-violent man would not move out of his place. For such a one there would be no question of compensation. He would simply die at his post and prove that his presence was not a danger to the State or the community. He knew that the Hindus of Noakhali made no such pretension. They were simple folk who loved the world and wanted to live in the world in peace and safety. Such persons would consult their honour if the Government honourably offered them compensation in order to see the majority living in peace. If the mere presence of the Hindus irritated the Muslims who were in the majority, he would consider it to be the duty of the Government to offer compensation as it would be of the Government in a Hindu majority province to offer compensation to the Muslims if their presence irritated the majority community.

Q. In case of evacuation, under advice from the Government, should the evacuees ask for compensation for (a) all their movable and immovable property, (b)



loss of business? In other words, what would you consider to be adequate compensation?

A. Gandhiji said that the Government would be obliged to compensate for both immovable and movable property when the latter could not be or were not carried away with him by the evacuee. Loss of business was a ticklish question. He could not conceive the possibility of any Government shouldering the burden of such compensation. He would understand the proposition that asked for a reasonable sum for enabling the person concerned to start business in a new place.

Whilst he examined and admitted the possibility of evacuation, his experience of all India told him that the Hindus and the Muslims knew how to live at peace among themselves. He declined to believe that people had said goodbye to their senses so as to make it impossible to live at peace with each other as they had done for generations. For he believed with the late poet Iqbal that the Hindus and the Muslims who had lived together long under the shadow of the mighty Himalayas and had drunk the waters of the Ganges and the Jamuna had a unique message for the world.

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## 4. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 20, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

CHAR LARUA,  
February 20, 1947

**Q. If you think the Government may boycott, i. e., remove the minority community after giving adequate compensation, may not people take time by the forelock and go?**

A. As to this he said that those who felt that they would take time by the forelock and form a Hindu corporation to take the Hindus away, he had nothing in common with them. He could not be party to any such scheme. The burden lay entirely on the majority community and the Government. He merely meant that when they declared bankruptcy of wisdom, the minority should go if they were adequately compensated. The other way was the way of violence, i. e., civil war, not of nonviolence.

**Q. You have said castes should go. But then will Hinduism survive? Why do you thus mix up Hinduism with the progressive religions like Christianity or Islam?**

A. He maintained that caste as it was understood must go if Hinduism was to survive. He did not believe that Christianity and Islam were progressive and Hinduism static, i. e., retrogressive. As a matter of fact he noticed no definite progress in any religion. The world would not be the shambles it had become if the religions of the world were progressive. There was room for varna, as a duty. This was true of all religions whether the name used was other than varna. What was a Muslim Maulvi or a Christian priest but a Brahmin if he taught his flock its true duty not for money but because he possessed the gift of interpretation? And this was true of the other divisions.

**Q. As you are an advocate of the abolition of caste, are we to take it that you favour inter caste marriages? Many occupations are now the monopoly of specific castes. Should not this be abolished?**

A. He was certainly in favour of intercaste marriage. The question did not arise when all became casteless. When this happy event took place, the monopoly of occupations would go.

**Q. If there is only one God, should there not be only one religion?**

A. This was a strange question. Just as a tree had a million leaves similarly though God was one, there were as many religions as there were men and women though they were rooted in one God. They did not see this plain truth because they were



followers of different prophets and claimed as many religions as there were prophets. As a matter of fact whilst he believed himself to be a Hindu, he knew that he did not worship God in the same manner as one or all of them.

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## 5. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 21, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

KAMALAPUR,  
February 21, 1947

Gandhiji congratulated the audience on having come from the surrounding villages. He however sympathized with them for being exposed to the sun. He also hoped that they were not afraid of the Indian sun, perhaps the greatest gift from God. Happy was India which had clear blue sky for the larger part of the year.

He then referred to the fact that he had gone to Chandpur more than once whilst India’s grand old son Shri Haradaya Nag (1853-1942; participated in the non-co-operation movement and Salt Satyagraha; devoted his life to constructive work) was alive. He was then his guest. He knew, therefore, what importance Chandpur had. He was glad that Chandpur had played its part in looking after the refugees. But he deplored the disregard of the laws of sanitation and cleanliness. If they rigidly carried out these rules they would not have to live in constant dread of the plague and other diseases which were the brood of insanitation.

He then told them that they must not harbour ill will against their Muslim neighbours. He appealed to both the parties to live at peace with each other. But he held that even if the Hindus alone harboured no ill will against the Muslims, or vice versa, strife would abate. If however both harboured ill will, one against the other, strife were bound to be the result. There was a mantra in the Upanishads [which says] that man became what he thought. (5 “According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action. Others, however, say that a person consists of desires. As is his desire, so is his will; as is his will, so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV. 4.5) How true it was found in every walk of life! Let them beware of harbouring an evil thought.

He then came to the two questions before him. The first was:

Q. You advocate inter-caste marriages. Do you also favour marriages between Indians professing different religions? Should they declare themselves as belonging to no denomination, or can they continue their old religious practices and yet intermarry? If so, what form should the marriage ceremony take? Is it to be a purely



civil function or a religious function? Do you consider religion to be an exclusively personal matter?

A. Though he admitted that he had not always held the view, he had come to the conclusion long ago, that an inter-religious marriage was a welcome event whenever it took place. His stipulation was that such a connection was not to be a product of lust. In his opinion [if it was a product of lust]<sup>1</sup> it was no marriage. It was illicit intercourse. Marriage in his estimation was a sacred institution. Hence there must be mutual friendship, either party having equal respect for the religion of the other. There was no question about this conversion. Hence the marriage ceremony would be performed by priests belonging to both faiths. This happy event could take place when the communities shed mutual enmity and had regard for the religions of the world.

Q. Should religious instruction form part of the school curriculum as approved by the State? Do you favour separate schools for children belonging to different denominations for the facility of religious instruction? Or, should religious instruction be left in the hands of private bodies? If so, do you think it is right for the State to subsidize such bodies?

A. As to this question he said that he did not believe in State religion even though the whole community had one religion. State interference would probably always be unwelcome. Religion was a purely personal matter. There were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from the other. He was also opposed to State aid, partly or wholly, to religious bodies. For he knew that an institution or group, which did not manage to finance its own religious teaching, was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the State schools would not give ethical teaching. Fundamental ethics were common to all religions.

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## 6. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 22, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

CHAR KRISHNAPUR,  
February 22, 1947

At the outset Gandhiji said that he had received from a Muslim friend in Baluchistan a printed sheet containing what he thought were the sayings of the Prophet and the teachers. The whole selection was good but he was attracted by the following from Prophet Mohamed’s sayings:

When God made the earth it shook to and fro till He put mountains on it to keep it firm. Then the Angels asked, O God, is there anything in Thy creation stronger than these mountains? And God replied, iron is stronger than these mountains for it breaks them.

And is there anything in Thy creation stronger than iron?

Yes, fire is stronger than iron, for it melts it.

Is there anything stronger than fire?

Yes, water, for it quenches fire.

Is there anything stronger than water?

Yes, wind, for it puts water in motion.

O our Sustainer, is there anything stronger than wind?

Yes, a good man giving alms. If he gives it with his right hand and conceals it from his left, he overcomes all things. Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brother’s face, your putting a wanderer on the right road, your giving water to the thirsty, is charity. A man’s true wealth hereafter is the good he has done to his fellowmen. When he dies people will ask, what property he had left behind him? But the Angels will ask, what good deeds has he sent before him?

Gandhiji then dealt with the following questions.

Q. Why should there be insistence on temple entry? Of course, we understand that in case of objection, there is scope in it for satyagraha. No-caste dinners have a limited value; for those who join do not shed untouchability in their homes or during



social ceremonies. They look upon these dinners, organized by Congressmen or other progressives, as special occasions when caste rules are held in abeyance; something comparable to what one does when one goes to Jagannath Puri and partakes of cooked rice offered to Jagannath without reference to one's caste. Anti-Untouchability has not yet gone deep enough to affect the normal social life of individuals. What can be done to break down barriers in private homes? Even with regard to temple-entry there is one question. Do you think that priests in public service in free India will be drafted from among competent men and women without any reference to their former castes?

A. Gandhiji said that it was an apt question in this part of Bengal where there were the largest number of Namasudras. He welcomed the question doubly because he had occupied the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder and because he did not believe in the ladder of castes. He invited all to occupy that lowest rung. Then there would be no occasions for such questions as were addressed to him. Meanwhile, he was bound to deal with them. He entirely endorsed the proposition that untouchability would be doomed and totally abolished when there was no prohibition applied against anyone by reason of his caste. The only universal prohibition would be against insanitation, degradation, etc. But he clung to the belief that temple-entry took the first place in the programme of removal of untouchability and he made bold to say that social public dinners would proceed as they were preceding the final conquest over the demon of untouchability. He prophesied that Hinduism would be destroyed if untouchability was not destroyed, even as the British race would lose its name if British rule was not destroyed in toto, as it was certainly being dissolved before their very eyes.

Q. You wrote about economic equality in 1941. Do you hold that all persons who perform useful and necessary service in society, whether farmer or Bhangi, engineer or accountant, doctor or teacher, have a moral right only to equal wages with the rest? Of course, it is understood, educational or other expenses shall be a charge of the State. Our question is, should not all persons get the same wages for their personal needs? Do you not think that if we work for this equality, it will cut sooner under the root of untouchability than any other process?

A. As to this Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the Bhangis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work.



Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land.

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## 7. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 23, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”.

It being Gandhiji’s day of silence the questions and answers were read out.)

CHARSOLADI,

February 23, 1947

Q. Namasudra girls are usually married off at the age of 12 or 13; formerly the usual age was 8 or 9. The bridegroom has to pay a dowry of Rs. 150 for the bride. The average difference between the two is about 12 to 15 years. As a result of this the number of widows in the Namasudra society is rather large. Among one section of the caste widow-marriage was prevalent. But in imitation of another section which was looked upon as superior, the former are giving up that practice. What is your advice regarding child-marriage and widow-remarriage?

A. Dealing with the question Gandhiji said that his opinion was definite. In the first instance there should be no possibility of child-widows. He was averse to child-marriages. It was an evil custom which unfortunately the Namasudras had perhaps taken from the so-called higher castes.

Gandhiji was also against the system of dowry. It was nothing but the sale of girls. That there should be castes even amongst Namasudras was deplorable and he would strongly advise them to abolish all caste distinctions amongst themselves. And in this they should bear in mind the opinion the speaker had often expressed that all caste distinctions should be abolished, and there should be only one caste, namely, Bhangis, and all Hindus should take pride in being called Bhangis and nothing else. This applied to the Namasudras as well. When child-marriages were abolished, naturally there would be few, if any, young widows. As a general rule he was for one man one wife for life, and one woman one husband for life. Custom had familiarized women in the so-called higher castes with enforced widowhood. Contrary was the rule with men. He called it a disgrace, but whilst society was in that pitiable condition, he advocated widow-remarriage for all young widows. He believed in equality of the sexes and, therefore, he could only think of the same rights for women as men.

Q. You say that you are in favour of inter-religious marriages (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 21-2-1947) but at the same time you say that each party should retain his or her own religion and, therefore, you said, you tolerated even civil marriages. Are there any



instances of parties belonging to different religions keeping up their own religions to the end of their lives; and is not the institution of civil marriage a negation of religion and does it not tend towards laxity of religion?

A. Gandhiji said that the questions were appropriate. He had no instances in mind where the parties had clung to their respective faiths unto death because these friends whom he knew had not yet died. He had, however, under his observation men and women professing different religions and each clinging to his or her own faith without abatement. But he would go so far as to say that they need not wait for the discovery of past instances. They should create new ones so that timid ones may shed their timidity. As to civil marriages he did not believe in them but he welcomed the institution of civil marriage as a much-needed reform for the sake of reform.

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## 8. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 24, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

HAIMCHAR,  
February 24, 1947

This being the last stage of the second part of his pilgrimage, Gandhiji thanked God for the happy ending of the second part. He referred to the intense wish that Bapa, whom he described as the chief priest and servant of the Harijans, had expressed that he should include Haimchar in his programme. He also referred to the origin of the distribution of workers in the villages that had suffered and how Bapa had instinctively selected the Haimchar area as the field of his service.

He then referred to the communications, telegraphic and otherwise, he had received for his opinion on Mr. Attlee’s statement (Vide Appendix 1.) He said there were the Congress and the League, not to mention other associations, which would express authoritative opinions. He would however permit himself to say that the statement had put the burden on the various parties of doing what they thought best. It had declared that British rule would end before or during the month of June, 1948. It was up to the parties to make or mar the situation. Nothing on earth could overturn their united wish. And so far as he was concerned, he was emphatically of the opinion that if the Hindus and Muslims closed their ranks and came together without external pressure, they would not only better their political condition but they would affect the whole of India and probably the world.

It was an easy descent to what was uppermost in the mind of his audience composed mostly of Namasudras. He warned them against considering themselves as fallen or untouchables. Those so-called higher castes were the guilty ones; they were responsible for what they had become. If they realized the fact, they would never make the mistake of imitating the evil customs and habits of the higher classes.

He was sorry to hear that there were child-marriages amongst them and that child-widows were compelled in imitation of the higher castes to abstain from remarrying. The result, he had learned, was that diseases which resulted from promiscuity were prevalent among them. Their betterment would not come from the legislatures or from any other outside agency. It depended on their own efforts. They should remember what the late Malaviyaji (Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946); President,





Indian National Congress, 1909 and 1918; Member, Legislative Assembly; founder of the Benares Hindu University and its Vice-Chancellor from 1919 to 1939.) used to say, that children of God should confine themselves to earning an honest cowrie and eat what it could procure. Then there would be happiness for them and untouchability would be a thing of the past. The higher castes so called would be ashamed of their sin against them.

Bapu pointed out the destruction that had been wrought. He was sorry for it but he would not shed a tear for it nor harbour ill will against the destroyers. Let them not bewail their lot. They were used to hard labour or should be. They might plead with the Government to do justice and that in time. But they would not give in if that assistance did not come. They must trust their hands and feet to set them up again in life. God always helped those who helped themselves. Their reliance must be on the living God and on the ever-toiling masses.

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## 9. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 25, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

HAIMCHAR,  
February 25, 1947

Gandhiji drew the attention of the audience to the meeting (Vide “SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING”, HAIMCHAR, February 25, 1947.) he was invited to attend by the Relief Commissioner, Nurannabi Chowdhury. He asked them to follow the advice he had given without waiting to know what others would do. He said that he wanted the Kingdom of God on earth. Surely we did not want to wait for anyone else to do so.

Then he dealt with the questions that were addressed to him.

Q. Do you not think that a strict enforcement of the purdah system would improve the moral condition of women?

A. He was warned by some Muslim critics against speaking on the purdah. He had therefore some hesitation in speaking about it. But he took heart when he turned round and saw that many Hindu women observed it and that numerous Malaya Muslim women among whom he had many friends did not observe the purdah. He also knew many distinguished Muslim women of India who did not observe it. Lastly, the real purdah was of the heart. A woman who peeped through the purdah and contemplated a male on whom her gaze fell violated the spirit behind it. If a woman observed it in spirit, she was truly carrying out what the great Prophet had said.

Q. To those who had lost all their trade your advice is that they should voluntarily turn themselves into labourers. Who will then look after education, commerce and the like? If you thus dissolve the division of labour, will not the cause of civilization suffer?

A. The question betrayed ignorance of his meaning. If a man could not carry on his original mercantile business, it was not open to him but obligatory on him to take to physical labour, say, scavenging or breaking stones. He believed in the division of labour or work. But he did insist on equality of wages. The lawyer, the doctor, or the teacher was entitled to no more than the Bhangi. Then only would division of work uplift the nation or the earth. There was no other royal road to true civilization or happiness. Spirit giveth life, the letter killeth.



A Ganapati with an elephant's head was a monster but as a representation of Om (The sacred syllable or Pranava) was an uplifting symbol. Ravana with ten heads was a fabled fool but if it meant a man who carried no head about him and was tossed to and fro by fleeting passions, he was a many-headed demon.

Q. How can the caste Hindus look after the interests of the untouchables? How can they realize the feelings of the classes who have suffered so long at their hands? Is it not then better to entrust the interests of the untouchables to men of their own caste?

A. He was of the opinion that the caste Hindus owed a sacred duty to the so called untouchables. He must become a Bhangi in name and action. When that happened the untouchables would rise at a bound and Hinduism would leave a rich legacy to the world. If that happened, the system of cleaning closets would transform. In England the real Bhangis were famous engineers and sanitarians. That could not happen in India so long as society was sluggish and slothful.

Harijan, 23-3-1947

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## 10. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

HAIMCHAR,  
February 26, 1947

Q. When things are all going wrong at the Centre, what can common people do to restore unity?

A. There was a law of science which enunciated that two forces were simultaneously at work: the centripetal and the centrifugal. He wanted to apply the law to life also. The centre, therefore, of the Government attracted us all to it and in good government we would respond to that centripetal force. Similar was the centrifugal force in obedience to which we, the villagers of Haimchar, attracted the centre. Thus, where these forces worked well there would be ordered and orderly government at the centre and the circumference. When, however, the centre was going wrong, it should be pointless to dominate the seven hundred thousand villages. On the other hand, the villagers would live in perfect amity if they were wise in leaving alone the centre to look after its so-called high politics?

Q. A man who sacrifices self-interest for the sake of his community is at least unselfish to that extent. How can the heart of such a man be affected so that he will sacrifice communal interests for the interest of the nation?

A. A man whose spirit of sacrifice did not go beyond his own community became selfish himself and also made his community selfish. In his opinion the logical conclusion of self-sacrifice was that the individual sacrificed himself for the community, the community sacrificed itself for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation and the nation for the world. A drop torn from the ocean perished without doing any good. If it remained a part of the ocean, it shared the glory of carrying on its bosom a fleet of mighty ships.

Q. In free India whose interest shall be supreme? If a neighbouring State is in want, what should free India do?

A. Gandhiji said that the first part of the question had been answered in the above. A truly independent free India was bound to run to the help of its neighbours in distress. He instanced Afghanistan, Ceylon and Burma and said that the rule also



applied to the neighbours of these three and thus, by implication, they became India's neighbours too. And thus, he said, if individual sacrifice was a living sacrifice, it embraced the whole of humanity. (What follows is reproduced from Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase)

Gandhiji gave to his ideal society the name Ramarajya. Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that Ramarajya means a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for Khuda or God. I want Khudai raj, which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on earth. The rule of the first four Caliphs was somewhat comparable to it. The establishment of such a rajya would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but of the whole world.

Harijan, 23-3-1947, and Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Bk. II, pp. 189-90

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## 11. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 27, 1947

(According to “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary” from which this has been extracted, Gandhiji offered prayers in a temple which was destroyed during the riots and was rebuilt by the Government. The idol in the temple, however, escaped destruction because the resourceful priest had put it away in a safe place. Gandhiji hoped that the old and rusty tins used in rebuilding the temple would be painted so as to prevent further deterioration.)

HAIMCHAR,  
February 27, 1947

Q. Can a man serve his immediate neighbours and yet serve the whole of humanity? What is the true meaning of swadeshi?

A. Gandhiji said that the question had been answered by him the previous evening. (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 26-2-1947) He believed in the implicit truth that a man could serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours was in no way selfish or exclusive, i.e., did not in any way involve the exploitation of any other human being. The neighbours would then understand the spirit in which such service was given. They would also know that they would be expected to give their services to their neighbours. Thus considered, it would spread like the proverbial snowball gathering strength in geometrical progression, encircling the whole earth.

It followed that swadeshi was that spirit which dictated man to serve his next door neighbour to the exclusion of any other. The condition that he had already mentioned was that the neighbour thus served had in his turn to serve his own neighbour. In this sense swadeshi was never exclusive. It recognized the scientific limitation of human capacity for service.

Q. The Government has been introducing schemes of industrializing the country for the maximum utilization of her raw materials, not of her abundant and unused man-power which is left to rot in idleness. Can such schemes be considered swadeshi?

A. Gandhiji remarked that the question had been well put. He did not exactly know what the Government plan was. But he heartily endorsed the proposition that any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful man-power was lopsided and could never tend to establish human equality.



America was the most industrialized country in the world and yet it had not banished poverty and degradation. That was because it neglected universal manpower and concentrated power in the hands of the few who amassed fortunes at the expense of the many. The result was that its industrialization had become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world.

If India was to escape such a disaster, it had to imitate what was best in America and the other Western countries and leave aside its attractive-looking but destructive economic policies. Therefore, real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and rebuying finished articles at fabulous prices.

After the questions had been answered, Gandhiji touched upon the fact that he had a visit from some members of the Scheduled Classes. He had told them that his mission was to teach people how to be really brave. They need not be afraid for their lives because the so-called high-caste men had not yet returned to their places. If they shed their fear they would have no enemies. The Muslims would be their friends when they recognized bravery in them. Cowards were ever exposed to the enmity of all, whether Muslims or others. The way to the attainment of that courage lay not in the possession of the sword and the efficiency to kill one's opponent, but in the refusal to recognize in any other human being an enemy, along with the determination to lay down one's life and yet not surrender at the point of the sword.

Gandhiji then referred in detail to some of the abuses current in local society, like child-marriage, absence of widow-remarriage, etc., which resulted in the lowering of the moral stature of the people. If they could shed these weaknesses, they would gain the power to die for their faith and honour.

Harijan, 23-3-1947

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## 12. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of February 28, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

HAIMCHAR,  
February 28, 1947

Gandhiji took up the thread of his remarks of the previous evening about the *Namasudras*. He had no time to refer to the question of education. The blame for the neglect of education among them must lie solely upon the so-called high-caste Hindus. It was preposterous to expect that those who were deliberately suppressed by Hindu society would themselves take to education. What he, however, deplored was that there were men among them who taught them not to accept good things from the so-called high-caste Hindus. He was of the opinion that it was mischievous propaganda. Therefore, he expected the *Namasudras* to give definite assurance about land [for school] and the attendance of boys and girls. In that case he had no doubt that there were enough penitent Hindus who would gladly take up the duty of educating these neglected children. He invited the *Namasudras* to send the required assurance to Thakkar Bapa who might be trusted by them to do the rest and he hoped that there were enough local Hindus who would offer their money and ability for the performance of the honourable duty of educating these children.

He then referred to the prospect of his having to go to Bihar and to the atrocities that had been committed by the Hindus of Bihar before which the happenings in Noakhali or Tipperah paled into insignificance. He had enough pressure put upon him by the Muslims in Bengal to go to Bihar. He had refused to listen to the advice because he had the hope that he could work with equal effect among the Bihar Hindus without having to go there. But he had a visit from the secretary of Dr. Syed Mahmud. He had brought a long letter from Dr. Mahmud. They should know that Dr. Mahmud was a valued friend of his. He was himself a Development Member of the Bihar Ministry. In answer to his question, Dr. Mahmud had written to him asking him to visit Bihar as soon as he could. He had said that all was not as rosy as it should be and that his presence in Bihar would ease the situation and reassure the Muslims that he was equally concerned about the welfare of the Muslims as of the Hindus. He could not resist Dr. Mahmud’s letter. He had, therefore, sent an urgent wire (Vide “Telegram to Shrikrishna Sinha”, 28-2-1947) to Bihar and it was highly likely that he might have to hurry to Bihar. In that case, he would have to interrupt the tour in Noakhali and Tipperah.





But the message he would leave for the Hindus and Mussalmans here, during the short period he expected to be absent, was that they should live with one another as brothers. This they could only do if they shed internal weaknesses and were prepared to lay down their lives without retaliation for the defence of what they considered sacred. (The following two paragraphs are reproduced from Amrita Bazar Patrika.)

Gandhiji said that he was in constant communication with the authorities concerned on the Bihar situation and had been speaking unequivocally against the madness of Bihar Hindus. He was sure that he was there where he could serve both the communities. He had come to Noakhali to serve both the communities and not to create bitterness between them.

He had come here to create fearlessness among the affected people. He asked them not to despair and told them that his associates would be working here as usual. People here must not quarrel among themselves. They must not antagonize Muslims but they must not also yield to threats. They should rather lay down their lives. Gandhiji emphatically said that he had decided to go to Bihar, not for the relief of Muslims, but to effect a change of mentality among the Hindus of Bihar. He hoped that Hindus and Muslims would live together in amity all over India.

Gandhiji then passed on to a question which had been referred to him that evening. It was with regard to the partition of Bengal into two provinces, one having a Hindu and the other a Muslim majority. Bengalis had once fought against and successfully annulled the partition of their province. (The partition of Bengal in 1905 was annulled in 1911.) But according to some, he proceeded, the time had now come when such a division had become desirable in the interest of peace. Gandhiji expressed the opinion that personally he had always been anti-partition. But it was not uncommon even for brothers to fight and separate from one another. There were many things which India had to put up with in the past under compulsion, but he himself was built in a totally different way.

In a similar manner, if the Hindus, who formed the majority in the whole of India, desired to keep everyone united by means of compulsion, he would resist it in the same manner as before. He was as much against forced partition as against forced unity.



Gandhiji then proceeded to say that whatever might have been the history of British rule in the past, there was no shadow of doubt that the British were going to quit India in the near future. It was time, therefore, that the Hindus and the Muslims should determine to live in peace and amity. The alternative was civil war which would only serve to tear the country to pieces. One did not know what the future had in store for them. If the people really and sincerely, and with a pure heart, wished unitedly for a particular thing, speaking in human language, it could be said that God, being the servant of His servants, would Himself carry out that will.

Harijan, 23-3-1947, and Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2-3-1947

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### 13. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 1, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Walking Tour Diary”)

HAIMCHAR,  
March 1, 1947

Gandhiji said that he would try to cover Bajpati also on his return. (People from Bajpati had complained that Bajpati had been dropped from Gandhiji’s programme.) **He could not fix the time. He was not leaving Noakhali or Tipperah without the establishment of heart unity. There was time for satisfying all reasonable expectations.**

I hope to leave for Bihar tomorrow afternoon. I will leave Haimchar at about three in the afternoon. I will go to Calcutta and from there proceed to Bihar. (This paragraph is from Amrita Bazar Patrika.)

He did not expect to stay there long. He would not be able to hold the prayer meeting [tomorrow] in Haimchar but would like to have it in Chandpur.

Q. You have referred to numerous social abuses prevalent among us. They are there; but then if the men are unwilling to effect the necessary social changes what can we women do about it?

A. Gandhiji said that there was no occasion for women to consider themselves subordinate or inferior to men. It was proclaimed that woman was half of man and by parity of reasoning man was half of woman. They were not two separate entities but halves of one. The English language went further and called women the better half of man. Therefore, he advised women to resort to civil rebellion against all undesirable and unworthy restraints. All restraints to be beneficial, must be voluntary. There was no possibility of harm resulting from civil rebellion. It presupposed purity and a reasoned resistance.

Q. Those who have lost their dear ones, or the homes which they built up through years of patient care, find it extremely difficult to forgive and forget. How can they get over that feeling and look upon the community from which the miscreants came with a feeling of brotherhood?

A. The speaker said the one way to forget and forgive was to contemplate Bihar which had done much worse than Noakhali and Tipperah. Did they want the Muslims to take dire vengeance for the Hindu atrocities there? They could not. From this they should learn to forget and forgive, if they did not wish to descend to the lowest depths of barbarity. Moreover, they must not harbor an inferiority complex. They should be



brave. And forgiveness was an attribute and adornment of bravery. Let them be truly brave. True bravery refused to strike; it would suffer all infliction with patient cheerfulness. That would be the truest way of disarming opposition.

Q. Speaking about the proposed partition of Bengal, one of the proposals is that there should be only two separate administrative divisions without any exchange of populations taking place. This arrangement would keep each community in its place in peace. What is your objection to such a proposal?

A. Gandhiji considered two administrative divisions to be as impracticable as exchange of populations. That would result in an armed neutrality which was bound to kill all healthy growth. The leaders of both the communities must come together as friends and reduce their differences and suffer them. Any other way was the way of barbarism and subordination to a third power.

Harijan, 23-3-1947, and Amrita Bazar Patrika, 4-3-1947

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## 14. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 2, 1947

(This was Mr. Gandhi's last prayer meeting in East Bengal which was attended by over 30,000 people.)

CHANDPUR,  
March 2, 1947

Gandhiji explained why he had to interrupt his work in East Bengal and hurry to Bihar. He had turned a deaf ear to pressing requests made to him by the Bengal Premier and Mr. Fazlul Huq to go to Bihar. Their statements could not find an echo in my heart. I had flattered myself with the belief that I would be able to affect the Bihar Hindus from my place in Bengal. But Dr. Syed Mahmud has sent his secretary to me with a long letter which showed me that I should go to Bihar for the sake of the Muslims of Bihar. (The following paragraph is reproduced from Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase.)

He expected to return to his chosen scene of service — Noakhali — as soon as possible. Dr. Mahmud's secretary had said they would not detain him for more than a fortnight. Meanwhile Gandhiji hoped that the Muslims would belie the fears of the Hindu refugees that they would not be allowed to live in peace.

Gandhiji, in conclusion, appealed to Hindus and Muslims to live in peace as brothers and friends and exhorted the officials and the police to conduct themselves in such a way that the public would look upon them as their friends and servants who by their selfless service and tact helped the communities to act as friends.

The Hindu, 4-3-1947, and Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase, Vol. I, Bk. II, p. 255

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## 15. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 5, 1947

(At the Bankipur Maidan where over one hundred thousand people had assembled. All the Ministers were present. The Urdu version of the speech has been collated with the report in Harijan published under "Gandhiji's Bihar Tour Diary".)<sup>1</sup>

PATNA,  
March 5, 1947

Gandhiji apologized for having come in a motor-car instead of walking to the prayer meeting. This was, he said, a reflection on the Biharis who should know the art of welcoming people in a quiet and dignified manner instead of the present embarrassing manner. They should have had consideration for his old age, he said, and spared him the shouts, however well-meant they were but which were too much for his ears.

He complimented the vast audience on their exemplary silence, but expressing his regret over their half-hearted participation in chanting the Ramdhun, he said:

An earnest prayer is very effective. If God is a Power, which indeed He is, then people must pray. Devotees of every religion pray according to their practices in their respective places of worship. It would be more beneficial if all of them prayed together in a common congregation.

It would be terrible if people should 'Victory to India' and work for her annihilation. Such action will bring no glory to India. If we wish victory for India, we ought to work to that end. If we merely repeat 'Jai Hind' or 'Sitaram' without the appropriate sentiments it would be mere parrot-like repetition. Please do not think that I do not want victory for India. In fact I have staked everything I possess for the sake of bringing glory to India.

I am visiting Bihar after many years. It is not as though I did not wish to come earlier. It was Bihar that made me known to the whole of India. No one knew me earlier. I had almost become a Negro after staying in Africa for twenty long years. Then I came to Champaran and the entire country woke up. Earlier I didn't even know the location of Champaran; but when I arrived here I felt as if I had known the people of Bihar for centuries and they too seemed to know me.



This Bihar of ours has today committed a heinous crime. The atrocities perpetrated on a handful of Muslims have no parallel, so say the Muslims, in the annals of history. I too have read some history. I know that the world has witnessed greater brutality by man on man. But it is no use repeating them here. We must not compete in doing evil and that too against whom? Those who cry for avenging Noakhali in Bihar do not know the meaning of vengeance. Is it manly to return barbarism for barbarism? We ought to overcome violence by love.

At present I have no evidence to say that Congressmen have committed these crimes. Tomorrow I may have to admit it. I must, however, say that Bihar has sullied the fair name of India. When I heard in Noakhali the reports of atrocities committed in Bihar, I decided to undertake a fast. (In his appeal to Bihar is dated November 6, 1946 Gandhiji had expressed his intention to go on a fast unto death unless the madness in Bihar ceased. His appeal had an immediate effect on the situation in Bihar and the contemplated fast was not undertaken. His partial fast, however, as a penance for the Bihar tragedy commenced on November 6. Vide "To Bihar", 6-11-1946) It had been reported to me that some Congressmen had a hand in these crimes. It would be wrong even today to say that there was not a single Congressman involved in the mad upheaval. In India the Congress has to accept the responsibility for the misdeeds of all communities and all individuals. I had claimed in London (At the Round Table Conference in December, 1931. Vide "Speech at Plenary Session of Round Table Conference", 1-12-1931) on your behalf that the Congress represented the whole of India by right of service. Hence any sin committed by India comes to the door of the Congress. You who are listening to me may not have done any evil, yet you have to accept the responsibility. I have become hard-hearted now. I have not come here to shed tears or to make you cry. I would rather wish to steal your hearts. I could make you cry if I chose. But I do not wish to do so. We should not disown responsibility by saying that our hands are clean. India consists of many communities. We have the tribal people among us. We are responsible for them as well. If we disown responsibility for them, we have no right to claim that India belongs to us.

The way to achieve independence consists in all Indians saying with one voice that unless they gave to the whole world all that was good in them, their survival would be meaningless. Are we going to compete in [making] atom bombs? Are we going to match barbarism with even more barbarous acts? India has placed before the world a new weapon. I adopted the way of non-violence in 1920-21. We have been insisting that we will attain independence through non-violence. I do not claim that all Indians



have accepted non-violence as a matter of creed. But even when we accept anything as a matter of policy, it becomes our duty to act upon it.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad told me today that some people believed that the Bihar riots had arrested the crimes in Noakhali, otherwise. Hindus everywhere would have suffered a similar fate. This is not correct. If Hindus had to suffer similar atrocities everywhere I would say that they were a cowardly lot. Who can frighten a person who has shed all fear? While touring in Bengal I used to tell the people that Hindus as well as Muslims of Noakhali had admitted that the miscreant was a coward and the victim who feared him a greater coward. Those who are under the illusion that Bihar has saved other people by committing these barbarities are talking nonsense. This is not the way to attain freedom. If Muslims believe that they would annihilate the Hindus or if Hindus believe that they would annihilate the Muslims, I should like to ask them what they would gain thereby? Muslims will not serve Islam if they annihilate the Hindus; rather they would thereby destroy Islam. And if the Hindus believe that they would be able to annihilate Islam it means that they would be annihilating Hindu dharma.

I consider myself a follower of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and every other religion because I am a true Hindu. All religions are equal and they are founded on the same faith. Various religions are like different leaves on the same tree, with slight differences in shades and shapes. Scriptures have said that one who condemns other religions, condemns one's own religion. I consider myself a representative of all the true religions.

We should not gloat over the massacre of Muslims by Bihar Hindus. There can be no greater shame for India. Dr. Syed Mahmud told me that this had brought humiliation to him and to all Congressmen. He wrote to me to come and see the madness in which the people of Bihar, who claim to follow me, were indulging and asked me to stop their madness. Earlier I had wondered what I could do by coming here but Dr. Mahmud's letter compelled me to come here. The Hindus of Bihar have committed a grave sin. They will raise the head of Bihar much higher if they do honest reparations, greater in magnitude than their crimes. There is an English saying: "The greater the sin, the greater the saint." I went to Noakhali with the determination to do or die. I have come here with the same resolve. If our thoughts are not right our actions are bound to go wrong. As soon as there is an opportunity, we commit a crime. Why





should all of us not unite? After all we are servants of the same God, by whatever name we may call Him. We may call him Rama or Rahim, Krishna or Karim.

I had also been summoned to Delhi. ‘Come here’, they said, ‘what are you doing in Noakhali? We need you here’. But I did not leave Noakhali. But when I received Dr. Mahmud’s letter regarding Bihar, I came over here. Muslim Leaguers used to abuse me and say ‘go to Bihar’. It had no effect on me. But how could I ignore Dr. Mahmud’s appeal? I felt that I would become worthless if I did not go to Bihar even now. When I came and saw the conditions here I realized that we had, indeed, committed a great sin here. It is our duty to atone for our sin and do reparations. Those who have committed these misdeeds have done great harm to India. Those who think that this massacre in Bihar has saved India are really mad. This is not the way to free India; such methods would delay the day of India’s deliverance. May God grant us wisdom as Manubehn has just now sung before you:

ईश्वर अल्ला तेरे नाम

सबको सन्मति दे भगवान।

(Ishwar, Allah both are your names, Oh God, grant wisdom to us all.)

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar — I, pp. 1-6, and Harijan, 23-3-1947

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## 16. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 6, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,  
March 6, 1947

(Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar has “7”, obviously a slip, for Holi, which Gandhiji observed “will be celebrated tomorrow”, fell on March 7.)

Gandhiji began his post-prayer address by complimenting the audience as well as Bari Saheb (Abdul Bari), the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and his comrades for the orderliness which had been successfully maintained during the evening. (On the previous evening, in their eagerness to go near Gandhiji and have his darshan, a large section of the assemblage had become quite unruly.) While the Ramdhun was being sung there were some beats out of time. His advice was that they should practise more until both the tune and the time were in perfect unison.

A note had been handed to him reminding him that Holi was on the following day and people would like to hear his opinion as to how it ought to be celebrated. Gandhiji began by saying that he had no doubt in his mind that a religious ceremony like the Holi should never be marked by wild revelry, but by a disciplined effort to put oneself in communion with God.

Holi will be celebrated tomorrow. If we wish to celebrate it in a religious spirit, we must meet and greet each and every Muslim in the true spirit. With our overflowing love we should reassure the Muslims that the Hindus are their brothers and that there can be no difference between us.

Dr. Mahmud is a Congress Muslim; but I have been meeting Muslims belonging to the League too. We meet one another with great affection and talk in the most-friendly manner. Houses of Muslims have been burnt down and their fathers, brothers, sons, innocent children, womenfolk and friends have been done to death. We should not disclaim responsibility for these acts by saying that some other people are responsible for them. Whoever might have actually done it, we cannot escape the responsibility. Muslims say that they live in great terror here. Hindus in Noakhali also used to say that they lived in terror of the Muslims.

We should not terrorize each other. If at all, we should overawe each other with our love and affection. Some Muslim friends say that the Ministry here may allot some



houses or lands to the Muslims under political compulsion. But this will not do much good so long as the Hindus and Muslims do not sincerely love or trust each other. They say that Hindus and Muslims have been living together here for centuries, used to refer to one another as paternal or maternal uncles and attend wedding and funeral ceremonies. Today, however, they have turned into sworn enemies. How could the Muslims live here if this enmity persisted? I had to hold my head in shame when I heard this from Muslim friends.

I have heard that Hindus here start shouting and threatening when they see Muslims. They raise the slogans of Jai Hind Vande Mataram. It is all very well to shout slogans; but we must make sure that they do not terrorize, or intimidate our upset other people. We are guilty of a great sin. Do we intend to announce through our slogans that we are proud of these acts? Do we regard them as the right actions? Hindus in Noakhali were also afraid of the slogan Allah O Akbar raised by Muslims. The slogan merely means 'God is Great' and no one need be afraid of this slogan. But when slogans are used for a wrong purpose, their meanings too are misunderstood and they become curses instead of boons.

Jai Hind does not mean victory to Hindus and defeat for Muslims. But nowadays the Muslims take it in that light because we have put it to wrong use and threatened them with it. When we hear the slogans shouted by another person we think that the other fellow is preparing for a fight, and we also start getting ready for it. If we go on fighting like this and wreak vengeance for one place upon another, rivers of blood will flow all over India and still the spirit of vengeance will not subside. Hindus should behave so affectionately that even if a Muslim child comes into their midst, they should wash and clean him, dress him well and shower him with such love that the child should feel entirely at home. Only when this happens will Muslims realize that Hindus have become their friends.

Gandhiji was firmly of the opinion that this could never be our fate if we were determined to have it otherwise. His hope lay more in women who, he had ever maintained, were the living embodiment of ahimsa and of self-sacrifice, without which ahimsa could never be a reality. Gandhiji wanted everyone to celebrate the Holi in such a manner that every single Muslim felt that the Hindus had not only repented what had been done to them but had also gathered love for them to an extent which outdid their previous sentiments. If the Holi was marked by this revival of the old friendly relations then indeed it would be a truly religious celebration.

A gentleman remarked to me that they had always regarded Hindus as very noble people, incapable of kidnapping anyone's wife or daughter, since it was immoral



and barbarous to do so. But the Hindus had stooped to such things. Many Muslim girls are missing. That gentleman also stated that it was difficult to tell the exact number of such girls, because whole families were missing. Muslims think that many of their girls have been forcibly kept in Hindu houses. “If we say this,” these friends say, “no one will pay any heed; but if you make an earnest appeal, it may produce a serious response.”

I had made a similar appeal to Muslims in Noakhali and I repeat it here to the Hindus. If any Muslim girl is held by any Hindu, he should release her. If he is afraid of returning her to the court or to the Police Station, let him take her to Dr. Mahmud or to his wife or to me or to Dr. Rajendra Prasad. I can assure the abductors that no harm will come to them, if they approach me. In fact, they should not be afraid of suffering punishment for their crime. He is brave who confesses his crime and is prepared to suffer due punishment.

Another thing which the gentleman told me was that the Muslims were afraid that the Hindus did not want the Muslim refugees to return to their homes. I have heard the same story in Noakhali from Hindus and now I am hearing it from the Muslims in Bihar. Our behaviour should be so exemplary that even if an Englishman lives amidst us we should not let him feel that we are his enemies.

I repeat here what I said in Noakhali. As long as the Hindus and Muslims together do not assure me that their hearts have been cleansed and that I could leave them without any anxiety, I will not leave this place. I shall continue to stay here as long as the Muslims do not come to me and reassure me that the Hindus have become better than what they were in the past. I use the word “better” on purpose. In a way, all of us are filled with evil intentions. But every heart which has evil traits also possesses noble impulses. And now we have to overcome our evil traits with our nobler qualities.

You should contribute liberally to the funds raised for Muslim victims. But more than giving money, you have to cleanse your hearts. We have to win over the hearts of Muslims. We must realize that politics leads to all sorts of things. But even Muslim Leaguers have conceded that had Jawaharlal not arrived in Bihar<sup>1</sup> the fate of Muslims would have been much worse. They have undertaken to tell the whole world that some Hindu Congressmen have at the risk of their lives saved the Muslim Leaguers.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, pp. 9-12, and Harijan, 23-3-1947

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## 17. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 7, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,  
March 72, 1947

(From Harijan and The Hindu. Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar, however, reports it under “March 6”.)

**Gandhiji began his address this evening by saying that just before starting for the prayer-ground he had taken a brief rest.**

Today also I was wondering all the time whether we have realized that we had committed a great crime, a sin, and whether we had atoned for it. All my waking hours during the day have been spent in listening to the reports brought in by many Muslim and Hindu friends. All of them narrated the grievous wrongs done by us. None of them has been able to assure me that things have now settled down to complete normalcy. While I experienced the impact of these reports on me, I also wondered about the nature and intensity of the impact which these crimes and atrocities must have produced on the hearts of those who witnessed them.

The ideal of the sthitaprajna (man of steadfast wisdom) described in the second chapter of the Gita was always before him and he was ceaseless in his efforts to reach that ideal. Whatever others might say of him, he knew he was yet far from it. When one really reaches such a state, his very thought becomes charged with a power which transforms those around him. But where was that power in him now? He could only say that he was a common mortal, made of the same clay of which others were made, only ceaselessly striving to attain the lofty ideal which the Gita held before all mankind.

While speaking yesterday, I quoted an English proverb. It means the greater the sinner, the greater the saint he becomes if he really repents and decides to reform himself. Bihar has committed a monstrous sin. It must now make reparations of the same magnitude and become nobler. Bihar is a land where the verses of the Ramayana are always on the lips of the people. I have moved widely in Bihar and I know the people here very intimately. They live a simple life and their voice rings with the music of the Ramayana. Their misdeeds are of terrible proportions; but their capability for making reparations is also equally great. I have been a witness to this. Then why should they not confess their sins and atone for them? I do not know whether my voice does reach the people who have actually committed these crimes. Those who are sitting here in the audience and who had no hand in these crimes may also wonder how



people could go berserk. I don't know whether or not I shall be able to reach those people who had done wrong to their Muslim brethren. But I want to reach them. They are unlettered; they do not read what appears in newspapers. I think I must go to their homes and stay with them.

I have heard that these people shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai* while carrying out the massacre. I do not consider myself a Mahatma. But I cannot understand how people who consider me a Mahatma dragged in my name for committing such heinous crimes. I learnt of these terrible riots in Bihar while I was trekking the villages in Noakhali and attempting to unite the hearts of Hindus and Muslims. Now that I have come to Bihar, I think I must visit the scenes of actual massacre. I have not yet decided whether I should go to these places by car or whether I should travel there as in Noakhali, on foot. In any case, I must make myself heard by those people whom my words do not reach and, even when they do reach, they do so in a distorted form.

I said it yesterday and I repeat today that all those Hindus who kidnapped Muslim women should return them. I am staying at the house of Dr. Mahmud. It will indeed be a brave thing if the miscreants come forward and openly confess their sins and are prepared to undergo due punishment. But if such courage is lacking, they can at least restore the girls to me without any fear of harm coming to them. I shall not hand them over to the police.

There was however one thing more he would like them to do. It had been reported that property worth about a crore of rupees had been looted or destroyed. It did not matter what the exact figure was. For, if a man was deprived of a couple of rupees when he had only that amount it meant that he had lost his all.

It is the duty of everyone who has looted the properties of Muslims to return the stolen goods. Many families have been completely wiped out. But some of their relatives may be alive. And even if no one is left behind, the return of stolen goods will convince the Muslims that the Hindus have undergone a change of heart and they will begin to trust the Hindus.

I shall once again appeal to you that those of you who have understood my message, should certainly co-operate in this noble work and convey my message to the culprits. I can say nothing more at present. But I have resolved to go to each and every affected village and to strive to reach the ears of every man.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, pp. 6-8, and Harijan, 23-3-1947



## 18. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING OF March 8, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,  
March 8, 1947

Gandhiji said at the prayer meeting that he hoped the audience would forgive him for speaking always and exclusively on the themes which had brought him to Bihar. It had become his duty to listen to the tales of woe that the Muslim sufferers unfolded before him from day to day. One of them had come to him and complained that even so recently as two days ago, things were pilfered from the Muslim houses. If such was the case it was most unfortunate and it betrayed a lack of the spirit of repentance without which there was no possibility of concord between the two communities in Bihar, indeed, in the whole of India.

Whenever any new matter comes to my knowledge in connection with the work I have undertaken these days, I state it frankly before the public. Yesterday I referred to one matter. Today I heard something more about it. I shall report it to you frankly. “We had imagined that your arrival would put a stop to all mischief,” I was told, “but it is now four days since you came here and yet the mischief goes on unabated.” I am witnessing here what I saw in Noakhali. No one should say: ‘Why should we not do what they are doing there? We are in a greater majority here.’ Even if we have been wronged, does it mean that we should try to compete with each other in goondaism?

We behave decently not for the sake of anyone else. An English scholar has said that one who does good deeds only performs his duty. If we do a good deed, we do nothing extraordinary. We do only what we ought to, and we shall be failing in our duty if we do not do so.

We have our newspapers here. It is their duty and that of the Chief Minister to remind the people constantly that they have committed a shameful crime, that Hindus and Muslims have to live together and all of us are Indians. Every one of us is equally guilty of what any of us has done. We can achieve freedom only if we act in this spirit.

Riots are raging in Punjab. (Following the resignation of the Coalition Ministry, Hindus and Sikhs staged “Anti-Pakistan” demonstrations in Lahore on March 4 and communal riots broke out in the province. The Governor of the Punjab promulgated Section 93 in the province on March 5.) The administration in that province is being run under Article 93. This is no fault of the British that it is under the Governor’s rule. They have to run the government as





long as they are here and no one else is prepared to undertake the responsibility. It is India's misfortune that we cannot cooperate amongst ourselves and act unitedly. It would be wrong for a Bihari to excuse himself on the plea that others have perpetrated greater crimes. Let us admit that we are the greater sinners. Only then can we hope to reform ourselves. Let us try to tread the straight path. I have received a telegram from a Hindu brother. It says that I must not condemn the Hindus in Bihar. It warns me that due to my influence over them I may mislead them and prevent them from taking revenge. Look at the cheek of this gentleman who is trying to teach me my duty! He calls himself a Hindu but does not act like one. I claim to be a sanatani Hindu and therefore represent the best things of all the religions created for the worship of God. Every one of you, if you are honest, must feel likewise. We have committed a dirty crime and I have come here to cleanse the dirt and brighten the image of Hinduism. Am I going to flinch from my duty if someone beats me up or abuses me for doing it? It is my duty to speak out the truth and if I withhold it, I shall be disloyal to Hindus, to Muslims and to India. I shall therefore advise you not to listen to those who incite and misguide you.

I wish to tell you one more thing. It is now four days since I have been here. I have been collecting money for Harijans every day and I have already collected a lot. But today an idea crossed my mind. The Hindus in Bihar have committed a grave error, they have been very unjust to Muslims. Hence they should do their duty by contributing to a fund for the relief of Muslims by way of repentance. No one should think that he need not lift his little finger since there is already a Congress ministry with a Congress majority here, which will do everything that needs to be done. The ministers have to work under great stress in making use of public finances. You should realize that this is your responsibility. If you donate money to me, you will be giving it to a miser who has been on this job for the past sixty years. I have collected lakhs of rupees; but no one can say that I misappropriated the funds. Otherwise no one would have entrusted his money to me. I shall therefore appeal to you to donate the money not for my use, not for any other cause, but for the sake of the Muslim sufferers. Give with an open heart. A wealthy landlord has promised to give land as well as money for the Muslims. He will look after all the Muslims who would be placed under his care. Many more people should come forward with such offers.

I did not beg for money in Noakhali because I received about three lakh rupees. Today I thought I should hold out the begging bowl here and awaken the conscience





of the people. I should take everyone's help. What can I do by myself? And this is indeed your work; I can only remind you of your duty. I cannot perform your duty. Hence you must contribute generously to the Bihar fund. A Muslim child must feel entirely safe in a Hindu locality and the Muslims should be convinced of this change of heart. A friend came to me and asserted that there was a time in Bihar when Hindus and Muslims lived together and called each other uncles. Today it is no longer like that. We must atone for this.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar —I, pp. 136, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 19. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 9, 1947

(It being Gandhiji's silence day, his written speech was read out.)

PATNA,

March 9, 1947

It is good that I have one day of silence in the week. How beautiful it would be if everyone could spend at least a few hours in the day in silent introspection if it were not possible for them to spend a whole day in complete silence. If people were accustomed to such spiritual exercise, then their hands could never have been stained by deeds which have actually taken place in Bihar. But this is not the occasion for dilating upon the benefits of the practice of silence.

Today I wish to briefly indicate the duty of those who did not personally participate in the shameful killings which took place in this province. Their first duty is to purify their own thoughts. When thoughts are not pure, one's actions can never be purified. Pure action can never come from imitation. If one tries to become good by merely imitating the good conduct of others, such conduct never succeeds in radiating any influence upon others; because it is after all not the true stuff. But one whose heart has become really pure along with his actions, can at once sense the true character of the thoughts which influence the behaviour of his neighbours. When thoughts and actions have both become pure there can be no repetition of the deeds which have marred the fair face of Bihar. But the world never progresses in a straight line. The thoughts and actions of men never follow a parallel and uniform course. For all men these two can never be completely purified at any single point of time.

Therefore, I would wish to indicate this evening only that ideal of duty, which the workers should keep before themselves. If workers are available in sufficiently large numbers, it should be their first duty to explain clearly to the miscreants the full consequences of their misdeeds. It should be explained to the wrongdoers that such deeds can never be of any good to them personally, nor can they serve the cause of Hinduism or that of the country in general. It should be explained to them that they have not been able to serve those whom they intended to serve. They should also be induced to come forward and make a clean breast of their misdeeds before the public. They should also restore looted property and abducted women to the proper quarters.



A change of heart can never be brought about by law. It can only be effected through conversion of one's thought. When that is accomplished, there is no longer any need for compulsive laws. I had asked you to help in the relief of Muslim brothers and sisters who have suffered during the last riots. Yesterday you did not come prepared for that purpose. I expect you today to contribute to your fullest extent in this noble cause.

The Indian Nation, 11-3-1947

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## 20. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 10, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,

March 10, 1947

As the audience took some time to settle down during this evening’s prayer, Gandhiji remarked at the beginning of his address that it would be difficult for him to tell them all that he wanted to if they continued to behave in that manner. He expected that they had come to the prayer-ground with an earnest desire to pray and then do the work of God, not for mere sight-seeing.

I have been accused of utilizing the prayer meetings for the propagation of my political ideas. My detractors will continue to criticize me and those who have made it a habit to abuse me will continue to indulge in their pastime. I speak of political matters in a religious spirit. A person who leads a religious life cannot divide it into different compartments. As an unscrupulous person who accumulates huge wealth through fraud and deceit, and thinks that he can wash off his sins by chanting the name of God at home, is deceiving himself. God is not such a simpleton.

Indeed, it might even be said, continued Gandhiji, that the Law which held together the universe was indistinguishable from the Law-maker. Speaking in human language, one might even go so far as to say that God Himself was subject to the wheel of the Law. We were used to the saying that “the king can do no wrong”. But in God’s universe even such a distinction was hardly permissible. One could only say that ‘there could be no wrong in the Law, for the Law and the Law-maker were one and the same’. There was no scope for even the least little blade of grass to be free from the operation of God’s laws.

God is Himself the Law and the Law-giver. He does not transgress the Law laid down by Himself nor does He allow others to transgress it. You should understand that in our prayers we do not merely remember him but also undertake to do His work. If you realize this, then the meaning of my words will be easy to grasp.

A friend has written me a frank and honest letter and that is why I like it. He wonders why I cannot see that the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims is not on account of religious differences but is essentially political in origin. The Hindus want a united India. The Muslims want Pakistan so that Muslims will rule in Pakistan and Hindus in Hindustan. I really do not understand its implications. One thing is very clear. Religious or political differences should not lead to a total war.

But what he wanted to impress upon the audience was that supposing it were only a so-called political struggle, did it mean that all rules of decency and morals should be thrown to the winds?



When human conflicts are divorced from ethical considerations, the road can only lead to the use of the atom bomb where every trace of humanity is held completely in abeyance.

It is wrong to imagine that, in political warfare, one could slaughter men, women and children, innocent and guilty alike, without compunction. This is sheer brutality. Will forty crores of human beings descend to the level of beasts? Will such brutality secure us freedom? This is absolutely impossible. We do not know what is actually happening in Punjab. As long as we do not get full and reliable reports, let us hope that they have not descended to the beastly level of slaughtering innocent women and children. But even at present we must admit that brutality is very much in evidence in Punjab. But to what extent, will be known later on. Brutality can neither secure Pakistan nor preserve India. It will destroy both Pakistan and India, leaving abject slavery behind. I used to regard Punjabis as brave people. I can no longer regard them as such. Those who are burning houses, looting properties and slaughtering the innocent, do not even know why they are perpetrating these crimes and atrocities. In a regular war both sides know what they are fighting for. We are all slaves and our civil war will harm only ourselves. We should realize the teachings of our religions and act according to them. Our politics also should be consistent with our religion. (At this stage the audience near the dais became rather noisy and Gandhiji had to cut short his speech.)

You should contribute generously for the relief of Muslims. I shall stand up myself and collect the money. If you ask me whether Muslims in Noakhali contributed funds for the sake of Hindus, I have to confess that I did not get much. The reason is I am now looked upon as an enemy by the majority of the Muslims. Even then, some Muslims and Christians in Comilla had contributed more than Rs. 800/- along with a box containing vermilion and conch-shell [bangles] for distribution among women who had been forcibly deprived of these auspicious symbols.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar-I, pp. 18-20, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 21. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 11, 1947

(1 The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan, published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,

March 11, 1947

Gandhiji began his address by saying that that was perhaps his last evening prayer for the time being in the city of Patna, because his tour was going to begin on the following day. For the next few days, he would tour with the city as the centre and return to it every night for rest, the prayers being naturally held elsewhere. He expected, however, that the spirit in which the previous evening’s contributions to the fund for the Muslim sufferers had been made would continue unabated. The collections had amounted to nearly Rs. 2,000, besides some ornaments which yet remained to be auctioned. He was glad that women had given their ornaments, and he reminded them in this connection that the true ornament of woman was a pure heart, the place of which could never be taken by any physical adornment.

A friend said to me today that what the Hindus had done was no doubt very wrong, but that they had acted under great provocation. How could they remain peaceful after such incitement and provocation? Well, we should not try to minimize our guilt. The above argument would mean that if someone abuses or beats you, you will also return the abuse and hit back. Is it good to do the very thing which angers you? You in your turn will provoke further anger. The world has reached the stage of atomic warfare in returning violence for violence. Let us pray to God that He may save us from this atom bomb mentality. I have been persuading everyone to observe silence in reply to abuse or violence.

The whole world tries to suppress the coward. Even God does not help the coward. He says, ‘A person who is afraid of anyone except me, lacks faith in me.’ The brave man who has learnt the lesson of non-violence does not return abuse for abuse, nor does he slaughter innocent children and women under any provocation.

If I am starving and you feed me, the contentment in my eyes will brighten your face too. But take another instance. Suppose I am starving and demand food from you by abusing you. You will drive me away, saying: ‘Go and starve yourself to death.’ My abuses will not get me food. They will, however, make me feel that I am a brave man. Again, if you ask your gate-keeper to beat me up for my abuses, that will sow the seeds of hatred against you in my heart. I will say, ‘You may deny me food if I abuse you; but



why did you beat me?’ The next day I shall gather a few friends and retaliate. Or, if you manage to kill me, it will create among my relations and friends a feeling of revenge against you. This will aggravate the quarrel. I look upon all this as cowardice. Even if the Muslims had incited the Hindus, they should have remained peaceful.

An evil returned by another evil only succeeded in multiplying it, instead of reducing it. It was a universal law, he said, that violence could never be quenched by superior violence but only by non-violence or non-violent resistance. But the true meaning of non-violent resistance had often been misunderstood or even distorted. It never implied that a non-violent man should bend before the violence of an aggressor. While not returning the latter’s violence by violence, he should refuse to submit to the latter’s illegitimate demand even to the point of death. That was the true meaning of non-violent resistance.

I shall now discuss Pakistan. Jinnah Sahib is my friend. I have gone to his house many times. If Jinnah Sahib says to me: ‘Concede Pakistan or I will kill you,’ I will reply: ‘You may kill me if you like; but if you want Pakistan, you should first explain it to me. If you convince me that Pakistan is a worthy ideal and Hindus are maligning it for no reason, I shall proclaim to the Hindus from the house-tops that you should get Pakistan.’

But if the demand was backed by force, then the only course open to the nonviolent man was to offer non-violent resistance against it as long as he was not convinced of its justice. One was not to return violence by violence but neutralize it by withholding one’s hand and, at the same time, refusing to submit to the demand. This was the only civilized way of getting on in the world. Any other course could only lead to a race for armaments interspersed by periods of peace brought about by exhaustion, when preparations would be going on for violence of a superior order. Peace through superior violence inevitably led to the atom bomb and all that it stood for. It was the complete negation of non-violence and of democracy which was not possible without the former.

The non-violent resistance described above required courage of a superior order to that needed in violent warfare. Forgiveness was the quality of the brave, not of the cowardly. Gandhiji here related a story from the Mahabharata: one of the Pandava brothers (Yudhishtira) was accidentally injured while living in disguise in the home of King Virata. The brothers not only hid what had happened, but for fear that harm might come to the host if a drop of blood touched the ground, they prevented it from doing so by means of a golden bowl. It was this type of forbearance and courage which Gandhiji wished every Indian to develop, whether he was a Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Sikh. That alone could rescue them from their present fallen condition.

‘A friend has written to me eulogizing the sword. The Muslims came here, says he, hurling abuses and unfurling Muslim League flags. We tried to dissuade them, continues the friend, but they did not listen. When, however, we pulled out the



swords, asserts the friend, they came to their senses and became our friends. I tell you this was no true bravery. The persuasion was backed by the threat of the sword. Threats do not produce true friendship. If you were honest, you should have told the Muslims: 'Look here, you are only a handful and we are in a vast majority. You are abusing us. You want to unfurl your flag. And yet we shall not say anything to you nor return your abuses. But we shall not allow you to unfurl the flag nor shall we salute the Pakistani flag.' If the Muslims had seen that, in spite of your vast majority, you do not wish to fight them, but that on the other hand you wish to be friendly with them, their conscience would have awakened and they would have become your true friends. The weapon of non-violence is mightier than the weapon of violence. The last Great War also proves this truth.

**The lesson of non-violence was present in every religion but Gandhiji believed that perhaps it was here in India that its practice had been reduced to a science.**

Hindu religion prescribes great tapashcharya (Penance) for the realization of ahimsa. It is said that innumerable Hindus had shed their blood in the cause of ahimsa until the Himalayas became purified in their snowy whiteness by means of that sacrifice. The Hindus of today pay only lip service to ahimsa. You must demonstrate true ahimsa in this land of Ramachandra and King Janaka. True bravery consists in true ahimsa. At the moment you are guilty of committing very cowardly acts.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar —I, pp. 20-2, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 22. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 12, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,

March 12, 1947

Gandhiji referred, in the beginning of his address, to the decision of the British Government to quit India. The British were a nation with a strong sense of reality: and when they realized that it did not pay to rule, they did not hesitate to withdraw their power over a country. This had been the course of British history in the past. If the British were going, as they surely were, what should be the duty of Indians at the same time, asked Gandhiji. Were we to return blow for blow among ourselves, and thus perpetuate our slavery, only to tear up our motherland, in the end, into bits, which went by the name of Hindustan and Pakistan, Brahministan and Achhutistan? What greater madness could there be than what had taken place in Bengal and Bihar, or what was taking place in Punjab or the Frontier Province?

Today I visited a village where Hindus had caused great damage. An old Muslim showed me his own house and those of his relations with broken door-frames where bricks were removed from the door-sill. I was shocked and shaken to see that the Hindus had caused these depredations. I had wept when I saw the ruins caused by Muslims in Noakhali. Today also I might have wept. But my tears cannot render any succour to the sufferers. What I witnessed today does not behove human beings. We are all responsible for this vandalism so close to the city of Patna. Even if you did not participate personally in the loot, you cannot escape the charge of abett-ing the marauders. A mosque was also damaged in the village Kumarahar. This also I consider to be a devilish deed. It is no justification to argue that the Hindus damaged the mosque because the Muslims were desecrating the temples. Hindus worship idols, while the Muslims do not. But every human being does worship something or other. God resides everywhere; not only in the Bible and the Koran, in a mosque or a temple, but in the nose, ear, nail or even a single hair of the body of man. I have been taught ever since my childhood that

God resides everywhere. He is subtler than the air. It is one and the same thing whether one worships Him in a mosque, a temple or a church. I am as much an idol-



worshipper as an idolbreaker. Still when I go to a temple, I am happy if I find it neat and clean.

Those who desecrated the mosque were not men but devils; because mosques, temples or churches are all houses of the Lord. I have come here today to convey to you my grief. You may perhaps be smiling and thinking that whatever happened was all very good. But I assert that this is potent injustice. I am grieved when I hear that Muslims have desecrated the temple. Should I retaliate by damaging a mosque? How can such damage save the temple or benefit the Hindu religion? If Muslims are about to desecrate a temple, it becomes my duty to prevent them from vandalism, irrespective of my not being an idol worshipper. I should hug the idol and request them not to demolish the temple. I should lay down my life to protect the idol but refuse to hand it over to them. My entreaties will impress them, they will realize that I mean no harm to them and then they will become my friends.

Muslims are demanding Pakistan. They should therefore explain its advantages. No one will oppose it if he sees its advantages. But if they want to establish it forcibly, it will be a Napakistan (impureland) instead of Pakistan (pureland).

Badshah Khan is sitting by my side. He is a fakir by nature. But people, out of affection, call him Badshah (Emperor) because he rules the hearts of his people through love. He comes from a tribe whose tradition is to return a blow for a blow, and blood feuds are handed down from sire to son. But Badshah Khan has full faith in nonviolence. I asked him how an expert swordsman like him came to believe in nonviolence. He said that they had come to realize nonviolence. He said that they had come to realize non-violence as the only road to their national freedom. If the Pathans do not give up the policy of blow for blow and do not adopt nonviolence, he said they would perish in their internecine feuds.

When he took to nonviolence, he realized a kind of transformation coming over the Pathan tribes. It did not mean that every Pathan had undergone the transformation or that Badshah Khan had himself reached the highest goal of nonviolence. As far as he, the speaker, knew, he (Badshah Khan) was every day nearing the goal because he realized the truth of it. It was this type of brave nonviolence which Gandhiji wished the audience to imitate.

If we continue to fight among ourselves, the shackles of slavery will never be removed. The British are bound to quit this country. They are a nation of businessmen. They calculate the profit and loss from every transaction. They have realized that it is



no longer profitable to rule India. But what good will that freedom be to us if we continue to fight among ourselves after the British leave?

Gandhiji continued that he had come to Bihar in order to make the people realize the extent of the madness to which they had stooped. His object was to induce them to repent and thus undo the wrongs which had been perpetrated.

I have been told that a storm is still raging in the hearts of the citizens of Patna. I wish to remind you today that Bihar is the hallowed land of Lord Buddha and King Janaka. Lord Ramachandra had also once walked on this soil. It will be a great shame if this sacred land continues to witness the devilish dance of violence. You can retrieve the ancient glory of Bihar by means of nonviolence. I do not want the bravery of swords or words. Today we need that nonviolence which was exemplified by the people of Champaran in 1917.

Gandhiji added that, in his opinion, the departure from the straight path of nonviolence they had made at time in 1942 was very probably responsible for the aberration to which he had referred. He also instilled the spirit of general lawlessness which had seized them inasmuch as they dared to travel without tickets, pulled chains unlawfully or in senseless vindictiveness, burnt zamindari crops or belongings. He was no lover of the Zamindari system. He had often spoken against it; but he frankly confessed that he was not an enemy of the zamindars. He had no enemies. The best way to bring about reform in the economic and social system, whose evils were admittedly many, was through the royal road of self suffering. Any departure from it only resulted in merely changing the form of the evil. Violence was incapable of destroying the evil root and branch.

Lastly, Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the Harijans, asking him to visit their quarters and to live with them. He would have loved to do both the things; but he had to restrict himself to the mission that had brought him to Bihar. But having made himself a Bhangi in thought and deed, he could never forget the Harijans. He was sorry to say that the latter were still suffering from disabilities and that they did not get ready redress of their grievances.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, pp. 23-5, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 23. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 13, 1947

PATNA,  
March 13, 1947

Today too I was a witness to heart-rending scenes. This seems to be my destiny. We have indeed committed a great sin. We had lost our sanity. Even now we are not aware of its root cause. You can ask me whether you should not retaliate for what happened in Calcutta or Noakhali. But I have told you that this is not a healthy reaction. We should never think in terms of retaliation. If the sequence of retaliations goes on snowballing, India will be in ruins. Why should Muslims in Bihar be killed because some Bihari Hindus were killed in Calcutta?

If we seek freedom, it should be for the whole of India. It is not proper to seek separate freedom for Hindustan, Pakistan, Achhutistan or Sikhistan. For, such a mentality may even lead a person ultimately into demanding freedom for his own village above everything else. This tendency is wrong. We are all Indians and an evil deed committed anywhere in India is the concern of every Indian. I shall stick to my pledge of “Do or Die” so long as the whole of India does not become free.

We should not spread poison; on the other hand we should try to prevent it from spreading. If someone commits murder, we should be sorry because the murderer after all is our own brother. There must be something wrong in us; that is why our brother would stoop to such a sin. We should not become murderers to put an end to the murderer. If our hearts are filled with ill will, we must not hide that fact. We must openly confess it. We should think over our sins and repent for them. Sincere penitence reduces the incidence of sin. If we do not realize this truth, freedom of India will recede still further.

The British are leaving India; but if we continue to hate one another even after they leave us, then that freedom will bring us no benefit; someone else will come and snatch the freedom from us. If we look upon everyone as our brother, then only can we reap the full gains of freedom. Whatever is happening in the Punjab or the Frontier today is a matter of grave concern and regret. But we should not try to imitate the gangsterism of Punjab. People say that Bihar has made enough amends for its sins and the Government here is also very alert and that I should now go to Punjab. But what shall I do? I can go to the Punjab only when the Hindus and Muslims of Bihar tell me



with one voice that they need me no more and that I may safely go to the Punjab. That will also give me strength enough to tackle Punjab. It lies with you to strengthen my hands. If you do not give me strength, how can I go? You will yourself accuse me of running away from my pledge of “Do or Die”. God is the source of all strength. If He commands me, I shall go to Punjab. I am only a humble instrument in His hands. If my voice can reach the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab, I would tell them that the happenings in their province are doing good to no one. If the wild fire that is raging in the Punjab is not controlled, it will vitiate the climate in the whole of India.

Today I visited the ruined and deserted villages in the neighbourhood. I hung my head in shame. The people who perpetrated these crimes should also feel ashamed. Those who have looted Muslim properties should return them. If they dare not surrender to any authority, let them come to me or to Dr. Mahmud. They should not apprehend punishment. We will not tell the police. But one should not be afraid of undergoing punishment for one's sin. It would be praiseworthy indeed if you confessed your guilt even when there is fear of punishment. Those who have caused damage to others should pay compensation for the same.

While I was returning from my tour today, the villagers of Siparah stopped my car and presented me with a purse. The purse also contained a letter which stated that the villagers were sorry for what they had done. They assured me that they would try to resettle their Muslim brothers in the village. I appeal to all of you to atone for your sins as honestly as the brothers at Siparah. The amount which that small village has contributed and the manner in which they have expressed their sentiments deserve praise. It will be yet more commendable if they come forward to return the looted property.

I shall report to you something which I saw in a village today. One of your Ministers, Anugraha Babu (Anugraha Narayan Sinha, Minister, Finance, Labour, Supply and PriceControl), is sitting here. I wish to report to him also and to ask him why there is so much delay in atoning for that sin. Why are these villages still wearing a forlorn look? You will say this is a job which the Government ought to do. I am asking you, why should the Government do this job? Did you seek the Government's permission while ruining the villages? It is your responsibility to rebuild the villages. You must remove the debris and clean the villages. The Government will be thankful to you and will send you experts who can guide the work of sanitation. This is a job wherein even women



and children can participate. You should help the Government and the Government will help you.

The village I visited today was more unclean than the one I visited yesterday. Rains will make it even worse. Someone has recorded that India is strewn with excrement. One cannot contradict him if one visits the villages. Every corner in the village we visited was dirty. The lanes were very filthy and the roads were in a shabby state. I would call upon you to clean up these villages so that they reflect the cleanliness of your hearts. Besides contributing money you should be prepared for the work of sanitation. If you do not clean up the villages, how can I ask the Muslims to return to their homes? It is your duty to start the cleanliness drive from today. If your hearts are clean, the Muslims will surely return. I myself wish to undertake sanitation work. I have done this work in my time; but now I do not have the physical strength to do it. You must make your villages clean and beautiful. You should grow flowers and maintain a garden where women and children can walk about. The lanes should be spotlessly clean. The roads, even if they are narrow, should be so well-maintained that even a blind man should be able to walk on them. This alone can turn the villages of India into heaven on earth.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, pp. 27-9

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## 24. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of Mach 14, 1947

(3 The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

KHUSROPUR,

Mach 14, 1947

I wish that whatever I tell you now should touch your hearts. The scene I witnessed today after my two days tour was very painful. I do not suggest that my visits to villages earlier were not painful. Large houses of Muslims have been razed to the ground. Women and children had been slaughtered. I just cannot describe it in detail. Although I have hardened my heart, I am incapable of describing all the details even if I wish to do so. Muslims were your brothers and they are so even now. I have been hearing that Muslims in Bihar were particularly gentle. There used to be occasional disputes between Hindus and Muslims. But such disputes are bound to occur as long as the world lasts. But they should not tear heart from heart. Unfortunately this has happened now. I am fated to witness worse scenes than what I have seen during the last three days. What is happening in Punjab is heartrending. God alone knows how long such riots will continue. The people who are fighting in the Punjab do not even know what are the likely consequences of their action. If we go on fighting among ourselves in this manner, a third party may impose itself on us as an arbiter, and all sorts of witnesses, honest or dishonest, may come forward. It is better to have an arbitrator from among ourselves rather than allow an outsider. But the best thing is that the need for arbitration should not arise at all. I wish that Hindus and Muslims should cleanse their hearts and live like brothers.

Those who have committed crimes should come forward and confess their guilt with God as witness. No one should do so in a spirit of bravado. If someone has misbehaved in imitation of others, he too should own his mistake. I want a genuine feeling of repentance and an honest atonement for the atrocities committed by thousands of Hindus on a handful of Muslims.

Referring to the method of violence, Gandhiji said that some sort of peace might perhaps be established in the province by means of force. He hoped, but it could never be said with confidence, that evil would not spread throughout India, as it happened in the case of 1857. Similar things, as we know, had happened during the Sepoy War when it was quelled by means of superior arms. Outwardly, things quieted down but the hatred against an imposed rule went deep underground with the result





that we were even today reaping the harvest of what was then sown. The British Government took the place of the East India Company. They established schools and law courts and Indians took to these with enthusiasm; they even co-operated in the diffusion of Western culture; but, in spite of all this, they could never bear the insult or the degradation involved in political subjugation. Similarly, but in a worse manner, if the Punjab quietened down by reason of superior force used against the people of the Punjab, the seed of further conflict and bitterness between brothers that the Hindus and the Muslims were, would go still deeper. Violence, continued Gandhiji, thus could never be ended by counter-violence. The only effective answer to it was the way of non-violence.

People had adopted ahimsa in Champaran at my instance. I now feel that it was the ahimsa of the weak. The British, who were our adversaries, were a mighty power. That is why we seem to have adopted non-violence in facing them; but we could not remain nonviolent in our dealings with one another. We should feel sorry that we resorted to violence in dealing with our brothers. The mothers and sisters of Muslims are like our own mothers and sisters. If we have behaved with them like devils, it is our duty to atone for that sin.

Hindus and Muslims in Bihar should come closer than ever before. The followers of the two religions should never be afraid of one another. We should be afraid only of being overpowered by one another's love and affection. It is for you to consider whether you prefer to live in amity or wish to convert the whole of India into a boiling cauldron like Bihar or the Punjab.

Women have had a great hand in the growth of ahimsa. They can, if they choose, play a big role in Bihar. The events in Noakhali, Bihar and the Punjab are most unfortunate. If you have made up your mind to torture Gandhi, I cannot complain. In spite of my services to the country and to you, you have every right to say that Gandhi has cheated you and, but for him, you would have slaughtered all the Muslims — although you could not have done so. I would plead with you to pay attention to what I have to say. I do not wish anyone to be swayed by my personal influence; I want you to think calmly and act on my advice only if it appeals to your head and heart.

The Secretary of the Provincial Muslim League who had been good enough to come to him had complained that although the Government had made arrangements for repatriation, the mental attitude of the Hindus was not sufficiently reassuring. Gandhiji firmly said that the reality had to be faced and a determined effort made by every one of them to root out the least trace of the feeling of hostility and make it possible for their Muslim neighbours to live in brotherly love once more.





Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are all engaged in a bitter feud in Punjab. Sikhs have always claimed that one Sikh is equal in fight to a lakh and quarter of men. They arm even their children with kirpans. Many people are embracing Sikhism, lured by the kirpan. If you sincerely think that the way of the Punjab is the proper answer to the challenge of the times, you are free to follow it. I plead with you in all earnestness to tell me frankly that you do not approve of my way. I will not be hurt by your honesty.

Gandhiji would rather not live than see the day when the weapon of nonviolence was given up. It did not matter where he laid down his life for achieving his cherished aim; anywhere in India would still be India for him. But he still hugged the hope that nonviolence would surely be crowned with victory in the end; for in the example which Bihar might set in this line today lay the hope of peace and progress for our unhappy land.

I shall not say that Bihar has ignored my past services. I do not want you to do anything for my sake. I want you to work in the name of God, our Father. Confess your sins and atone for them with God alone as witness.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar — I, pp. 31-4, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 25. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 15, 1947

(The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,

March 15, 1947

I have been absent from here for the last three days. During these three days I visited a few villages. The villagers there have contributed their mite for the relief of Muslims. They gave more small coins than notes. Rich and wealthy people live here. You donated one thousand rupees on the first day and two thousand on the next day. When the gathering is large, it becomes very difficult to collect the donations.

When Gandhiji began his address, he first referred to his visit (Gandhiji had gone to meet the Governor about an hour before prayer time and had returned five minutes late for the prayer.) and said that people might naturally be interested to learn why he had gone there. For him it was a courtesy call because he could not go expecting any favours or services from the Governor as of yore. Under a responsible government, which theirs was, services and favours he could expect only from the Ministers who were the representatives of the people. The Governor had undoubtedly powers with reference to the minorities but these too he could exercise only with great restraint. What they discussed was for the Governor to communicate to his Ministers. One thing, however, the speaker was free to tell them. To his agreeable surprise, the Governor had said that those who were responsible to the people had to begin with themselves. If they did not begin with their individual lives and show relative perfection, they could not be real reformers or servants of the people.

Gandhiji wanted the people also to disabuse themselves of any thought that they had usurped any power from the British. Nonviolent noncooperation did not admit any such assumption. What they performed was a simple duty. The result undoubtedly was that the British naturally and voluntarily divested themselves of much authority and power and it was up to the people to do their duty along the lines of non-violence, if they were to have complete power as and for the people.

We have only partly recovered what we had lost through our folly. There is no doubt that we shall regain power in full measure. I have already explained to you the way to complete freedom.

The recent events in Bihar were a departure from that right conduct and, if the truth was not recognized and if the infection of the Punjab spread, he had not a shadow of doubt that they would lose what was within their grasp. He, therefore, expected Bihar to recognize the fact and do its duty honourably and well.



You must not fight among yourselves and should not kill women, children and old men. You must put a complete stop to these internal feuds. If you think that these feuds will bring freedom, you are sadly mistaken. The belief that through internal fight we will attain freedom is like expecting a barren woman to give birth to a child.

During the last three days I saw that houses had been razed to the ground, roofs pulled down and a lot of destruction had been caused. I heard that old men, children and women had been slaughtered. Our first duty therefore is to repent for our misdeeds. We should resolve not to commit these horrors again and to prevent others from doing so. The same thing applies here also. We must first reform ourselves and then try to reform others.

It was painful for him to find the houses in the same condition in which the rioters had left them. If they wanted their Muslim neighbours to come back, it was necessary that proper conditions should be restored and the debris completely cleared. Every individual who felt it was his duty to make the return of the refugees smooth, could at once lend a hand in rendering the broken homes habitable once more.

Some poor Muslims had also come to see me today. I advised them to return to their homes. I assured them that the Ministers were looking after their interests. I have given them an assurance on your behalf and asked them to return to their homes. The Muslims can be safe amidst you, if it is your wish. You should now start living together as before and always remember that I gave the assurance to the Muslims in your name and on your behalf. I have assured a flourishing Muslim merchant that he should not be afraid of restarting his business in full confidence, for I am sure that the Bihari Hindu would honour that pledge.

I am confident that the recent tragedy will never be repeated. I shall appeal to the Ministers to keep the interests of Muslims at heart. I cannot order them. I have never ordered anyone in my life. I only wish to appeal to everyone.

When nonviolence finds expression through a person, it influences other people too. I am not a great man. I am just the same today as I was when I came to Bihar for the first time. Of course there has been one change. My heart has been steeled now. I have assured the Muslims on your behalf that no Hindu will abuse them or hurt them or think of doing any such thing. Bihar should set an example of ahimsa which could be followed by other provinces. Rather than imitating Bengal or the Punjab, you should build a Bihar which Bengal and the Punjab would like to emulate. I have come to Bihar



from Noakhali, but my heart is still in Noakhali. I used to say there that I was working for Bihar in Noakhali. Similarly, I have not lost sight of the work in Noakhali while I am in Bihar.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, pp. 39-41, and Harijan, 30-3-1947

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## 26. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 16, 1947

PATNA,

March 16, 1947

I did not find time to write my speech for this silence day. I had told you yesterday itself that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan would speak to you today. He will therefore address you today instead of me.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—I, p. 42

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## 27. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING March 17, 1947

(The meeting was attended by more than thirty thousand people. A very large number of people participated in the Ramdhun for which Gandhiji congratulated them.)

MASAUH, March 17, 1947

It is not necessary, perhaps, to tell you that I have undertaken this tour not for pleasure but out of sorrow. I visit only those places where Muslims have suffered in some way or the other at the hands of Hindus. Everywhere I appeal to Hindus to atone for their sins.

A large number of Hindus attacked a handful of Muslims and killed women and children. This is not bravery but cowardice. It is cowardly to kill a person even under the apprehension that he is likely to kill us. We have to show true repentance for whatever has happened. If a brother of ours commits a crime, we cannot escape the responsibility. I include myself when I say “we”. No one should think that he has committed no crime and this old man is unnecessarily implicating him. When one man commits a crime, all mankind becomes responsible for it. Hence even if a single Hindu has misbehaved here, all the Hindus will be put in the dock.

What the Muslims have done in Noakhali or what the Hindus have done in Bihar brings no benefit to India; on the contrary it is an obstacle to India’s independence. I have been told that people shouted Mahavir Ji Ki jai and Gandhiji jai while committing these heinous crimes. Such people have not understood me. I am appealing to Hindus here that whoever has committed a crime should confess it. Those who have committed robbery, arson or murder should come to me and make a confession. I am no police officer; nor have I come here to prosecute you. You should not hesitate to make a confession before me at any rate. I shall not report the names of the criminals to the Ministers here, even though they are my friends. You should display your courage by confessing your guilt and ennoble your soul by atoning for it.

Hindus have written to me that they have indeed committed the crimes; but they plead that they have had enough provocation. According to them, the Muslims took the offensive and the Hindus retaliated in self-defense. Now, I pose this question to you. Suppose a man speaks ill of me or abuses me, should I retaliate by abusing him and soil my own tongue? If a man turns into a devil, should I confront him by becoming a devil myself? One who attacks another person is a coward, but it would be an act of



bravery to refuse to be provoked even in the face of an attack. One should realize that if the aggressor commits a shameful act one should not oneself commit a similar act.

I know the people of Bihar very well and I have visited this province very often. I had built great hopes on Bihar but this time the people here have dashed them to the ground. The only thing left to us now is to confess honestly that we are guilty of a serious crime. We should atone for the crime and declare that it would never be repeated. A Hindu friend has said, “I agree that you should have fought with those Muslims who had provoked you; but what is the justification for thousands of Hindus killing innocent women and children? Even if you had resorted to violence, you should have done it in a brave manner.”

Muslims complain that the Provincial Government’s hands are also not clean and the Ministers participated in the atrocities committed on the Muslims. It is difficult for me to believe this; I cannot also believe that the Chief Minister had a hand in this. Hindus accuse the government of harassing them. Innocent Hindus say they are arrested and tortured. It is likely that some innocent persons might have been arrested, but if they are really innocent they will certainly be released. An Inquiry has been appointed here presently. (Shrikrishna Sinha had announced on February 13 the government's decision to appoint a commission of inquiry to report on the disturbances in Bihar, Vide Volume 86, 460 (printed)). It will be impartial. Everyone will get an opportunity to place his or her complaint before the commission which will examine it and announce the verdict.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—2, p. 1 TO 3 (Red part has been omitted from web publication. It has been taken from Printed Volume 87)

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## 28. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 18, 1947

BIR, March 18, 1947

I saw today the wreckage caused by us at Masaurhi. I had read in newspapers the Muslims League version of the happenings at Masaurhi, and I confess that I thought the version was grossly exaggerated. I did not believe that man could be so depraved or that Biharis could stoop so low. But today I witnessed it with my own eyes. When Muslims fled you either looted their property or destroyed it. They had not harmed you in any way. I have come here with the resolve to serve the Muslims. I am a servant of God and therefore consider it my duty to serve all human beings.

It is very unfortunate that our hearts have not yet been cleansed. I concede that the Muslims behaved very viciously in Calcutta and Noakhali. But how can that be avenged in Bihar? It was a very wrong decision to observe a Noakhali Day here. (On October 25, 1946) Had I known about it, I would never have allowed such an observance in Bihar. I am very sorry that my name was falsely dragged into this affair and I was maligned.

My statements were presented to the public in a twisted and distorted form. When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru constituted the Provisional Government at Delhi, (on September 2, 1946) people wished to celebrate the occasion like Diwali. When I heard this, I said we should do no such thing because Jawaharlal and his colleagues had put on a crown of thorns. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 2-9-1946) The Muslim League had not joined the Government and it was a pity that riots had broken out in Noakhali. But my statement was distorted and people were told that Gandhi wanted them to observe a Noakhali Day. I had never even dreamt of this. And when the Noakhali Day was observed, people were so excited that they thought they were expected to settle the Noakhali scores with the Muslims.

Hindus and Muslims used to live here as good neighbours. They had mutual love and affection. They might have quarrelled occasionally, but that did not affect their relations. They used to become friends again soon. It is an altogether different story now. Today's celebration of any Day leads to fratricide. I have said that this must not happen while I am alive. I can never be a witness to fratricide. If this thing is repeated in Bihar I shall perish in that conflagration. I have heard that the Muslims here are panicstricken over the Punjab Day to be observed on the 23rd. I hope this is a false



alarm. I assert that we must not observe Punjab Day. If we do this, it will lead to dreadful consequences. The freedom of our country will become a distant dream. I pray to God that He must never let me live to witness that day. I am awakening the whole of Bihar through these words addressed to you.

While I was coming to the village of Bir, the residents of two villages stopped me on the way and handed over two letters to me. The first letter was addressed jointly by the Hindus and Muslims of Sain. They also contributed Rs. 55 for the relief of distressed Muslims in Bihar. I wish to read out to you their letter. They write:

We the residents of Sain are pained to see you in anguish which has been caused by our foolishness. We are extremely sorry for what has happened. Here, however, we Hindus and Muslims lived like brothers despite the prevailing lawlessness and we are happy and proud to tell you that we are living as brothers even today. We seek your blessings that we may continue to live in love and affection.

The other letter was given to me by the residents of Barni. They write:

When the riots were going on all around we formed a peace committee. No one was harmed here and no disturbance was caused in our area. There is absolutely no difference between Hindus and Muslims. We are working on the same lines even today, and we assure you that we will always continue to live like brothers.

The residents of this village also were not involved in any riot; and yet they are feeling sorry. This has made me very happy.

Some of our Muslim brothers have said that they are afraid of returning to their homes. Thieves and dacoits have carried away their goods. According to me, even the thieves and dacoits are our brothers. It would be ideal if they gave up their profession. But if that is not possible, they should at any rate not rob the innocent people whom we have beaten away from their homes.

Now you should contribute as much as you can for the relief of the Muslims in distress. I cannot collect the donations myself, because that exhausts me, besides I shall have to work during the night also. Volunteers are going round for collection. Please donate the maximum amount you can and thereby earn the merit for it and at the same time atone for your sins.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 10-2





## 29. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING of March 19, 1947

GORIAKHARHI,

March 19, 1947

I shall say after the prayers the few things that I wish to tell you. Since there is some time yet for the prayers to commence, I wish it to be utilized for collecting money for the relief of afflicted Muslims. We have committed a great sin by killing and robbing innocent Muslims. We can do some atonement through such donations. Hence I appeal to you to contribute your maximum.

After the prayers Gandhiji continued:

I have seen sign boards put up at the prayer ground to indicate separate enclosures. Some of them are in English and some in Hindi. I was amazed to see the English boards. For whom are they written? The newspaper correspondents are all Indians and they can read Hindi. Are the English signboards then intended for Badshah Khan? Or did you think that I had stayed away from India for many years and had therefore been denationalized?

This is very objectionable. I am not an enemy of the English language or script. But I believe that a thing in the wrong place is ugly. I can be honoured only by being kept in my proper place. Similar is the case with the English language and script. They are not appropriate for the Indian people. I have said it time and again, and I repeat it, that Hindustani alone can become the common language of all Indians. Neither Hindi nor Urdu can take that place. I do not claim to be proficient in Hindi; but I do understand Hindi well and to some extent Urdu also. I used to attempt conversation in Urdu with my friend Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal, Lucknow and other friends; and even now I try to speak chaste and correct Urdu with Muslim friends.

Till all the Hindus and Muslims in our country willingly accept one language and one script, it is essential that we learn both Hindi and Urdu. Whether or not the Muslims learn Hindi and Devanagari, we must learn the Urdu language and script. At the moment we have also to atone for our crimes against the Muslims. Hence it is all the more necessary that we demonstrate our affection and sympathy for them by learning their language and script. From tomorrow onwards I wish to see signboards in Hindi and Urdu wherever I go. Brijkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu who



accompanied me during those early days in Champaran normally used to write in Urdu only.

We should try our utmost to rehabilitate the Muslims who used to live in our neighbourhood. We should appeal to them to forget the past. We should bring them back to their homes. We should tell them that they can kill us if they want to, but must come back to their homes. The volunteers should become Khudai Khidmatgars<sup>1</sup>. They should respectfully appeal to the people to follow the dictates of their religion which taught them that their outward behaviour should be in keeping with their conscience and that they should tread the path of truth. Those who have committed crimes should honestly confess them and atone for them. All those who have taken part in the riots are sinners and they should atone for their sins.

[Form Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 19-20

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### 30. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 20, 1947

MASAUHRI,

March 20, 1947

You know I have returned after a two days' stay at Bir. I could see within these two days the damage wrought by us. (Gandhiji had visited Andari and Garriakhari the previous day. Out of 168 there was not a single Muslim in Andari. At Garriakhari out of 400 Muslims 119 were killed, 11 injured and 12 were missing. The houses were all in ruins.) Today also I saw a village (Harla) which had been deserted, and where a large number of women and children had been killed. I cannot narrate the whole story, because my heart is so full that I might burst into tears if I tried to tell it. One who wants to see things for himself can still go there. We have not been able to do anything by way of reparations during all these months. The devastated villages continue to wear a deserted look. Even now thieves and dacoits haunt the place and carry away goods since no Muslim stays there. And how can the Muslims stay at a place where their brothers and sisters, parents and children have been slaughtered? The mere memory of the massacre will stun them. I myself, perhaps, could not have stayed there. You might argue that the Government should rebuild or repair the damaged houses. But I ask you, 'Did you seek permission from the Government, when you resorted to murder, loot and arson?' You have to atone for the sins, not the Government, because, after all, the Government is your own and not imported from England.

If you rebuild Muslim houses and clean up their villages, they may think of returning to their homes in the confidence that Hindus had become their brothers, forgetting and forgiving the death of their relatives, who, after all, had to die one day or other. But this can happen only if you rebuild their houses with your own hands, clean their wells, sink new wells to replace the old ones filled with corpses of massacred Muslims. Muslims will trust you only when you do all this; and then they will return to their villages on their own. I appeal to every Hindu brother and sister to participate personally in undoing the damage. Those who are convinced that this is their duty should enter their names in the list with me or with Mrudulaben. Those who cannot come to me here or at Patna, should send their names by post. Much work remains to be done at Masaurhi too. You should render service wherever necessary, preferably in your own neighbourhood. There is no need for outsiders to come over to Masaurhi for the work of resettlement. Put up beautiful houses in place of the



debris so that one who looks at them will hardly believe what ruins were there. When you do this it is bound to influence the other provinces too and its fragrance will spread all over India.

I would request you not to think of celebrating a Punjab Day. Never make the mistake of avenging the Punjab in Bihar. Just as the Muslims here are in panic, so are the Hindus trembling in fear in Noakhali at the talk of a Pakistan Day. I wish to reach the ears of Janab Suhrawardy Saheb, the Chief Minister of Bengal. I wish to remind him that he had called upon me, as a Hindu, to go to Bihar where Hindus had perpetrated many atrocities, and that I came to Bihar at his bidding. The Hindus here have indeed committed many sins which need to be atoned for. I am myself undergoing penance. That is why I am here in Bihar although I have many tasks awaiting me at Sevagram, and in Delhi. If Suhrawardy Saheb wishes that I should remain in Bihar, he should prevent the observance of a Pakistan Day in Bengal. I do not want to prevent the Muslims from demanding Pakistan; but they should do so by explaining the advantages of Pakistan. Even if they want to observe a Pakistan Day, they should do so by convincing the Hindus so that they don't get nervous.

Hindus have been writing to me and confessing their guilt. I am also receiving letters written by Hindus and Muslims that because of the fraternal feeling there had been perfect peace in their villages and that they will never turn into each other's enemies. Such sentiments make me happy. I am also happy that people are contributing generously for the relief of afflicted Muslims. But now I would appeal to you to donate not merely money but also your own hard labour ; take up the trowel and get down to reconstructing the homes of Muslims which you have destroyed.

[ From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 19-20

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## 31. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 21, 1947

CHORHUAN,

March 21, 1947

I wish that those who have assembled here would think of the damage done and the number of men, women and children brutally done to death in this village, and sit in mournful silence in memory of the deceased. This will do you good. You will consider for yourselves why those who committed these crimes did so. Was it to save their religion? I would rather say that they did not thereby save any religion but harmed it. No religion teaches anyone to kill his neighbours. Righteous wars do take place, but I do not approve of them either. In the *Bhagavadgita*, too, oppressors and tyrants were resisted in a righteous war. It is the work of ruffians to kill innocent children and blameless men and women. A marauder wreaks destruction on others out of selfishness or ignorance. Whatever has happened here is, in my opinion, the work of oppressors and barbarians. Many houses have been burnt down and many others have been reduced to debris. The houses which a few months ago were full of life, are now desolate.

Why we turned into such barbarians will be revealed only in future. But the immediate problem is what you should do next. It is the duty of all men and women, I think, to clean the ruined houses and make them neat and habitable. We can always render some service, however poor we may be. Mere bathing in the Ganga does not wash away our sins. We should undertake honest cleansing. We can keep our bodies clean by bathing in clean water. But all men and women should cleanse themselves in every other way also. They should render all service honorarily and in a spirit of expiation. Did those who committed arson do it for any payment? We must wipe out the stains of their demoniac deeds with the water of human kindness. You should go to the Muslim brethren and tell them to forget the past, that it will never be repeated and persuade them to return and live peacefully as before. Tell them that their misery is your misery, that you are their brothers, that both Hindus and Muslims are sons of the same soil, both eat and drink from the same source and breathe the same air, hence there should be no ill will between them. Tell them that you will not get any peace of mind until they return to their homes. It is possible that the Muslims may turn round and ask how they can go back and live in the houses where their kith and kin have been beaten to death. They will be justified in saying so. But if the guilty



persons go to the Muslims with truly penitent hearts, I am sure, they will be persuaded. Human hearts melt before love. When the murderers themselves go to them in sackcloth and ashes and promise them never to repeat such deeds, even a stony heart will melt.

You should not depend on the Government to do this work. The Government will of course lend a hand. But it is mainly your task. The Government can give you tools and materials; but the cleaning has to be done by you.

Amidst this mad upheaval there were some Hindus, like oases in a desert, who risked the wrath of the violent mobs and saved the lives of many Muslims and gave them shelter. They deserve congratulations though they do not need any. They have done their duty and acquired punya (Merit acquired from good acts.). Punya contains all congratulations. Since we have become strangers to human sentiments these days, we are impelled to congratulate any evidence of human love. Those who gave shelter to Muslims did not do so from any selfish motives. If I have not gone to meet them, let them not think that I have no regard or respect for them. I would love to meet them and know how they saved the lives of Muslims. I have been unable to go to them in spite of my admiration because I have come here like a physician who goes only to those who are suffering. I have come to lighten the sufferings of Muslims in Bihar. I have been told that the Hindus have also suffered in the riots at some places. If there are any such Hindus, they too will be given relief. But I pay more attention to Muslims because there are quite a few of them here who are willing to help the Hindus.

I have been told that about fifty persons, who were wanted in connection with riot cases, surrendered themselves the day after my arrival at Masaurhi. I welcome this and hope that others who had taken part in the riots will also surrender to the appropriate authorities, making a clean breast of the crimes they had committed and taking whatever punishment might be given to them. If they do not have the courage to surrender to the authorities, let them come to me or to Badshah Khan or to Major-General Shah Nawaz with their confessions.

A friend from Bengal (According to Harijan, from Khadi Pratishthan) had recently come to me and told me that the Hindus in Noakhali are apprehensive about the preparations being made by the Muslims to observe the Pakistan Day and wish that I should return to Noakhali. I have asked the friend to return to Bengal without insisting on going there. I am doing the same work here that I was doing in Bengal. If the Hindus in Bihar



become honest and convince the Muslims that no harm will be done to them and if Muslims too do not want to take revenge in view of the Hindus' promise to look after them well, it will have its effect on the whole of India. As a result of this Muslims in Noakhali may also assure Hindus of their safety. There is no question of abandoning my post of duty till the Hindus and Muslims from both these regions assure me that they do not need my services. The Muslims of Bihar and the Hindus of Bengal should accept me as security for the safety of their lives and property. I shall suffer if they are made to suffer in any way.

I have repeatedly said that I have come here to do or die. If communal peace is not established, I shall pray to God to hasten my end, because, in that event, I shall not be in a position to serve anyone.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 29-32

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## 32. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 22, 194

(1 The Urdu version has been collated with the report in Harijan published under “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”.)

PATNA,

March 22, 1947

I have returned to Patna today after a five-day tour. You would have learnt from newspapers where I went and what I said. I liked the attitude of the villagers. They are genuinely penitent. Liberal contributions are being made by them for the relief of their Muslim brethren. I was very happy to see this. Many people have also written to me that they will not misbehave again.

In a number of places, Gandhiji said, due to the bravery of the local Hindus, no incidents had occurred. He was told by the Muslims themselves that in Dinapore Subdivision no trouble occurred though the Muslims were greatly nervous.

Gandhiji said that he had addressed the Muslim women refugees in the morning at Pipalwan. (Vide the preceding item.) He did not wish at present to enter into a description of the feelings of these women and their present condition. His heart was too heavy and he did not wish to shed tears. He only wanted to tell them how to repent. He tried as best as he could to console them and persuade them to pick up courage and return to their villages, placing reliance on God. At this meeting he was told that Muslim women and men dreaded the approach of March 22, as it had been reported that Punjab Day would be observed in Bihar on that date. He had told them that the Bihar Government had banned the observance of any kind of day, be it Pakistan Day or Punjab Day. The Minister who was present also gave the assurance that no celebration of any kind would be permitted and that the ban would be strictly enforced throughout the province. The Bihar Government, Gandhiji said, had banned the kisan rally also.

It is a different thing that the rally should not have been tarred with the same brush. But the situation is very delicate today. Our people’s hearts are not clean. Hence even a kisan rally should be abandoned. I shall appeal to the people concerned not to celebrate either a Punjab Day or a Pakistan Day. The Ministers have issued the order after much deliberation; hence the order must be obeyed. If one wishes to disobey a law as a satyagrahi, one can do so. When we have the voting right we can remove the Ministers if we do not approve of their policies. But so long as they are in authority, we must carry out their orders.





A true satyagrahi should implicitly obey the directions of those he had himself put in power. What Gandhiji said did not refer only to March 22. It applied to the future also and at no time should these celebrations be indulged in, so long as the atmosphere remained as it was that day.

There is a conflagration in every quarter today. A kisan rally is not advisable in these circumstances. You can write to the Government about the difficulties you are facing. You can agitate through newspapers. Rallies are intended to awaken the kisans and to organize the people. I have been leading such activities for the past sixty years and am quite an expert in these matters. Conditions today are not conducive for such activities. The Gita speaks of action in inaction and inaction in action. (iv. 18) If I apply this to the present-day context, it means we can do a lot of good by keeping quiet. We should discriminate between dharma and adharma. There are occasions when keeping away from adharma becomes the dharma. It is no doubt our duty to awaken the kisans. But this is not the time for it. It is the duty of every Hindu to follow the teachings of the Gita, although anyone in the world can derive benefit from the Gita. No one can say that we should repeat the same action in season and out of season. We are subserving our waking hours even when we sleep; but if we go on sleeping all the time we will be as good as dead. This only means that every action has its appropriate time. Desisting from an inopportune action is as good as timely action.

The 22nd of March has passed off peacefully. It is a good thing. We should now forget all about it. We don't have to celebrate Punjab Day or Pakistan Day. These days are intended only to make us fight. But our Muslim brothers here do not wish to fight. Why should we then celebrate Punjab Day?

I concede that a kisan rally stands on a different footing. But the times are not propitious even for a kisan rally. Every action should be undertaken at an appropriate time. This is an occasion for penitence. We should first atone for our sins. It is part of the atonement to realize that the atrocities committed on Muslim brothers and sisters constitute grave sins. If we are convinced that the Hindu heart has been cleansed through such atonement, then we can organize a kisan rally.

Major-General Shah Nawaz Khan has arrived here. Badshah Khan who intended to leave, has postponed his departure. A scheme is being prepared to rehabilitate the Muslims who have suffered at our hands. Every Hindu brother and sister should go to villages and put in hard labour, not for the sake of wages but in a spirit of service. We



should clean up Muslim villages and rebuild their houses to convince them that once again we have become their brothers although for a time we had gone berserk.

Some officials have informed me that about fifty persons have confessed their crimes. They have admitted that they are guilty. They are prepared to undergo any punishment meted out to them. This is a welcome development. But thousands have committed such crimes. All these thousands should confess their crimes. Then the Muslims will not be in a position to say that the criminals have not been arrested. Whoever has committed a crime should frankly say that earlier he was afraid of prosecution, but having made a confession he is now prepared to undergo any punishment. This would not only enhance their own prestige but also that of Bihar as a whole.

Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 35-7, and Harijan, 6-4-1947

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### 33. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 23, 1947

(As Gandhiji was observing silence his written speech was read out at the meeting held at the Bankipur Maidan.)

PATNA,

March 23, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I request you and those others whom my voice could reach to understand the aim of life. The sole purpose of life is that we should serve the creation of the Power which has created us and on whose mercy or, say, kindness, depends on every breath. Let us not destroy this creation. But today, in our arrogance we have either lost sight of this cause or we tend to forget it and are either fighting each other or preparing to do so. If we cannot avoid this calamity, you may be sure that India's independence is an impossibility. If you think you can achieve independence by the simple fact of the British quitting the land, you are sadly mistaken. If we continue to fight amongst ourselves even after their departure some other power would step in. To think that we can fight the world with its own weapons is like expecting a barren woman to give birth to a child.

A friend has written that a semblance of peace appears to have been established in the Punjab. But this peace and tranquillity has come through military occupation. Everyone is preparing openly for a fight and is busy collecting arms. If these preparations continue the peace established through the army or the police will ultimately turn out to be the peace of the grave. Real peace will come about only when one party at least silently adopts the course of true bravery. Bihar has realized through its own experience that there can be no bravery in killing women and children, or old and innocent people, that it is sheer cowardice. What a grand thing it would be if Bihar could show the real power of nonviolent bravery and thus guide India and the whole world on the path of true life. (According to Harijan, at the end Gandhiji informed the audience that the prayer meeting on Monday would be held near Poonpoo.)

[From Urdu ]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 38-9

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### 34. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 24, 1947

RAJGHAT,

March 24, 1947

It is well-nigh impossible for me to say anything amid such noise. I can say something only when you are quiet. In the first place, I wish to address a few words to the men and women volunteers. I have told them before also what they should do during the tours. It is the duty of women volunteers to guide women as to how they should sit and conduct themselves at public meetings. For this they should distribute leaflets beforehand and should read them out for their benefit. The men who are either standing or sitting are keeping quiet, but because the women are not quiet, they cannot also hear anything. In fact, it is not women alone who are to be blamed for this. They are overworked, poor and illiterate. They behave as they are told by their menfolk. If we have to take work from them, we should make them understand things and educate them. It is the duty of the women volunteers first of all to tell women the rules to be observed at public meetings.

Today I saw a village (Behrawan) where Hindus too have suffered losses. I had been asked earlier to visit that village. I realize the Hindus have suffered but that in no way mitigates their guilt. I did not visit the place with the thought of the Hindus who have suffered there. But that does not mean that I am hurt only at the loss of Muslims and that Hindus' sufferings do not move me. I am equally pained at the sufferings of all persons. In the words of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the Aligarh University, I would say that the Hindus and the Muslims are like the two eyes of Mother India. Just as the trouble in one eye afflicts the other too, similarly the whole of India suffers when either Hindus or Muslims suffer. If you realize this, I would think my purpose has been fulfilled.

[ From Urdu ] Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, p. 40

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## 35. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 25, 1947

PATNA,

March 25, 1947

My third tour will commence tomorrow. I shall go to Jahanabad and return on March 28. The prayer meeting will again be held here on the 29th.

I saw the destruction in the village which I visited and met the Hindus and the Muslims there. Today also I have been meeting people throughout the day. One Muslim friend said that it was very good indeed that I visited them. Now they were convinced that nothing of this sort would recur. But I was pained by what another Muslim friend told me. He said that the Hindus were now boycotting the Muslims. Sometimes boycotting could be a welcome thing but it is bad if it is directed against one's own brother. Suppose we have been under the treatment of a Muslim doctor till today, as for instance I used to be treated by Dr. Ansari, (1 M. A. Ansari (1880-1936) ; physician and surgeon ; Member, Congress Working Committee; President, Indian National Congress, 1927 ; Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, 1928-36) Hakim Ajmal Khan (2 (1863-1927) ; Chief Physician to the Nawab of Rampur, 1892-1902; President, Indian National Congress, 1921 ; first Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, 1920-27) or Dr. Abdul Rehman. Should we stop being treated by him as soon as a Hindu-Muslim riot breaks out? Boycott had an important place in our struggle against the British. But if it is adopted amongst ourselves it will amount to violence. The Hindus have committed a sin in Bihar and today they are the guilty ones; do they now want to persist in doing wrong? The case of the doctor was cited only as an example. The gentleman mentioned by me is a businessman and landlord. Both Hindus and Muslims had their shops on his land and did business there. It was a source of income for him. But now the Hindus have stopped going there; this is a pernicious boycott. It so happens sometimes that one who is engaged as a tailor does not like anyone else to take up that profession. There was a time when a tailor's son took to tailoring only. But now a tailor's son can also become a head clerk. Such ill will and feeling of animosity should be given up.

Let me give you some good news too. Today some League friends met me and expressed their wish to live with the Hindus amicably and wanted the Government to listen to them. I said to them that though the League represented a large number of Muslims I did not agree that those who were outside the League were not Muslims or



that the League was the sole representative of the Muslims. The boycott of the League would not do. I even asked the Noakhali Muslims to obey the orders of the League. So long as they were in the League, it was their duty to carry out its orders. But if the League misguided them and asked them to slit the throats of the Hindus, they should refuse to obey it and quit the League.

The League friends also said: “Though we belong to the League still we are friends of the Hindus. If the Government does not take us into confidence, how can the Muslims trust it? If we plead with the Muslims who had run away, they will come back. But if we do not cooperate how many Muslims can you bring back? Maybe a few of them would return. But all of them will not. The Government should consult us.” I told them it was a good and straightforward suggestion. Each should cooperate with the other and do his duty. When we work unitedly it will have its impact on India as well as on the world. It will purify our hearts. We should act only with a pure heart. What is the use of our being together without unity of hearts?

I also heard some Muslims say that there were ten crore Muslims and even if one crore perished the remaining nine crores would fight for founding a nation of their own. I told them that if they had such notions they would not serve Islam in any way. On the contrary they would destroy it. I had told the Hindus also in Noakhali that they should get rid of all fear. We should fear God alone. It is cowardice to agree to something or to bow our heads before others out of fear.

The friend from Noakhali has informed me that after my return from Noakhali the situation there has deteriorated again. I told him that if the Hindus in Bihar co-operated with me, I could work for Noakhali while I was still here. I would appeal to the Muslims of Noakhali, if my voice could reach them, to live in unity with Hindus, wherever they may be. Hindus should do likewise. I do not know what will happen in Noakhali in future—whether the surviving Hindus will be killed, their houses looted or burnt. But if this happens, the Muslims will dig their own graves. Even here I hear voices are being raised that scores will be settled once Gandhi goes away. This is a bad omen. I beseech you not to become cowards, but to be truthful and have faith in God. It is folly to agree to anything out of fear. Today some Domes came to see me. They told me that it was not only caste Hindus who boycotted them but even the Bhangis among Harijans boycotted them. They said that the Domes were normally engaged in bamboo work, only the poor ones did scavenging. They are not even aware of the



exact strength of their community. Only one boy from the community goes to college. The Domes invited me to stay with them. I told them that, though I would like it, I was at the moment engaged in other very important work. I was grieved to know that the Bhangis did not allow them to draw water from their wells. Bhangis and other Harijan friends should not discriminate amongst themselves. I fail to understand why others regard Harijans as inferior. I have myself become a Bhangi. If I swept your lanes and cleaned your latrines, and you hurled abuses at me and I tolerated them, how would I then become low? Those who are engaged in scavenging are not inferior but it is those who abuse others that are low. Those who do the cleaning for us and serve us should be treated with love by all of us.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—II, pp. 41-4

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## 36. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 26, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”)

JEHANABAD,

March 26, 1947

Gandhiji began his post-prayer speech by referring to the common weakness of misunderstanding opponents, attributing to them motives which could not be proved. Such behaviour often led to untoward results which prudent people would avoid. Such misunderstanding was responsible for differences between the Congress and the League. (Gandhiji had offered to stay in Jehanabad with some members of the Muslim League who had called on him at Patna. Not knowing this, one of his secretaries arranged for his stay with the authorities. When Gandhiji came to know of it, he tried to contact the members of the Muslim League but could not. The latter, however, accused him of breach of promise.) Both the organizations had a large following. The responsibility resting on them was all the greater for their popularity. Their conduct towards each other had to be above suspicion.

Gandhiji next referred to his visit to Kako Relief Camp (Where 500 refugees had taken shelter) and the village of Saistabad. Men and women burst into tears when they saw him. He told them that to break under one’s sorrow did not become brave people. All religions taught that sorrow should be bravely borne.

As he watched crowds of sturdy men pursuing him, mobbing his car and shouting vociferously Mahatma Gandhiki jai, etc., he could well imagine the havoc they must have wrought when they attacked a handful of Mussalmans. The Hindus should be ashamed of the act. They should take a vow never to succumb to the madness again. Nor should they think of taking revenge for the incidents of the Punjab or the like. Would they themselves become beasts simply because others happened to sink to that level? If ever they became mad again, they should destroy him first. His prayer in that case would be that God may give him the strength to pray to Him to forgive his murderers, that is, to purify their hearts. He prayed that God may enable him to show by example what true bravery was. No one could mistake arson and murder of innocent women and children as a brave act. It was cowardice of the meanest type.

Gandhiji next referred to a complaint that he had received from the Hindus of Kako enumerating their sufferings at the hands of Muslim zamindars. He interpreted





it as intended to minimize their own offence against the Mussalmans. It was not manliness to attempt to do so.

Again Gandhiji referred to a report that he had heard of the Hindus threatening the Mussalmans that they would wreak vengeance on them when he (Gandhiji) was gone. It ill became the votaries of the Ramayana to try to suppress the fourteen or fifteen percent of the Muslims in their midst. Men aspiring to be free could hardly think of enslaving others. If they tried to do so, they would only be binding their own chains of slavery tighter. It became their duty to go and beg forgiveness of the Mussalmans, and by their true repentance they should try to persuade them to go back to their homes. They should rebuild their houses. They should make their sorrow their own.

Harijan, 13-4-1947

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## 37. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 27, 1947

(The reports in Harijan and The Indian Nation have been collated.)

OKRI,

March 27, 1947

Gandhiji uttered the warning that Indians might lose the golden apple of independence which was almost within their grasp, out of insanity, which had caused scenes of desolation and destruction, and stated that the peace that reigned in the land was only on the surface. He said this while referring to his visit during the morning and afternoon to some riot affected villages.

Gandhiji added that they knew the very first pronouncement that the Viceroy had made when he assumed office stated that he was sent as the last Viceroy to wind up the British rule in India. They must have noticed that the pronouncement was deliberate, unconditional and unequivocal. He said that we must trust British promises for it would be cowardice to say that all Britons were dishonest. That, he explained, would mean that we were ourselves dishonest. Gandhiji added that the jar of British sins was full and they must go but it was not right to abuse them while they were departing. He knew that it had become a fashion, though not without cause, to distrust every British declaration. He for one would advise the acceptance of every declaration at its face value without qualifying it in the light of past experience to the contrary. His experience was that it was the deceiver who always lost and never the dupe if he was honest and brave. But he very much feared on account of what had happened in the country that by their folly or, what was worse than that, insanity, they might let slip out of their hands their hard-won prize before it was strongly locked in their unbreakable fist.

Gandhiji referred to Bihar and the Punjab and said that he had wisdom enough to see that they themselves might tempt the Viceroy to eat his own words, uttered solemnly on a solemn occasion. Heaven forbid that such an occasion should arise, but, if it did, even though his might be a voice in the wilderness, he would declare that the Viceroy should firmly and truly carry out his declaration and complete the British withdrawal.

Gandhiji then referred to his tour today in villages Amthua, Belai and Ghosi, this morning and Abdal Chak, Zulfipur and Abdalpur (In the afternoon). He said that the



same stories of atrocities were repeated the whole day. He advised the Congressmen who had approached him and said that innocent men were in jail as a result of communal cases, that they should produce those who were guilty and if they failed they should cease to be Congressmen. Gandhiji also advised the guilty to confess to him, for he would not give them away to Government but then they thought to atone for their sins. Gandhiji also requested Hindus to return all abducted women and girls, if any in their possession, at once.

Gandhiji referred to the police strike (On March 20, 1947, a police havildar was convicted of contempt of court by the Sub-divisional Officer, Gaya. The Gaya police then gave notice of strike unless redress was given to the havildar and the Sub-Divisional Officer punished. An immediate inquiry was ordered by the District Magistrate. The strike commenced on March 24 and the strikers refused to return to duty in spite of the inquiry which began the same day. From Gaya the strike spread to Patna and Monghyr.), and said that the police, like the scavengers, should never go on strike. Theirs was an essential service and they should render that service irrespective of pay.

There were many other effective and honourable means of getting grievances redressed. If he were a Cabinet Minister, he would offer the strikers nothing whatever under the threat of a strike, which implied force. He would give them the choice of an impartial arbitration, without any condition. He said:

It will be a bad day for India if the military, including the police, rule India.

He hoped the police would call off their strike unconditionally and request the Ministry to appoint an impartial arbitrator to investigate their case.

Gandhiji also appealed to the policemen not to behave in the manner in which they were behaving then. Every policeman, he said, was a servant of the people and his duty was to behave like the Khudai Khidmatgars. Policemen were the custodians of law.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that if every man, woman and child tried to understand his or her duty and if there was no theft or dacoity, there would be no need for policemen. Everyone could then become a policeman and help each other.

Gandhiji expressed regret that the Bihar Government had employed British soldiers to deal with the strikers. No matter what the cause was, and wherever it was, the Indian Governments must never requisition the services of British soldiers to deal



with civil disturbances. Otherwise it would mean that the Indian Governments were helpless without British arms.

Harijan, 13-4-1947, and The Indian Nation, 29-3-1947

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## 38. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 28, 1947

(The reports from Harijan, The Indian Nation and The Hindu have been collated.)

ALLAHGANJ,

March 28, 1947

Gandhiji began by saying that he had passed a very full and heavy day. The day began with a long meeting (Vide “Talk with Muslim Refugees”, 28-3-1947) with the members of the local Muslim League at the bungalow of Mr. Azharul Haq, local League leader. He was with them for over an hour and had a hearty chat with them answering all kinds of questions. Then he had a meeting (Vide “Talk with Muslim Refugees and Village Representative”, 28-3-1947) at his residential quarters with Hindus and Muslims belonging to JEHANABAD and the surrounding villages. He then had a meeting (Vide “Talk with Congress Workers”, 28-3-1947) with the Congressmen which included members of the various Congress Committees. Later he met the members of the local Hindu Mahasabha. Finally he had a heart-to-heart talk (5 Vide the preceding item.) with over 25 members of the police force on strike. Then at half past three again he visited the villages of Malathi, Gangasagar, Bola and Allahganj, in which Muslims had suffered badly.

Referring to his visit to the villages, Gandhiji said that naturally he was full of topics on which he wanted to speak and bespeak their attention. He was sorry to say that Hindu repentance was not open and sincere enough to inspire confidence among the Muslims. He had told the afternoon meeting that it was open to the representative Hindus who were present at the meeting to disabuse the Muslims of their suspicion. He was sorry to say that not one Hindu got up to give the needed assurance. He had not the heart, therefore, to ask his Muslim hearers whether they (the Hindus) had cleansed their hearts. Muslims were the injured party in Bihar and it was not open to anyone to expect a satisfactory answer from them unless the guilty Hindu party had led the way by repentance. There were, yet, ring-leaders like Mathura Singh at large and successfully evading arrest. There was, therefore, little cause for wonder if the Muslims were afraid to return to their respective villages. Gandhiji said that he could not help feeling that the culprit could not long remain at large if the Hindu population did not give him shelter. He asked Mathura Singh’s friends and sympathizers to advise him to discover himself and face the consequences of his action. He would also like to tell him that it was no act of bravery for him to evade arrest. He was thus rendering a



disservice to himself, his religion and his country. He suggested to the Congressmen, in whose midst the inhumanities were enacted, that they could not absolve themselves from the guilt, unless they made every effort to induce all the culprits to come out into the open and to wash their guilt as publicly as they had committed the crimes.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that he had visited a mosque in the village Bola which was damaged during the disturbances. He was told that on the day of Holi the mosque was again desecrated by some villagers who played Holi inside the mosque premises. If it was true, Gandhiji said, it was undoubtedly a notice given by them to the Muslims not to enter their homes even when they were rebuilt, not dare to visit the mosque. If this reported desecration on Holi day was a fact, it was a bad omen for the Hindus, for Bihar and for the whole country. He regretted the reported action of the local Hindus and warned them to respect all places of worship alike. He called upon the culprits to confess. But Gandhiji regretted, new parties and new leaders had risen who believed in all sorts of crimes and perhaps nobody was prepared to listen to him. He recalled the theme of today's bhajan and prayed to God for help and hoped Bihar would come out of the difficulty now facing the province.

Gandhiji went on to say that he had heard at the Muslim League meeting in the morning and at the meeting of the Hindus and the Muslims in the afternoon that Mahant Bhagwat Das who was a member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly was himself a participator in the crime and was himself present at both the meetings. The speaker advised him whilst he was under suspicion to give up his membership. He was glad to say that Mahant Bhagwat Das, without a moment's hesitation, welcomed the advice and promised at once to act up to it. He also added that Bhagwat Das was in no way a participator directly or indirectly in the crime and that he was quite ready to face an open, impartial enquiry to be made by the Muslim League itself. If it was a sincere declaration, Gandhiji said, it was certainly a refreshing thing at a time when there was no real sign of sincere sorrow and repentance on the part of the Hindus in the affected areas. This he was obliged to say in spite of welcome letters of repentance to which he had made reference at the previous evening's meeting.

His attention has been drawn, Gandhiji said, to the fact that the Government lorry which had accompanied him in his tour was forcibly boarded by passers-by as if they had a right to travel in it even as the authorized occupants. He was sorry at the



unmanly exhibition of authority and lawlessness. Such a licence could not be tolerated even in the freest country in the world. Those who defied the law were digging the grave of Indian independence before it was in their hands.

Gandhiji fervently appealed to all Bihar and through Bihar to the Indian people not to plunge the country into a turmoil in the prelude to the dawn of freedom over this land which he called the 'arunodaya' of the new age. Gandhiji warned the nation to awaken before the day of freedom dawned, just as all good men were up from slumber and prayed before sunrise.

Gandhiji put to rest all speculation about his visit to Delhi in response to Lord Mountbatten's invitation by announcing that he was leaving Bihar for three or four days. Gandhiji said he was determined to stay in Bihar and see the work he had taken up through and no man could prevent him from doing it. God alone could keep him away if He so desired.

Harijan, 13-4-1947, The Indian Nation, 30-3-1947, and The Hindu, 31-3-1947

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## 39. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, March 29, 1947

(Extracted from “Gandhiji’s Bihar Tour Diary”)

PATNA,

March 29, 1947

At the outset Gandhiji told the audience that he would be leaving for Delhi the next day and hoped to return in about four or five days.

Gandhiji then feelingly referred to the death on the previous evening of Prof. Abdul Bari, President of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, under tragic circumstances. Prof. Bari was a disciple and co-worker of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Dr. Rajendra Prasad has built for himself a unique and undisputed position and influence in the province by his service and sacrifice. Prof. Bari had also by his service in the cause of the workers in Jamshedpur and other places endeared himself to the people and rose to occupy the position of the President of the Provincial Congress Committee. A fearless fighter, Prof. Bari was with the Congress during the different phases of its struggle for freedom.

Gandhiji referred to his visit earlier in the day to Prof. Bari’s house to console the members of the bereaved family and ask them not to grieve and to hearten them for the work that had specially descended upon the weak shoulders of his children.

Gandhiji said that as he entered the house he was struck with its simplicity and the simple life Prof. Bari had led. The house was located in an ordinary narrow lane and what he saw inside the house fully bore out what everyone had said about Prof. Bari, that he was a poor man and that though he had opportunities he scrupulously maintained his integrity as far as public finances were concerned. At a time when the administration of the country was in the Congress hands and crores of rupees had to be administered, men of Prof. Bari’s honesty would have been of invaluable help. He had hoped on his return from the third tour just finished, to be more closely associated with him and to make an effective appeal to him to modify, if not altogether get rid of, his short temper which went ill with the very high office, in fact the highest in the province of Bihar, especially when there was a nationalist ministry at the head of affairs which naturally had to be influenced by the premier provincial Congress organization. Gandhiji said that he had had full faith in Prof. Bari and had known that his word carried great weight with him. But God had willed otherwise and He had deprived Bihar of the





great service of a very brave man with the heart of a fakir. But men like Bari never died, and it was for those who remained to carry on the noble work he had left behind.

Gandhiji then referred to the circumstances of Prof. Bari's death and said that in an unfortunate altercation that had ensued between him and one Gurkha member of the anti-smuggling force and a former member of the Indian National Army, the latter shot him. He warned the audience that there was no politics of any kind in the death and that it would be wrong and unjustified to associate the whole I. N. A. organization with the death of Prof. Bari because of what one single individual did.

Harijan, 13-4-1947

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## 40. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 1, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 1, 1947

Today as soon as Manu Gandhi uttered the first word of the Kalma from the Koran a young man stood up, marched right up to the stage where Gandhiji sat and said, "You go away from here. This is a Hindu temple where we will not allow a Muslim prayer. You have been repeatedly telling this thing to us but our mothers and sisters continue to be slaughtered. We cannot tolerate it any longer." Gandhiji told him:

You are free to go. If you do not want to pray, let the others do it. This place does not belong to you. This is not the right way. (1 But the young man could not be silenced. He came close to Gandhiji. People tried to pull him back but he stood firm and persisted in arguing. A lady put herself between Gandhiji and the young man. Gandhiji asked her to keep away, saying, "Let no one stand between me and him." But the people removed the young man from the meeting.) You did not do the right thing. You forcibly removed the young man from the meeting. You should not have done such a thing. It would give him a sense of triumph. He was very excited. He did not wish to listen to the prayer. But I know that you all wish to listen to it. I do not wish to hold the prayer in spite of protests. Now I intend to give up the rest of the prayer. You are all familiar with the prayer I offer. You have heard it even before I went to Noakhali. In my sequence of prayers, the Muslim prayer is followed by the Parsi prayer. After that this girl would have sung to you a bhajan in her melodious voice and then there would have been Ramdhun. But now I am leaving out the Parsi prayer and also the Ramdhun. Auz-o-Billahi is the beginning of one of the verses of the Koran. You think that uttering this expression is an insult to Hinduism. But I am a true sanatani Hindu. My Hinduism tells me that along with the Hindu prayer I should also offer the Muslim prayer and the Parsi and Christian prayers. True Hinduism lies in offering prayers of all religions because only he is a good Hindu who is also a good Muslim and a good Parsi. The young man said that this was a Hindu temple and such prayers could not be held here. But that is wild talk. This temple belongs to the Bhangis. Even a single Bhangi can throw me out of this place if he so desires. But these people love me. They know that I am a Hindu. Jugal Kishore Birla, on the other hand, is my brother. He is a big man in terms of money but he regards me an elder. He has put me up here because he considers me a pious Hindu. He also takes me to the big temple built by him. If in spite of all this the young man insists that I should go away and I cannot pray here, it is merely his arrogance. But you should



have won him over with love. You threw him out by force. What is the point in offering prayers by resorting to force? The young man was in a rage and in his anger was talking wild things. It was out of such talk that all those things happened in the Punjab. This rage is what starts all the fanaticism. The shlokas just recited by this girl say that when a man broods on objects of the senses—that is, all the five senses—he is caught up in craving. Then he is possessed by wrath which leads to stupefaction, i.e., insanity. (Bhagavadgita, II. 62 and 63)

Driven by such frenzy the simple folk of Bihar have indulged in such acts as to make me hang my head down in shame. In the same mad fury the people of Noakhali indulged in excesses. But the law of the jungle was more in evidence in Bihar than in Noakhali and it was even more so in Punjab.

If you are true Hindus, you should not act in such a manner. If in a meeting something is being said which we do not like to hear we must get up and leave the meeting. There is no need to shout and make a row. Moreover, this is a matter of religion. Leave alone religious discussion this man would not even allow people to pray. Prayers should not be disturbed as was done by this young man. Such acts help no one.

None of those who have died in Punjab will ever come back. Ultimately all of us have to go the same way. It is true that these people met their death by being slaughtered whereas others die of cholera or in some other way. He who is born is destined to die. In being born there is, to an extent, some human responsibility, but in the matter of dying, none but God has any hand. Death cannot be avoided on any account. Death is our companion, our friend. If people have died with courage, they have lost nothing. Rather, they have gained something. But the great problem is how to deal with those who committed these murders. True, to err is human. After all, man is but a bundle of errors. But we ought to rectify the errors. God will not overlook our acts. When we go to Him He will look into our hearts. He knows our hearts. If there is a change of heart in us, he will pardon all our lapses.

I have many friends in Punjab who call themselves my devoted followers. But who am I to describe themselves as such? All these friends insist that since I have already come as far as Delhi I should go over to the Punjab at least for one night, so as to comfort the people there. It would take only a few hours if I fly. But how can I go at somebody's bidding? I shall go there only at God's bidding or at the bidding of my own



heart. I did not go to Noakhali at someone else's call. Before leaving this place I had said that I was going there because my heart urged me to do so. People had been asking me to go to Bihar but I had not gone there at anyone's call. I went when Dr. Mahmud Saheb wrote to me that my going there would alone clear the minds of the Biharis.

Bihar is a province where Hindus and Muslims can live together [in peace]. But there too women and children have been subjected to outrages no less violent. Blind with fury, people killed innocent children; they slaughtered the womenfolk and threw the bodies into the wells. I am not talking in the air. All these are facts that can be proved by evidence. After that the Muslims are bound to say that they would not live there. But once they are assured that they would not be treated like that again, they would come back. The Bihari Muslims had nearly come to appreciate this ; so much so that if we could have reassured them, I was confident that the Muslims who had fled to Asansol and Sind would have come back. They were on the point of returning. But now, should the atrocities in the Punjab be avenged in Bihar? Then, will it be repeated in Madras? And where will this end? Will all of us become barbarous in this way? The Congress fought a non-violent battle against the British. Should we now start killing our own brethren? True, Muslims are perpetrating atrocities, but should we also do the same? Was there an act of atrocity that the British did not commit?

But now the British are going. The Viceroy told me that they had never retreated, but they were leaving India, as a result of her nonviolent struggle. You might say that they are doing it for show, because in any case they had got to go. But, if anyone comes to us with honest intentions, why should we interpret his honesty as wickedness? I have learnt to accept honesty on the face of it till I have experience to the contrary. Just at the moment of the departure of the British should we present the spectacle of pleading for the retention of their army although they are leaving? In the Punjab today we are protected solely by them. But can we call it protection? I wish we could protect ourselves even if only a handful of us survived. Let us not be afraid of dying. If we are to be killed, would we not rather be killed by our Muslim brothers? Would a brother cease to be a brother because he has changed his religion? Moreover, do we not indulge in the same acts as they do? What have we not done to the women in Bihar? The Hindus have done it, which means I have done it. It is a matter of shame. Do you think I should hurl two abuses in return for one? But that is exactly what both the Hindus and the Muslims are secretly doing and they are possessed by a mad frenzy.



Here is Badshah Khan sitting right beside me. Who can remove him from here? How much prayer did I leave unfinished because of that young man? I did so because I wanted to demonstrate, I wanted to proclaim to one and all that I would be a good Hindu only if I am a good Parsi, a good Muslim. Would it be religious to abuse other religions? For me, there is nothing like different religions.

All these people who have come from all over Asia (For the Inter-Asian Relations Conference) talk very lovingly to Jawaharlal. They are all very pleased with him. By the grace of God, we have a gem of a man in our midst who wants to embrace the whole world. Should we not maintain peace if only to honour him?

Now let me say a few things about the Viceroy. I was with him yesterday for more than two hours, and therefore could not come for the prayers. Fortunately the girl started the prayers as I had instructed her. Today I also talked with the Viceroy for two hours. (Vide "Interview with Lord Mountbatten", 1-4-1947, and "Interview With Lord Mountbatten", 1-4-1947) He said that he was making an honest effort. He assured me that he was the last Viceroy. He said he never wanted to come to India. He wanted to be on the seas but he came here because he was prevailed upon.

He was sent here when the Labour Government of Great Britain decided to quit India, since he belongs to the royal family. The British want to depart from India with grace. He said he was eager to hand over this country even to a single Parsi if he came forward to take it, not to mention a Hindu or a Muslim. Why should I not listen to one who comes to me with such honest intentions? The British have done us enough harm in the past. But Lord Mountbatten has done us no harm. He says that he would like to be a servant right from today if it were possible. But it is not proper that he should run away while we are fighting with each other. He, after all, belongs to a brave race. Why should he run away? He is thinking of the manner in which he should leave the country. He is making good efforts. He is proceeding honourably. If we too proceed accordingly, what has never before happened will happen now. If anyone wants to accommodate a fellow who would not conduct himself honourably but would act barbarously, let him learn from me how to do it. I am a prisoner of the Viceroy till Friday. Jawahar also wants to detain me here. After three days I shall tell you everything. I do not want to hide anything. But what can possibly happen? Whatever the Congress decides will be done; nothing will be according to what I say. Mr Writ runs no more. If it did, the tragedies in Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali would not have happened. No one listens to



me anymore. I am a small man. True, there was a time when mine was a big voice. Then everyone obeyed what I said; now neither the Congress nor the Hindus nor the Muslims listen to me. Where is the Congress today? It is disintegrating. I am crying in the wilderness. Today everyone can forsake me but God will not. He has His devotee tested. An English poem<sup>1</sup> describes God as the “Hound of Heaven”. He is the retriever of dharma, i.e., He seeks out dharma. It would be enough if He hears me. When God rules your hearts you will do only as He bids. We should therefore behave like rational creatures. We ought not to let loose our tongues at the slightest provocation.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 5-11

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## 41. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 2, 1947

DELHI,

April 2, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

If there is anybody who intends today to object to the prayers, as was done yesterday, I would like to be informed so that I may not begin the prayers at all. I do not wish to hold the prayers in the face of opposition by anyone.

Two persons stood up and said, “If you wish to have your prayers you should hold them in the grounds outside this Hindu temple.”

GANDHIJI: This temple belongs to Bhangis. I too am a Bhangi. It would be a different matter if the Trustees object. I shall hold the prayers in this very place if you would let me do so.

A YOUNG MAN: This temple belongs to the public. We have seen what has happened in Punjab. We shall certainly not allow you to hold the prayers.

GANDHIJI: I do not wish to enter into an argument. Let me tell you with due respect that you can't represent the Bhangis. I am a Bhangi by choice. I have removed the night-soil. If I ask you, you will not be able to do so. Even so if you object I shall not hold the prayers.

“We wish to hear the prayers. We want to have the prayers”, people shouted.

GANDHIJI: Among these thousands of people you are the only two persons who are obstructing. I know you are full of anger. I shall have the prayers, but not unless you calm yourselves and try to understand.

The young man shouted: “If you want to recite the verses of the Gita in a mosque, will the Muslims allow you to do so? We have witnessed so much in Punjab.”

GANDHIJI: It is not necessary to shout. You are not protecting Hindu dharma by doing so, in fact you are murdering it. I am not postponing the prayer out of fear. If anybody wants to stop me once I have started the prayers I shall not stop even if I am killed. And you will see I shall be reciting Rama Rahim and Krishna Karim (According to the source after his return from Noakhali, Gandhiji replaced the refrain Bhaj man pyare Sitaram by Bhaj man pyare Rama Rahim, bhaj man pyare Krishna Karim.) when I



breathe my last. I have told you that I am a Bhangi, a Christian, a Muslim, besides of course being a Hindu. How can you stop me when Badshah Khan is here with me? But you may stop me, even a child can do so.

**YOUNG MAN:** Go to Punjab.

**GANDHIJI:** What shall I do by going there? I am straining every nerve to do what service I can for the Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali even while remaining here.

**Some people tried to remove the young man.**

**GANDHIJI:** Please do not push him. Be patient.

**YOUNG MAN:** Give us four minutes, we would like to talk to you.

**GANDHIJI** I don't have the time and I don't want to enter into an argument. I would only urge upon you respectfully to tell me in the affirmative or negative [whether I should hold the prayer or not].

**YOUNG MAN:** We shall not allow you to hold the prayers.

**GANDHIJI:** Everyone should remain seated peacefully. I am going. No one should molest these persons. You may consider this to be your triumph but is it so? Is it bravery to stab anybody in the back? I must say that by doing so you are murdering Hinduism. You must try to think and understand. I will put the same question to you tomorrow and if you object to the prayers I shall go away.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 11-3

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## 42. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 3, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday there were only two or three people who wanted to stop the prayers, but today the matter has gone further. I have received a letter written by the president of some scavengers' union. It says that I must not stay here. Just look at the ordeal an old man like me has to go through. But the president of the scavengers' union here is another person. After all I am a scavenger myself and all my scavenger friends here listen to me. I have been staying here after consulting them and will continue to stay. Moreover, Jugal Kishore Birla is the boss here. He has put me up here. When the person who has accommodated me does not ask me to leave, why should I go?

Again today I shall ask you whether I should hold the prayer or not. But before that I would like to ask if you have understood what I said to you yesterday. If you have, you would have realized why I stopped the prayer yesterday. If somebody tells me not to hold the prayer or that, if I did, I may not include the recitation from the Koran, should I accept defeat and continue the prayer? I am not going to give up the prayer even if I have to lose my life. Those who stop the prayer in this manner do not advance Hinduism but harm it. Yesterday there were only two or three such people; today there are many.

I am disturbed by what I heard today. I hope it is not true -namely, that the persons obstructing prayers belong to a big organization (The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh).

But those who do physical exercises and drill here every morning and are members of that organization love me. If they do not want me to stay here there is no point in my staying on. I must not remain here. But I had a talk with their leader. He said that it was not their intention to harm anyone. The Sangh was not formed to oppose anyone. True, they had not accepted my method of non-violence; but they were willing to confine themselves within the Congress discipline. So long as the Congress rules non-violently they would remain peaceful. He thus talked with me very cordially.



If you still want to stop me, then kindly do not come here from tomorrow. I do not wish to hold prayers in this manner. I am made of different stuff. If I am a Hindu, I am also a Muslim. And the Sikhs are almost Hindus. I have seen the Granth Sahib. In many parts it is Hinduism to the letter - the religion I follow. Hence, with great humility I request you to remain peaceful because I would stop the prayer even at a child's wish. If you want to recite God's name by creating a row you would be acting like a devil although you may be uttering the name of God. And I can never do the work of the devil. I am a devotee of God alone. Please do not take it as cowardice on my part. Had you been in large numbers and had all of you insisted that I should not hold the prayer, I would certainly have carried on. I would have asked you to cut my throat and continued the prayer. But here in the presence of so many of you, a handful of persons want to stop me. If you suppress them and insist on my continuing the prayer it would be the act of a devil and I cannot follow the devil. He who is God's enemy is the devil. I cannot cooperate with the devil. My method of resisting is like Rama's. During the battle between Rama and Ravana Vibhishana asked Rama how he would fight against Ravana without a chariot. Rama then pointed out how one could fight a war with the help of qualities like truthfulness, valour and so on. Rama was a devotee of God and talked like one. I have regarded Rama not as God but as a devotee. Later on from a devotee he came to be regarded as God. Tulsidas too has described Rama as without a body. This One without form pervades all forms. Him we worship. I am a worshipper of this Rama. How can I ever worship Ravana? You may kill me, spit in my face but I shall go on repeating Rama Rahim and Krishna Karim till my last breath. And even at the moment you shower blows on me I shall not blame you. Nor shall I complain to God whatever may be done to me. I am His devotee. I shall accept His wish.

But today, even if a child wants me to stop, I shall stop the prayer. I shall leave the place. Please remain seated in silence and do not indulge in arguments. Silence is also a form of prayer, and my prayer is not meant for the world to see. It is for peace of mind, for cleansing the heart. In the present circumstances we cannot cleanse our hearts by praying while they are full of anger. Hence, let us consider silence itself as prayer. If people forced me down from all sides, stopped me from praying and under pain of bodily injury I discontinued the prayer it would be irreligion, not religion. It would not cleanse our hearts. What face would I have to go and tell the Hindus of Noakhali not to be afraid and to go on repeating Ramanama? That is why I ask you to understand this peaceful method of mine. How can I carry on the prayer if all of you



want to stop me? But I would continue the Ramdhun and Rama Rahim Krishna Karim, and so on and leave the place if a child wants me to do so. Now I ask you to reply 'yes' or 'no'. Do not argue. Shall I conduct the prayer?

Some thirty persons stood up and said: "Do not hold the prayer, we do not want your prayers."

GANDHIJI: Well, so, all of you are against it?

Two to three hundred people cried out: "No, all of us are not against it. Do hold the prayer."

G. No, there are too many people against it. I am defeated, you have won. Tomorrow more people can raise their hands. Even now your number is considerable. I can hold the prayer, but I have no desire to be killed at your hands. I want to live and work.

PEOPLE: Not all, only a few are not in favour.

G. That's all right, there need not be more! Even these few can kill me if they want.

This was followed by shouting from both the sides and there was a great deal of noise.

Gandhiji stood at the edge of the dais and said: Please listen. Do not get so excited. You are all Hindus. A Hindu ought to think calmly and speak after great thought and consideration. Please go home and think how the wounds of Punjab can be healed. I am also thinking about it as best as I can. But the wound is not going to be healed by getting angry.

With this Gandhiji finished his speech. But a voice came from the crowd: "Please answer one question before leaving. Why did you stop Ramdhun at Noakhali? (According to the source Ramdhun was never stopped during prayers at Noakhali. A few Muslims did leave the prayer meeting when the Ramdhun started, but the prayer did not stop.) Stop it here too and hold your prayers in your room."

G. I do not wish to give any answer here. Please leave this place and do not quarrel even after you have left.

Gandhiji then started to leave. In the meantime the police tried to restore order. This created confusion in the meeting. Then Gandhiji returned to the dais. People asked him to start the prayer. They offered to pacify those who were protesting. They said they would all sit down, and that they were all ready to lay down their lives for him, but he should not abandon the prayer.

G. If you are going to die let it be on my condition. All my life I have been teaching the art of laying down life and learning it myself. If you want to lay down your



lives, you should not do it boiling with rage. You should meet death with the strength of coolness. Right now these people are confused. They think that it is only Gandhi who is going about doing all the harm. So, for the present, consider only my silence as my prayer. I know at present everyone's blood is boiling because of the events in Punjab. Isn't my own blood boiling? There is a fire raging even in my heart. I understand the problem of Punjab fully well. The Punjabis are all my brothers. Right now they are all enraged. They must calm down. The people of Bihar were also angry. I have contained their anger. In the present situation we can make any headway only by containing our anger.

The police have taken away those few people. How can I hold the prayer when they have been removed? Let them return to this place and sit here in silence and then we shall all pray together. Just now, I am using my energy in thinking how to prevent what is going on. What else? Do you think I visit the Viceroy for dinner parties? (For reports of the interviews with the Viceroy on April 2 and 3, vide "Interview With Lord Mountbatten" and "Interview With Lord Mountbatten", 3-4-1947) We are both putting our heads together and trying to find out a way. He is more eager to put an end to all this chaos than I am. It is just as well that he should. I request you again to remain quiet. Silence by itself is prayer. I do not like those who protest being stopped by force.

When Gandhiji turned to go, people stopped him for the third time and said: "Why do you listen to those few persons who are causing obstruction? Actually, they have suffered nothing. It is we who have suffered in the Punjab-who have been wronged. But we are not preventing you. We request you to hold the prayer, if only for some time." G. You are right. But you must give them a chance to understand.

**Some people said: "Will you answer our question?"**

G. You just think. I am an old man. Can I keep standing and talking? I tell even the Viceroy that he should not expect me to talk standing. Do I have all that energy? But God makes me talk. He gives me strength. I am having [high] blood-pressure these days. Still He is pulling me along. Tomorrow I shall talk more provided there is no opposition.

Let those who are at the root of this opposition at least come to me and talk. If all they want is that I should not stay here I shall go away. There are many people who would have me stay with them. But I am a Bhangi, and am content to put up in the Bhangi Colony. I could even have all this accommodation here. They have only small



holes to live in. I cannot stand it. I insist on cleanliness. If God grants me the strength, I shall start living in one of them. May God be kind to all and grant independence to India.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 14-9

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### 43. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 4, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Will there be peace today or are you going to repeat what you did yesterday and the day before?

Voices came from all sides: "It is all quiet today. There will be no trouble today. Please hold the prayer."

Gandhiji asked again: Are you sure you did not drown a voice or two on your own? Is there anyone who wants to oppose it?

A hand went up.

Gandhiji said: Very well. In that case, there will be no prayer today also. I shall not hold the prayer so long as there is even one person who refuses to understand or does not voluntarily leave the meeting. It serves no purpose if the police seizes him and takes him away. People should not gang up like this to suppress a smaller group. Even if there are only a few who oppose, they should be persuaded. They should leave the place if they disapprove of anything that happens here. They should not create disturbance. If this one person is convinced of my point and goes away from here I shall hold the prayer. Otherwise he must sit through the prayer in silence. (A pundit then requested Gandhiji to hold the prayers and appealed to the people to maintain silence.)

Are you all quiet now? Has the gentleman who did not want the prayer to be held, left? I shall appeal to all of you that he should not be threatened or bullied. What will happen to the poor man if the police take him away? Whatever may be his opinion about himself, I shall only pity him. Who will protect him if I do not? If a person calls himself a Hindu or a Muslim and wants to stop me from holding the prayer, why should he be attacked?

He says that I should not hold the prayer in this temple. But this temple belongs to the scavengers who come to me and complain against outsiders creating trouble in their temple. How can I console my little brothers? I am their elder brother. I am an excellent Bhangi. I do the external cleaning and clean the latrines, but our hearts too need to be cleansed. A true Bhangi has to do the inner cleaning too, which I am doing.



If we do not cleanse our hearts, if we do not get rid of the feeling of high and low, Hinduism is not going to survive. It has survived so far because it is a great religion. It is still alive even though it is gasping for breath. But if we do not give up the feeling of high and low it would go on weakening even though it is a great religion. Even Dr. Moonje (Dr. B. S. Moonje) has supported me in this. He has written me a letter saying that even though he does not agree with me on other points— he believes in the training of the sword—he is in complete agreement with me in the matter of removal of untouchability and the feeling of high and low.

Hence, those who oppose my prayer are destroying Hindu dharma. They should understand that I am as much a Parsi, a Christian and also a Muslim as I am a Hindu. What wonderful meaning is conveyed by Auz-o-Billahi. I have not read the Yajurveda. But a gentleman writes to say that everything is contained in the Yajurveda. In that case why should you oppose it? Religious sentiment whether expressed in Arabic, Sanskrit or Chinese, is always noble. That is why I would like to ask that gentleman if he has understood my point.

If he is not a Hindu and belongs to some other religion, let him not attend the prayer. In any case only a few Muslims join my prayer. The Muslims too have been asking me what right I have to recite portions from the Koran. Yet they did not prevent me from doing so in Noakhali. Could they not have stopped me?

But no one who belongs to Hinduism can have reason to complain. We have 108 upanishads. One of them is the Allopanishad. The wonderful thing about Hinduism is that it assimilates people from outside. But it's one great limitation is untouchability or the feeling of high and low. This poison has spread in it. It can survive only if the poison is removed. These people talk of saving Hinduism with the help of the sword. They carry swords while doing their drills. Why? For killing [their opponents]? This is not the way to advance Hinduism.

A religion grows through truth alone. I have learnt this from Hindu dharma. It has also taught me that “there is no religion greater than Truth” (Mahabharata, Shantiparva, XI, 13) and that “ahimsa is the greatest religion” (Mahabharata, Adiparva, XI, 13). Patanjali (Propounder of the Yoga philosophy) put the five vows of non-violence, truth, non-possession, non-stealing and brahmacharya on a scientific plane. These are to be found in the other religions too. But Hinduism alone has provided a scientific basis for them.



After this Gandhiji while narrating the story of the South Indian Harijan saints Nandanar and Avvaiaamma, said that Avvaiaamma's feet were stretched towards the temple's deity. When some Hindus found fault with her, she asked them to place her feet where God was not present. But whichever side they turned her feet God was surely there.

Idol worship is only one form of worshipping. But if God resides in one's heart, it hardly matters where one's feet may be. Man can worship with his feet, and he can also kick with them. If there is a fire raging like a volcano it cannot be extinguished with water. If I Control it with stones and stand on it to save the lives of millions of people. I will certainly have worshipped God with the stones and my feet. One can worship with one's feet and hands and also with one's tongue. Worship should be sincere, no matter what method one adopts.

That is why, if that gentleman is present here, I would like to request him to allow us to carry on the prayer in peace.

I would like to emphasize that I am not at all angry with those young men. How could I be angry with them? The Gita does not preach anger. And right from my South Africa days I have been reciting the Gita verses in the course of my prayers. I have learnt this teaching of the Gita right from there and have carried it here with me. Those who oppose it do not know what Hinduism is. Not realizing it they indulge in devilish acts and forget God.

**After this the people were quiet and the prayer was held in peace.**

Gandhiji said: I am extremely grateful to God that today on the fourth day He allowed us to have our prayer in peace. Let me also tell you that nobody should think that no prayers were held during these days. When you came here, I came here and we all sat in silence, it was as good as praying, because there was prayer in our hearts.

Then, I am also indebted to those who tried to disturb our prayers. I am grateful to them because I had an opportunity to look into my heart. I had no opportunity before to examine my heart about the question of prayer. I had to search within to find out where I stood. Was there anger in my heart against them? Did my prayer mean something different? God wants to test His devotees in ever so many ways, and ultimately, He frees His devotee from his trouble as you have just heard in the bhajan (By Mirabai, namely, Hari tum haro janaki bhir. Vide "Ashram Bhajanavali"). From this we must learn that whatever we suffer is ordained by God. It is God's grace that I have passed this test today.





I am also grateful to the gentleman who was persuaded by the pundit's appeal. God has saved me from a more difficult test. Once the prayer was started, even if as few as four persons had asked me to stop, I would have said: 'You may cut my throat if you want, but I shall keep on repeating Rama Rahim, Rama Rahim,' and even at that moment, instead of allowing myself to be overpowered by anger, I would have prayed to God to grant them good sense as was said in the Ramdhun.

Let me narrate to you one thing that happened at Noakhali. It was with great difficulty that Ramdhun could be started there. Every time I started my journey we used to sing Ramdhun and as we approached some village we entered it with Ramdhun. We used to explain to the people that Rama, Rahim, Khuda, Ishwar were all names of God. In fact, God is known by millions of names.

If I explain to you the meaning of Auz-o-Billahi you would not even know that it has been taken from Arabic. Would it then be a crime if I pray in Arabic? Please do not reduce Hinduism to a worthless faith by such acts. Hinduism is a great religion. It is an ancient religion. Lokmanya Tilak (Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920); patriot, scholar and writer; one of the founders of the Deccan Education Society; was sentenced to six years' deportation in 1908 ; launched Home Rule League movement with Annie Besant in 1916; started the Congress Democratic Party in 1920; author of the Orion, The Arctic Home in the Vedas and Gitarahasya) has proved it to be ten thousand years old. But in my view it is older than a hundred thousand years. It is eternal. What is contained in the Vedas is the essence of dharma and dharma has come into being with the functioning of human beings. That is why the Vedas are said to be without a beginning. When men realized those things they inscribed them in their hearts. They were reduced to writing much later, because man learnt the art of writing afterwards. Many of the writings too are lost. Thus a large part of the Bible too is lost from memory. The same is the case with the Koran. Many scholars of the Bible are of the opinion that it has a number of interpolations. Thus, the Shastras are endless. The essence of the Shastras, i. e., the Vedas, is that God is, and He is One. The essence of the Koran and the Bible is the same. No one may say that the Bible mentions three Gods. It mentions only one God.

I frequently visit the Viceroy. I am spending quite some time there. But that time is not wasted. I do what I would do in Bihar, Punjab, Noakhali and all the other places. For me the smallest work is as important as the biggest. For me whatever is in the atoms and molecules is in the universe. I believe in the saying that what is in the microcosm of one's self is reflected in the macrocosm (यथा पिण्डे, तथा ब्रह्माण्डे). If I leave



Punjab, Bihar or Noakhali, I can do no work for India. For me India lives only in such places. Today I have explained so many things to you. I feel happy about it. I thank you for maintaining peace.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 19-24

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## 44. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 5, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 5, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It is a painful thing but for the remaining few days I shall have to ask you if there would be any protest from any quarter against the recitation from the Koran. If there are, it will benefit neither you nor your religion. Just as God, in spite of the many names that describe Him, is but one, dharma although known by several names is but one; because all religions have come from God. They would be worthless if they had not come from God. Any religion which is not the religion of God is the religion of the Devil, and cannot but be worthless. You must, therefore, realize that if what has been happening for the last three days continues, it would mean the end of Hindu dharma.

If I am a Hindu, why can I not recite from the Koran, or from the Zend-Avesta? Besides, the Hindu mode of worship also is no less diverse. Some would have recitations from the upanishads and not from the Vedas; some would want the Gita and not the upanishads, a third one would demand the *Atharvaveda* in preference to the *Yajurveda*. In other words, each one is entitled to pray in his own way. If you want to stop me, even today I am willing to accept defeat and let you win. If anyone from among you desires, he can give me this cup of poison. If somebody does give it to me I would be glad to drink it and you too should bear with it. You do not have to drink the poison but you will please witness it. Do not be angry but please understand that if this old man is forbearing he is doing the right thing.

It is a good thing that you have come here in such large numbers. But if even one of you is opposed to the recitation of Auz-o-Billahi, I will abandon the prayer and you will have to go back peacefully. (The people reassured Gandhiji and the prayer went off peacefully.)

I must thank you for maintaining the peace. Such peace was not usual before. It indicates that we have not lost our dharma by what happened during the past three days. If man does not live in peace, if he never inwardly examines his thoughts, is caught in the mad rush of life and remains excited all the time, he cannot produce what Shaukat Ali Saheb used to call “cold strength”. Mohammed Ali Sahib also used to say that we had to achieve independence by fighting the British and the taklis would



be our cannon and the cones our cannonballs. He had as much poetic imagination as erudition.

And all this happened in your Delhi. In those days I had been staying with Rudra Saheb (S. K. Rudra, Principal, St. Stephen's College, Delhi) at his St. Stephen's College residence. The College has now been shifted to some vast premises, but I first met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in the same old building. There I met Prof. Abdul Bari as well as many other great Maulanas. After long discussions it was decided that the Congress could join the Khilafat movement (Which was launched in 1919; vide "Comment on a Protest") only if the whole movement was conducted peacefully. It was decided with God as witness that every activity of the Khilafat movement would be peaceful. It was a matter of swearing by Ishwar or Khuda. There was no distinction between Ishwar and Khuda. We are going to be rewarded with the fruit of what we did then.

I mention this incident because tomorrow the National Week begins. It was on this day (In 1919) that India realized herself. India then realized that she lived not in Delhi or Bombay or Lahore but in her seven lakh villages. If there were a terrible earthquake destroying the entire urban population, even then India would not die. Even if the entire population of two crores in the cities perished, the 38 crores in the seven lakh villages would continue to live. The terrible earthquake that had rocked Patna (In January, 1934) too caused damage only to the big cities, leaving the tiny villages untouched. Of course, if the Cosmic Being described in the eleventh chapter of the Gita decides to swallow all, none would escape. It is however clear that India is alive because of her villages.

These seven lakh villages were suddenly aroused on the 6th April, 1919. When I had issued an appeal on the 5th April (Apparently the reference is to the appeal issued on March 23, 1919, when Gandhiji was in Madras; vide Vol. XV, pp. 145-6. For the instructions issued on April 5, *ibid.*, "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 29-3-1947) I had not imagined even in my dreams that India would be aroused to that extent. On that day I was at Salem in the house of Rajagopalachari who is your Minister now. I was thinking the whole day about how to start the satyagraha. Shri Vijayaraghavachari—who is no more—and others too met me there. When the thought occurred to me I asked Mahadev—alas, he too is no more—to send for Rajaji. Rajaji agreed with me and we issued the appeal. Just by the appeal India was so aroused that I was wonder-struck. In those days the Congress had



neither volunteers nor any means to carry messages, still it was like the passing of an electric current.

We had appealed to the people to observe a fast and pray on the 6th of April. The Hindus observe fast for 36 hours whereas the Muslims may observe a roza (Fasting during daytime.) for only 24 hours. The Hindus observe pradosha (Pradosha or Pradosham is a bimonthly occasion on the thirteenth day of every fortnight in the Hindu calendar. It is closely connected with the worship of Hindu god Shiva. The auspicious 3 hour period, 1.5 hours before and after the sunset is one of the optimum time for worship of Lord Shiva) for 24 hours. We also decided upon a fast for 24 hours so that both Hindus and Muslims could observe it. During this fast no food, milk, vegetables, etc., could be taken. One could take any amount of water. I had instructed that the aged and the weak like me could take fruit. But when you undertake the fast tomorrow you should not take fruits like bananas which satisfy hunger. This would be something like what my mother did, she used to put me on a fast diet and feed me with puris (A fried delicacy) of kutu (A cereal which may be taken) and 'gulabjamun' (A sweetmeat) the whole day long. I do not intend to pamper you as my mother pampered me. Those who cannot observe a complete fast may take fruit juice.

The special message for the 6th April is Hindu-Muslim unity, khadi and village work; but who would do it today? Today if there is Hindu-Muslim unity anywhere, it is only in my heart. Even the charkha is lying only by my side. You can also take up these things tomorrow if you wish. For doing this you must forget the past happenings. No matter what atrocities had been committed by the Muslims in the Punjab and by the Hindus in Bihar, both the communities should forget these things and think in terms of establishing brotherly relations. If you do not think along these lines, are you going to pray to God that He should make you as fanatical as the people in Punjab and Bihar? Would you thus save yourselves and your religions? That is why you should undertake the fast only if your hearts are imbued with the spirit of 1919 and you would be able to imbibe that spirit only if you remain peaceful and calm.

How would you attain peace? Spin for an hour daily and then tell me if you do not find peace. Pattani Saheb (Sir Prabhashankar Pattani), Chairman of the Bhavnagar Council, member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, could sleep after spinning for an hour at night when all other remedies failed.



Hindu-Muslim unity can be established only through peace. I know it is a difficult task. Our non-violence is tested when we can remain calm even though a volcano may be raging in our hearts.

And what is the harm if all of us die by remaining peaceful? Even if some Muslim kills me, he will be after all my brother. If we fail to preserve peace and forcibly retain the country's unity our hearts will remain divided. And, if [the spirit of] Pakistan persists in our hearts and we are not willing on any account to live with our brothers peacefully, I warn you India will not be able to retain her freedom.

Yes, in a way, Pakistan can be full of the nectar of nectar. But why do you need pistols, spears and swords for it? A Pakistan forced on others will be full of poison. Why should we force people to swallow this poison? If I do not poison others' hearts, have no poison in mine and do not mind it if I have to die fighting all others, Pakistan [thus achieved] would be a thing of love and so would be India. India will be full of the nectar of love when she belongs not only to the Hindus but also to the Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Sikhs in equal measure. And that Pakistan alone would be full of love where there would be a place for all the communities and no malice against anyone. Because I am a believer in such an India and such a Pakistan, I would recite Auz-o-Billahi even while I recite the Gayatri (A Vedic hymn invoking the creative energy of the sun; Rig-veda, III. 62-10.) and the Gita.

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Andrews Saheb (C.F. Andrews (1871-1940); British missionary, author, educationist and a close associate of Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhiji). We should remember his qualities. He lived a very simple life. We were very close friends. He was a white man, but he was so simple and mixed so well with the villagers that it was difficult to believe that he was an Englishman. He did not even know how to dress properly. He used to wrap a dhoti loosely round his large body. He was not bothered about appearances. He had a heart of gold. (What follows is reproduced from "The Delhi Interlude" in Harijan.)

In conclusion, Gandhiji said that he had received a letter, which he would release to the Press, from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh that they had had nothing to do with the raising of objections to the prayer on the three previous days. He was glad to hear that and believed it. No organization could protect life or religion if it did not work absolutely in the open.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 25-9, and Harijan, 20-4-1947



## 45. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 6, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 6, 1947

While I was listening to this bhajan (By Rabindranath Tagore. The purport of the bhajan was : “Let us all aspire and say that our Bharat may rise to great heights in the world. It may attain eminence in the field of religion and action. Again a new sun will rise above it.”), as also to the Ramdhun, the scene of my Noakhali days came vividly before my eyes. The party (Which, besides Manu Gandhi, included the Press correspondents, Sainen Chatterjee and Biren Sinha.) comprising these very men and women used to accompany me for about half a mile while I proceeded on my tour in the morning.

I only wish to tell you that you should not give up your goodness. If all the Muslims say that they wish to sever all connection with the Hindus and wish to live separately, should we out of anger start killing them? If we do that we shall be engulfed in such a holocaust that we shall all be reduced to ashes and none will survive. Indiscriminate looting and arson will only spell disaster for the whole country. Regular warfare also, I must say, causes only destruction and nothing is gained thereby.

What has been said in the Mahabharata is of universal application. It does not apply to Hindus alone. It depicts the story of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Though they were blood-brothers the Pandavas worshipped Rama, that is, goodness, and the Kauravas followed Ravana, that is, evil. Renouncing ahimsa they took to violence and fought among themselves with the result that not only were the Kauravas killed, but the Pandavas also were losers in spite of their victory. Very few among them survived to see the end of the war and those who did found their lives so unbearable that they had to retire to the Himalayas. This is exactly what is happening in our country today.

Today is the first day of National Week. I trust you are observing it as a day of fasting and prayer. There was mass spinning also from 3 to 4 p.m. in which the Congress President, his wife, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Jugal Kishore and many others took part. The spinning yajna having been completed so beautifully and enthusiastically you will soon be breaking the fast but how good it would be if as a result of today’s rededication the names of Rama and Rahim and the message of the bhajan are permanently engraved in our hearts. But today all this remains but a dream in India.



I am being inundated with abusive letters and telegrams. This shows how grossly some people misunderstand my ideas. Some think I consider myself too big even to reply to their letters while others think I am enjoying myself in Delhi while the Punjab is in flames. How can they understand that I am working day and night for them wherever I am? True, I cannot wipe their tears. God alone can do that.

Khwaja Abdul Majid, who is a trustee of Aligarh University, came to see me today. (Vide “Talk with Abdul Majid”, 6-4-1947) He has a lot of landed property but at heart he is a *fakir*. He used to be my host whenever I went to Aligarh. Swami Satyadev Parivrajak, who had been on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas, used to accompany me. He was a very active worker but now God has taken him away. He told me he would accompany me but he would not join me if I dined with a Muslim. On hearing this Khwaja Saheb said, “If that is what his religion enjoins, I shall make separate arrangements for him.” Though the Swami was accompanying me Khwaja Saheb did not mind when the Swami did not dine with him. Would those good old days be here again when there used to be heart-unity among Hindus and Muslims. Khwaja Saheb continues to be the president of the nationalist Muslims. Other nationalist Muslims who had graduated from the Aligarh University in those days are today ideal students of the Jamia Millia and are excellent workers. They are like an oasis in the Sahara. Even if somebody killed Khwaja Saheb he would not wish him ill. Such people may be few but we must retain our innate qualities. When faced with bad characters we should not stoop to their level. But we committed this mistake in Bihar. Nationalist Muslims had been killed by Hindus there and Hindus friends of Islam had been killed by Muslims.

We should dispassionately think where we are drifting. Hindus should not harbour anger in their hearts against Muslims even if the latter wanted to destroy them. Even if the Muslims want to kill us all we should face death bravely. If they established their rule after killing Hindus we would be ushering in a new world by sacrificing our lives. None should fear death. Birth and death are inevitable for every human being. Why should we then rejoice or grieve? If we die with a smile we shall enter into a new life, we shall be ushering in a new India. The Concluding verses<sup>1</sup> of the second chapter of the Gita describe how a god fearing man should live. I would exhort you to read and understand those verses and ponder over their meaning. You will then realize what our ideal is and how far short of it we are today. Our independence is at our threshold and it is our duty to ask ourselves whether we are fit





to have it and sustain it. This week, while I am here, I propose to administer you the dose which would make you worthy of freedom. If we keep on quarrelling amongst ourselves we shall lose our freedom even after attaining it.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 29-32

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## 46. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 7, 1947

(According to the source the note was regarding the Noakhali situation.)

NEW DELHI,

Monday, April 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am constantly receiving letters accusing me of being subservient to M. A. Jinnah (It being Gandhiji's silence day, his written message was to be read out. But as the meeting began half an hour late and by then Gandhiji had broken his silence, he addressed the gathering himself.) and being a fifth-columnist. One correspondent has accused me of becoming a communist (One of the letters bore the address "Mahmud Gandhi". In one, he was called a communist, in another "Jinnah's slave". This only amused Gandhiji; he wrote: "It's the people who have conferred upon me the titles of 'Mahatma' and 'Bapu'. Shouldn't I welcome the new titles given by them?"). But I am unaffected by such attacks. The verses of the Gita to which you listen every day are always in my mind and give me the strength to put up with such things. If my critics understood the meaning of these verses they would not say such things. I am a sanatani Hindu and therefore claim to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. Even some Muslims feel I have no right to recite from the Koran. They think by doing so I am trying to beguile the muslims. They do not realize that religion cannot be confined within the boundaries of language or script. I do not see why I can't read from the Koran or consider Mohamad as my prophet. I have faith in the saints and prophets of every religion. I pray to God that I may not lose my head over those who accuse me; in fact I am ready to die at their hands. I firmly believe that if I am steadfast in my faith I shall be serving not only Hinduism but also Islam.

Today a Hindu from Rawalpindi narrated the tragic events that had taken place there. Fifty-eight of his companions were killed just because they were Hindus. He and his son alone could survive. The villages around Rawalpindi have been reduced to ashes. What a pity that Rawalpindi where Sikhs and Muslims once vied with one another in welcoming me and the Ali Brothers has become a danger spot for non-Muslims. The Hindus of the Punjab are seething with anger. The Sikhs say that they are the followers of Guru Govind Singh who has taught them how to wield the sword. But I would exhort the Hindus and Sikhs again and again not to retaliate. I make bold to say that if Hindus and Sikhs sacrifice their lives at the hands of Muslims without



rancour or retaliation they will become the saviours not only of their own religions but also of Islam and the whole world.

I have been preaching truth and non-violence for the last thirty years. I had done the same thing in South Africa for twenty years and I believe that the Indians there have been the gainers for following my advice. Even here those who have trodden the path of truth and nonviolence have not been losers at all. True, the satyagrahis have sacrificed their all. But what does it matter? They have gained a gem and thrown away what was worthless. I am hesitating to go to the Punjab as I am not sure what I would do there. Should I go there to take revenge? The thought of taking revenge appears quite pleasing but God tells me that it is not for me to take revenge. A number of people have advised me that I must go to Punjab. But I have told them that I am not going to speak in favour or retaliation because that would be doing a disservice to Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.

Let me tell the Muslims also that it is sheer madness to talk of wrestling Pakistan by fighting with the Hindus and Sikhs. Pakistan is supposed to be the land of peace. M. A. Jinnah asserts that justice will prevail there. Today why don't we find justice there? What happened in Bihar, he may ask. But the Bihar Chief Minister is miserable today. 'Where had the Congress gone? What has it done?', one may ask. It is a big question. The Congress should exercise equal authority over both Hindus and Muslims. But this is not the case today. I cannot even think of Pakistan where there would be no peace and security for a non-Muslim nor can I think of an India where Muslims may be in danger. I went to Bihar and tried to pacify angry Hindus and to create a sense of confidence among the Muslims in respect of the Hindus. Happily a large number of Hindus expressed regret and promised that such a thing would not be allowed to be repeated in future. Similarly, I would appeal to Muslim leaders to ask their fellow Muslims in Muslim majority provinces to refrain from trying to wipe out non-Muslims in those areas. No matter how provocative the language of Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, that was no excuse for the barbarity and cruelty perpetrated on non-Muslims by Muslims in the areas where they were in a majority.

During the last two days distressing news has again been received from Noakhali. But in spite of everything it is wrong and cowardly to seek police or military protection. Those who cry when the disturbances break out are slaves and those who seek military protection will remain slaves forever. People do not like civil war nor do



they like to remain in slavery. In their letters Satis Babu and Pyarelal have inquired what is to be done when thatched huts with scores of people locked inside are set ablaze.

Haran Babu has also written in the same strain from Chaumuhani and sent the information that some people in their charge who were intending to leave have been persuaded to stay on. I have telegraphed to the Chief Minister of Bengal that this is a dangerous development. (Vide “Telegram to H. S. Suhrawardy”, “Telegram to H. S. Suhrawardy”, 7-4-1947) I have sent a message to the people that those who have the fortitude and courage should sacrifice their lives and let themselves be burnt. If they don’t find in themselves the strength to do so they may migrate to other places. (Vide telegrams to Satis Chandra Das Gupta and Haranchandra GhoshChowdhury, “Telegram to Satis chandra Das Gupta”, 7-4-1947 and “Telegram to Haranchandra Ghosh-Chowdhury”, 7-4-1947) Many great men have resorted in the past to migration. Mohamed did it once. Whatever people do, they should in no case call the army belonging to the British, whom we wish to drive away. So many sons of England and Japan died in the last War but their people didn’t grieve for them. They are brave races. To have a preference for British rule would be a shame for us.

Will the land protected by the immortal Himalayas and irrigated by the waters of the health giving Ganga ruin itself through violence? I hope in my heart of hearts that we shall give up the very thought of maintaining large armies. The armies are not going to do us any good and so long as they remain our independence will be meaningless.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 32-5

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## 47. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 8, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 8, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I find that you are nowadays so quiet that there is no need to thank you every day. Today I wish to speak about my own sad plight and I hope every word of mine will enter your ears and my message will touch your hearts, that is, it will move you to the depths of your hearts.

You must have seen the telegrams from Satis Babu and Haran Babu in the newspapers yesterday. Today Satis Babu has sent a telegram in reply in which he states that Jiwansingh, Pyarelal and other co-workers of mine who have been working there have decided to stick on till the last moment and everybody agrees that what I say is right. Hindus will abide by my advice. The danger is very grave and the risk to one's life is constantly increasing. They are miserable but are still preparing themselves in a determined and peaceful manner. Now they do not like the idea of running away in fear. They think that if they have got to face death it is better to accept it as a gift from God. It means laying down one's life cheerfully, not dying after killing. All this is the result of the work done so far.

I had asked them whether they wanted me to leave my work here and go to them. I have other important things to do. I have to go to Bihar. Then there is the Punjab, too. They have written to me that I should not think of going there at all.

All these people are working in different places. Satis Babu is working in one place while Haran Babu is doing a difficult job at Chaumuhani. Amtussalaam, Pyarelal, Kanu and Abha (Abha Gandhi, daughter of Amrita Lal Chatterjee, married to Kanu Gandhi) have selected a village each. I am confident that they will all conduct themselves in the manner I expect them to do. And, what is my expectation? I expect that, as this girl sings in the Ramdhun, "May God grant good sense to everyone". I shall go on hoping that the people would realize that nothing is to be gained by force and violence. If anyone does gain something or gets something done by others through violence, his gain would not last long. This is the way of robbers and bandits. If others resort to



robbery, should we also do the same? No, we shall certainly not go their way. If they want to kill us, we shall willingly die.

I am happy to see that we have in our midst brave people who are willing to meet death in this manner. Such people as well as the country will benefit from their bravery. Even while dying they will bear no ill will against those who kill them, nor will they wish to get them punished. Those who kill are not going to escape punishment. God will punish them. Who are we to mete out punishment? We would not appeal even to God to punish them, because God is all merciful. We would pray to Him for mercy for ourselves and also for our enemies, and would meet death trying to bear goodwill towards all, including those who might kill us. No matter what happens, in whatever He does, God will only be merciful.

But if anyone from among these people dies, do you think I would say: ‘Oh, what a tragedy!’ No I would not. I would rather say that he had done well to have rendered such a great service. I would say that he had served the Muslims too while carrying out God’s work.

But death retreats from those who show courage and are ready to die. We should hope that they do not have to die. There is Suhrawardy Saheb and also other officers, big and small. God will grant good sense even to those who have taken to robbery and they will also take the warning and give up oppressing people. I even hope that all the Muslims there would come together and take upon themselves the responsibility of protecting their Hindu brethren and I would receive telegrams from the Muslims everywhere that I should have no worry and that there was nothing to fear from their side. When this happens, I would dance with joy.

A friend asks why I, though a Hindu, say that I am a Muslim [also]. This is an obvious thing. I have learnt this from the Gita. The Gita says.

यो मा पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वच मयि पश्यति।

तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति॥ (४-३०)

That is, “he who sees Me everywhere never vanishes from Me nor I from him.” For instance there is Rama in the Koran, the Zend Avesta and the Bible as well and god was worshipped by the Christains, Ormuzd as worshipped by the Parsis and Khuda as invoked by the Muslims are but different names of Ishwara. And, because I am a true



Hindu, believing in Hindu dharma, I am also a Christian and a Muslim. This is no mere fancy or empty talk. This is the truth. The Ishopanishad also says: “I am in everything and everything is in me.” (Verses 6 and 5 respectively) It further says: “He moves and He moves not.” (After this Gandhiji replied to some written questions.) Thus God has been described in various ways in the Gita and the upanishads.

In another letter I have been asked to explain why I call myself a servant [of God] and if Rama and Rahim mean the same to me, why do I not choose either one of them. I give this explanation because I claim to be a servant of God. Lord Vishnu is known by a thousand names. But God is known not by just a thousand but a hundred thousand names. In fact I would say God has 400 million names. Hence, why must call Him just Rama or Rahim? And then someone asks whether I talk like this merely to appease the Muslims.

My answer is No. I have not formulated this prayer after any deliberation. Abbas Tyabji's daughter Raihana, who is a staunch Muslim and also a Hindu, had asked me if she could teach me Auz-o-Billahi. I consented and said she might as well convert me to Islam. She declined and said that I was as good as her father and she was my daughter. She called me a good Hindu and saw no need to convert me to Islam. But she taught me Auz-o-Billahi and since then it has formed a part of the prayer. In the same way, after [one of] my fasts Dr. Gilder taught me a Zoroastrian hymn which too has been a part of the prayer ever since. I always hunger for Ramanama. I will recite it in a thousand ways and if someone comes and forces me to recite or not to recite any particular name I will recite no names at all.<sup>2</sup>

**Q. You said that those who have neither the courage nor the wish to die should migrate. But where should they go?**

A. These few men can be accommodated anywhere in this vast country. In the first place they can create a settlement for themselves in the Punjab itself, but if that is not possible this country is big enough for them to find some place in it. I need not tell them where they should go. Let it be remembered, however, that they should not go about begging, stretching out their hands before others but should rely on their own strength. Holding up to ridicule some letters in English, Gandhiji said that he himself did not know English well and he was like the castor-oil plant being treated as a tree in a desert. But if even he could find so many mistakes in their English, how



many more mistakes would be found by an English expert? In any case, what was the need of writing in English and typing the letters?

**Q. Are you not ashamed of calling the police during your prayers?**

A. I am really very much ashamed and every time the police have attempted to restore peace during the prayer I have stopped the prayer. Moreover, I did not beg of Sardar Patel to send the police for my protection. But if the police do come in spite of this, they also might learn a few good things from the prayer and Ramanama. Why should we resent it?

**Q. From where did you bring non-violence into Hinduism? With non-violence you are turning the Hindus into cowards.**

A. I cannot think even in my dream that anyone has become a coward because of me. Even the young girl Abha who used to be a little afraid before has become brave after staying with me. I told her that her husband would not be accompanying her. And now she visits the sensitive spots all by herself. Would you call her a coward? She goes there unarmed. She does not insist even on having a dagger before proceeding to such places. She hardly even keeps a kitchen knife. I have never said that the moment you hear a danger signal you should run for your lives. We have to die and die without killing others. Non-violence is the quintessence of Hinduism. Your Gita teaches non-violence. I say the essence of Islam too is non-violence and Christianity too teaches non-violence.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 36-40

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## 48. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 8, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 9, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Last time when I was here you heard the same bhajan (Ham aise deshke vasi hain; vide “The Hymn”) which Sucheta Devi sang just now. Its beautiful words were sung in a voice as sweet as the words. Even today while listening to it I felt as though it were new and I had not heard it before. How wonderful if our country were as described in the bhajan and we could say that there was no sorrow or suffering. But we know the country is in no such condition. If one after another everyone becomes good as suggested in the bhajan, the country would also become good. What is the strength of an ocean? After all, it is made up of individual drops. Similarly, a country too is constituted of its citizens. Today we are not in a position to sing the bhajan with a clear conscience. Suppose we start looking for such a country, where would we find one? Our body is such a country and the atman residing within is the inhabitant of that country. The bhajan describes the qualities that should belong to the atman. We ought to imbibe these qualities in us. If we are able to do so our country would surely be beautiful—whether it is known by the name of Hindustan or Pakistan, whether it has 11 provinces or 21, or any other number. We must all live in such a way that everyone lives in comfort, none remains poor and none oppresses his fellow-beings.

To build such a country you have to live, all of us have to live, including myself. But what is happening now is just the opposite. The piles of letters I receive contain abuse as well as praise. We should surrender all abuse as well as praise to God and have nothing to do with either.

I think some of those who write these letters must be present in this meeting. I am glad that they are hearing my words, because listening to me they will understand me and work for the benefit of the country.

We are going to attain independence. We have not yet attained it. If we work unitedly, the Viceroy would leave this very day, or he would entrust all responsibilities to us and silently watch us or would stay on to do what we might ask of him, for his own satisfaction. He is not the kind of man who would sit idle. He belongs to the royal



family and is extremely intelligent. His wife also is a talented lady. We can utilize their talents to our advantage. But this cannot be done under the prevailing circumstances. He would continue to be here for another fourteen months and testify whether India behaves well or otherwise. It was with a view to seeing India that the delegates from the Asian countries had come to attend the Inter-Asian Relations Conference. But they went back with the impression that the Hindus and Muslims were fighting with each other. Nobody knows why they are fighting. I at any rate do not know what they are quarrelling about.

Are the Muslims fighting for Pakistan? They say that they would have Pakistan at any cost. Would they have it by compelling us to give it? Would they take it by force? By force they cannot have even an inch of land. By persuasion they may have the whole of India. I would welcome it if Jinnah Sahib became the first President of free India and formed his own Cabinet. But there would be one condition, namely, that with God as witness, he should regard Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and all others as equals.

One of the correspondents asks why I should not be called “Muhammed Gandhi”? And then he hurls the choicest abuses, which need not be repeated here. If we ignore the person who abuses us, he will repeat his performance once, twice, thrice, several times—only to tire of it. Being tired, he would either keep quiet or, driven by anger, kill us. But what would happen after he kills us? We would lose nothing. One might ask: ‘Who would protect our wives and children?’ But he should realize that there is God to protect them. Why, then, should we worry?

The best way to stop the agitation for the partition of Bengal (On April 4, the Executive Committee of the Bengal Provincial congress Committee and the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha conference had made a demand for the partition of Bengal.) is to persuade the Hindus through reasoning and assure them right now that they would not be forced to act one way or the other. By their wholly impartial conduct the Muslims must prove that the Hindus need have no misgivings about justice and fair-play in Pakistan, that no favours would be shown to the Muslims just because they are Muslims, and while selecting men for Government jobs merit alone would be the consideration. If Suhrawardy Saheb acts in this manner, the whole of Bengal would become an independent province. Then there would be no question of dividing the province into three or four. By placating the minorities he should thus win them over. He should



treat the Hindus in such a way that they insist on having Suhrawardy as their Chief Minister. He should enjoy their full confidence.

But that is not the position now. Today I have received a letter from Sushila (2 Sushila Pai) who was formerly running a school at Rajkot. Describing the situation where she is now working, she says that there was so much terror in the air that no Hindu woman ventured to go there even if escorted, not to speak of going alone. When she herself went there, the other women could go with her.

I cannot help saying that if Indians evince true courage the coercive method now adopted to achieve Pakistan cannot but fail in its purpose. I dare say the talk of achieving Pakistan by force and threats is but an idle dream.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 40-3

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## 49. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 10, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The *bhajan* (The Bengali bhajan 'Yadi tor dak sune keuna ase tabe ekla chalore' by Rabindranath Tagore had been sung by Sucheta Kripalani.) is as sweet as its meaning is sublime. It is of great significance to you as to all of us today. The essence of the bhajan is that even in the darkest hour we may not lose hope and faith. The lamp that is alight might go out and darkness spreads around, but we must live through it. The flame that has ceased to burn, the life that is lost, these do not come back. Hindus and Muslims might take to the law of the jungle, but they ought to remember that they are not invertebrate animals but men standing erect. Hence even in the worst calamity they should not lose their faith and forget their dharma.

I have again received a number of letters today. A gentle- man writes to say that both Hindus and Muslims have turned into beasts. They are fighting each other. Is there no way out? There certainly is. The one simple way out of the situation is for either of the two communities to stop descending to the level of beasts. The correspondent, however, mentions one more thing. He says the important question is as to how the third party acts. He believes that the Viceroy has come here definitely to transfer power to Indian hands. If may be granted that he has come with sincere intentions; that the British have deputed this illustrious soldier of the royal family only to wind up their power spread far and wide in India and that the British Ministers responsible for deputing him are also honest in their purpose. But he still doubts the bona fides of the representatives of British commercial interests here. They had done everything to exploit this land. Till this day they had monopolized all our trade. What would they do now? It is a pertinent question. If the Hindus and Muslims together wish to keep them, would they stay on as our friends or would the British businessmen force themselves on us even if we did not want them? There is also the hold of the Civil Service. They have come to have such a stranglehold over us that we are not sure whether we would get freedom at all. It was by the grace of God that we adopted certain methods and the circumstances too changed so that the British are not talking



of leaving. But the Civil Service is still here and also the British soldiers. If they can earn their livelihood here, why should they leave?

Another doubt is that the Viceroy's offer might quietly be withdrawn. To this doubt I can only say that under the present circumstances we can say precious little. It is as yet only the dawn of freedom; the sun has not yet come up. We have no idea how warm the sun will be. At the moment we are shivering. Our hearts are full of fear. Only when the sun shines forth will we be able to feel its warmth. In this connection I want to say nothing to you. But I would appeal to the British in India, whether civilians, soldiers or businessmen, to leave India if they wish to preserve their good name. Till now they have been riding on our backs, which was not fair on their part. They had better climb down willingly. Lord Mountbatten has come here precisely to help them do it and he is not alone. He represents the full strength of the British people. Surely they will have to suffer some losses in doing it. But they are prepared for it. In fact they have already given some proof of their willingness. We said that the civil servants should go and they are leaving, they are going to inflict themselves on their own countrymen, that is, now it will be for Great Britain to pay them their pensions, etc. On the one hand Lord Mountbatten has summoned the Governors along with their secretaries to be briefed about the true state of affairs. (A two-day conference of provincial Governors was scheduled to begin on April 15.) On the other hand Churchill and his party will not give in without putting up resistance. Even then the Viceroy maintains that he represents the British people and as per their wish they should now withdraw. The Governors, the British commercial interests and members of the Civil Services should all help the Viceroy in this task and they should leave. Those who wish may stay on with pleasure. But they should act very differently from what they had hitherto been doing. In other words, instead of exploiting us they should help us prosper. They will leave behind a good name if they act in this manner.

But news is pouring in from all quarters that their mischief was at the root of all these riots. Lord Mountbatten too has an inkling of it. He is afraid lest this popular suspicion should prove true. The British in India will now have to see to it that the suspicion of both Hindus and Muslims that the British had a hand in the riots is not substantiated. If this suspicion proves correct history will not spare them. It will be recorded in history that they were plunderers.



But they can say let bygones be bygones and now they have turned over a new leaf. Lord Mountbatten is honest in his intention but his success is in the hands of the British commercial interests, the British army and the British civilians. If they are not sincere, whatever the Viceroy has done will be undone. Let us therefore pray to God to grant them good sense. Whatever the trouble in quitting India, even if they face a dark future ahead, still I would tell them that their good lies in deciding to leave India.

Afterwards they can help us resolve our disputes, and they might even succeed in doing so. Then it will bring them a good name. I pray to God that they quit India not as enemies but as true friends, and leave us to cherish friendship for them in our hearts.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 43-5

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## 50. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

April 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am sorry to have to inform you that today I have suddenly decided to leave for Bihar. You are aware that my field of work is Noakhali and Bihar. It is not that I have chosen these places. I went to Noakhali just by chance or, say, at the call of God. I had to go to Bihar also in the same connection. I could accomplish something during the days I spent in Noakhali. The Hindus there smarting under the reign of terror had some respite. But just as I worked for the Hindus, I also worked for the Muslims there. Today it may not appear significant; but in future when the climate changes the country will realize the value of the work done there. In a way, some benefits of the work can be noticed even now. Even today good Muslims have come to accept their Hindu neighbors as their brothers. But the number of such people has not grown as much as it should. Even so, there is no doubt that the work that is being done there today will bring many benefits in the future.

For the present I am needed not so much in Noakhali as in Bihar. I have a telegram from a Muslim friend from Bihar saying that I had stayed away from Bihar for a long time and should now return there. He says that they would feel reassured only when I go there. It is true that my decision to go to Bihar has not been prompted by this telegram. But now my mind has turned to Bihar because I had told them that I would do or die there.

By “doing” I mean that the Hindus and Muslims of Bihar should live in amity like brothers. Even if there is frenzy raging like a fire elsewhere, the Hindus and Muslims of Bihar should live in amity. There are quite a few villages in Bihar still untouched by the outside fire. Not only in Bihar but in Noakhali and the Punjab, where there has been so much trouble, there are some villages where people continue to live together in peace and with mutual trust. You will come across such villages all over the country.

You can turn round and tell me that just a couple of days ago I had talked of going to the Punjab. You can ask me why I now intend to go to Bihar. You can also ask me if my talks with the Viceroy are over, as I had come here for that specific purpose.



You can insist that if my talks with the Viceroy are over, I should wait at least to see the result. But why should I wait to see the result? It is not in my hands to produce any results. There are other people to take decisions in the matter. I wanted to discuss a few things with the Viceroy which I have already done. I had said earlier that in Delhi I was a prisoner of two persons, namely, the Viceroy and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. Rajendra Babu had come to me. I have discussed the matter with him and also sent a message to Nehru. I have decided to go to Bihar with their permission.

It is my svadharma (One's own duty) to go to Bihar. I worship the Gita. The Gita ordains that one should perform one's own duty and stick to one's own field of action. The Gita clearly states that better is death in the discharge of one's own duty and in one's own field. Running after another's function is fraught with danger. Hence, staying in a place like Delhi which is another's domain is for me fraught with danger.

If I had had a call from God directing me to go to the Punjab I would have certainly gone there. You may well ask me if it is God who prompts me. That way, God does not come to me in person. But I do hear an inner voice. One who becomes a devotee of God hears His voice from within. I did not hear such a voice with regard to Punjab. But let me tell you that I have thought enough about going to the Punjab, and have come to the conclusion that my going there now would not serve any particular purpose, because we do not rule the Province. Even if the Muslim League had been ruling there, it would have meant our rule, because if the Muslim League members come to power there it would be on the strength of the votes of the people; and then it would be our rule. A rule established by the votes of the people would be the rule of the people. It is up to us to see whether such a rule brings happiness or unhappiness.

Supposing it were our misfortune to have Hindu rule in one part of the country and a Muslim-ruled Pakistan in the other, if both the states take the attitude that the people of the other community may not live in peace in their land, the Hindu state would become a hell and likewise Pakistan would be a Na-Pakistan (Land of impurity) True Pakistan is a place where there is proper justice, where there is no rule of force and where everything is done and achieved by effecting a change of heart in the opponents. But today we have forgotten our ideals.

But whether I go to Punjab or not, I shall certainly work for it. Whatever I want to tell the people after going there can as well be conveyed to them from outside the Punjab. I want to teach only one thing which I shall never tire of repeating. And it is





that every Hindu and every Sikh should resolve that he would die, but would never kill. Master Tara Singh says the Sikhs shall kill. In my view what he says is not proper. He should say that if they do not get what they want they would die for it, even if they may be only a handful, and rest only when they have achieved their goal. He should not talk in terms of killing. I need not go all the way to Punjab to say this.

I could have conveyed my feelings to Bihar also from outside, but I feel that it is necessary to go there and persuade the people. For the same reason I went round in Noakhali. I was warned that I would be killed. But I tell you that even if all of you try to protect me you will not be able to save me from death. Even doctors and hakims would be of no avail. Even Hakim Lukman, quoted in today's bhajan<sup>1</sup>, says in despair that the grandeur of life is only transitory. Why then should we try to run away from death? We ought to face death with courage. We must conduct ourselves in such a way that the world would condemn those who would attack us. Let the whole world ask them how they would get Pakistan by adopting tyrannical means.

The essence of satyagraha is that the satyagrahi converts the whole world to his view. I have said right from the beginning that we need not send our workers to the United States or to Britain to carry on propaganda for our cause. Truth will shine through our work right here and the whole world will come to witness it. In the same way I had won world sympathy while I was in South Africa and the British as well as Americans had upheld my stand.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 46-9

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## 51. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 12, 1947

NEW DELHI,

April 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Tomorrow is the last day of National Week. April 6 (In 1919) was the day of awakening. On that day we witnessed how the whole country was united. The towns in any case have a kind of unity without which they cannot function, but on that day we realized that India's villages too were united.

It is really remarkable that the villages should have been so united. I had appealed to the people to fast on April 6 (In 1919) and the whole nation followed my call. Who was I? But it was the voice of God. That was why all the villages from Madras to the Punjab and from the Punjab to Dibrugarh in Assam were astir. India was awakened that day. April 132 was the day of massacre in India. That was the day when Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were all massacred indiscriminately in the Jallianwala Bagh. It was not really a bagh (Garden) but an enclosure with walls on all four sides. It was not possible to escape from the enclosure, as there was only one small exit. Here unarmed people were slaughtered, bringing the death toll to two, or maybe five, thousand. The blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs mingled at the place. No one could tell how much blood of which community was spilt there. If a blood sample were to be sent to the most experienced doctor even he could not have determined whether it belonged to a Hindu or a Sikh or a Muslim. In other words, all the Indians became fellow martyrs in Jallianwala Bagh.

Do not turn round and ask me how they could be called martyrs since they had not gone there with the intention of getting killed. It is true that they had not gone there prepared to meet death but they were all innocent people. Massacre of innocent people is a serious matter. It is not a thing to be easily forgotten. It is our duty to cherish their memory. So horrifying was the tragedy that the whole nation was moved. It provoked Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to write a letter (Addressed to the Viceroy, renouncing knighthood. It appeared in Young India, 7-6-1919; vide "Letter to Maganlal Gandhi", 6-6-1919) to the Government and he joined our ranks. You have, therefore, to observe April 13 [as Martyrs' Day]. I shall not be able to join you here tomorrow. I am not happy about it, but I have now decided to go to Bihar.



It may be asked why I could not postpone my departure by a day. But, again, I am not going to Bihar for pleasure. There too I shall be serving India to the best of my capacity. As for fasting, it can be done even on the train. So, I shall be leaving today. You must fast tomorrow and observe April 13 in the same manner as you had observed April 6 on Sunday last.

If you have properly understood everything that was said during these seven days, then those of you who have been coming here regularly should resolve tomorrow that you would die but never kill. Why should we say that we would die after killing? Why should we also say that we would have the courage to die only if we have a sword or a gun in our hands? Do you think it brings us any credit to say that we would have no fear if we had a gun with us, but would feel afraid without one? Let us discard lathis, swords and guns and go ahead with God as our companion. Free from fear let us then go everywhere and proclaim that we Hindus and Muslims would never indulge in mutual strife.

But today we are fighting bitterly. I feel ashamed before the foreigners when they come to see me. Still I tell them that those who turn fanatics are only a few, that the entire population of 400 millions has not gone crazy and that I have full faith that a day would come when all the Indians would resolve to achieve their end not with the might of arms but with the strength of reason. If India desires true freedom, everybody should learn this lesson.

Another thing I want to tell you is that however loud our protests might be, our Press refuses to mend its ways. Today one of the newspapers has gone to the extent of stating that Gandhi is going away because of his differences with the Congress Working Committee, and now he is not able to get along with the Working Committee. This comment has appeared not in some small, insignificant paper but in a leading paper with a large circulation. I feel ashamed to see how low our newspapers have sunk.

I have explained to you yesterday why I am going and that is the real truth. What the newspaper says, despite my explanation, is sheer nonsense. I am going, no doubt; but there is no quarrel among us. Our relations are no less cordial. Maulana Saheb was here a little while ago. Rajaji, the Sardar, Nehru and Kripalani were also here. We were all talking amicably. Only Rajendra Babu (Who was down with fever.) had not come; but does his absence mean that he had quarrelled with me? Isn't all this gossip mischievous? It



can certainly be said that we have our differences. But was there any time when we had no differences? Such differences have always been there. Even father and son have their own differences. But this paper is not merely hinting at our differences; it clearly says that we have fallen out.

If I were going because of any quarrel, why should I have gone to seek permission from the Viceroy? Why did I take permission from Nehru and Kripalani? I would have just gone away without consulting anyone.

Not only that, the Sardar asked me a little while ago about my return. I replied that I would be back the moment I heard his summons. Would I talk that way if we had quarrelled? If I choose to be a rebel I can be a pretty tough one. If I would not listen to anyone neither would I do violence to anyone nor persecute anyone.

But it is a trick of their trade to create panic among the people and thus increase their sales. It is a very wicked thing to indulge in order to fill this wretched tummy. I have also been a journalist and in those African jungles where there was none to bother about the Indians I had done a lot of journalistic work. If for earning their livelihood these people fill the pages of their newspapers and thereby harm the interests of India, then, they must give up journalism and find some other occupation for their livelihood. In the English language the Press is called the Fourth Estate. The Press can help or harm the country in so many ways. If the newspapers do not maintain a healthy attitude, what purpose would be served by India becoming free?

We too have developed such a habit that we can do without the Koran, without the Gita or the Ramayana, but we cannot do without the newspapers in the morning. Even great men have become slaves to the newspaper [habit]. If we do not get our morning paper we are upset. The newspapermen have also created this dependence on the papers by indulging in unfounded gossip. But all this gossip hardly serves any purpose.

I would suggest that you throw away such useless newspapers. If you want to get news you can enquire from people. You are not going to lose anything by not reading the newspapers. If you must read a newspaper, take care to choose those which are published to serve the interest of the country and call upon Hindus and Muslims to live in amity. Then the journalists too would not be in such a mad rush to



work overnight and also forgo their rest during daytime. Then there would be no rush for giving publicity to baseless rumours.

If good journalists happen to hear about any quarrel between Gandhi and Nehru or Kripalani and Maulana Azad, they must first verify it with Gandhi or Nehru before rushing to print it. Had they come to us to verify it, we would have rebuked them sternly for talking nonsense.

Today a Muslim friend sent me a nice letter. A Hindu friend has also written me a nice thing. The Muslim friend writes to say that Satavlekarji's interpretation of the verse from the Ishopanishad is indeed sublime. Similar is the meaning of the verse Auz-o-Billah, etc. There is no difference between the two, only, one is in Sanskrit and the other in Arabic.

My Hindu friend has asked me why, while I regard the Koran as a scripture, the Muslims do not similarly regard the Gita and the Upanishads. Why don't they recite from these in the mosques?

The answer is clear. As a true Hindu I regard the Koran as a book of religion because it contains words that praise Khuda. But what is the logic in forcing Muslims to regard our scriptures also as their books of religion? This would not be an act of goodness.

I hope to meet you again. I shall come back when Jawaharlal or Kripalani or the Viceroy sends for me. I shall continue to work for you and for the people of the Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali also. You should always continue your prayers with the same devotion as you have been doing all these days.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 49-53.

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## 52. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 14, 1947

(Held at the Bankipur Maidan)

PATNA,

April 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, You maintained good silence during the prayer. Kindly remain peaceful till I finish speaking. In the first place I must tell you about my journey. Things went on smoothly right from Delhi so that I could sleep comfortably throughout the night. Even though a big crowd had gathered at Kanpur the people were peaceful. I was fast asleep and did not know about the gathering. It was all very peaceful till I reached the Bihar border, but with my entry into Bihar the disturbances began. This was so at least in my view. I can sleep even during the day if only people would let me. I had work to do and I went on doing it. I would ask the Biharis not to behave in the manner they did. There is a limit even to love. It serves no purpose going beyond a limit. Love should not be expressed in such a way as to upset the other person.

I had gone to Delhi to meet the Viceroy. I discussed many things with him. He seems to be a man of honest intentions. He kept repeating that he was the last Viceroy and that he would be in office only till 30th June next year. But this does not mean that he has nothing to do till then. He is preparing for his departure. It is my impression that he is keen on going, whether or not we continue to fight among ourselves. The British have ruled us for more than a century. They have given us education, but have we learnt only to quarrel? On the one hand our independence is approaching and on the other we continue to fight among ourselves. A good deal of discussions were held in Delhi. Panditji, Rajaji, Vallabhbhai and all others are trying to think of ways and means to consolidate our independence which we are about to attain. They are making efforts so that there may be peace and calm in the country and the defects of foreign rule may be removed.

People ask me why I did not go to Punjab. All I can say in reply is that I can neither go nor refrain from going anywhere at somebody's bidding. For this I need a call from within, in other words, the inner voice. There were quite a few people who said that I should go and as many advised to the contrary. I listened to both views. But then my inner voice told me that my work lay in Bihar and Noakhali. "Better is death", it is said, "in the discharge of one's duty, another's duty is fraught with danger." The Gita says



that one's duty, however small, is better than another's, however great. I felt that I should come here, and so I consulted the Viceroy, Panditji and other leaders. This does not mean that I shall never go to Punjab. I shall go there when I feel I should.

I had said at Noakhali that I would either do or die. Maybe I will die, not in Noakhali but in Bihar, or, I might die not even in Bihar but in the Punjab. It would be just as well if I succeed in Noakhali, for it would have its good effect all round. If the Hindus and the Muslims of Bihar tell me that my work here is over and that I should leave, then I shall go to Noakhali. Those Muslims who are writing abusive letters to me should be able to say that although the Hindus have misbehaved they would not do so any more. If these Muslims feel reassured, they would certainly be able to say so. Let the Hindus of Noakhali also say the same thing. When I was in Delhi, the Muslims of Bihar were asking me why I did not go to Bihar. It pained me that they did not say that they had restored brotherly relations with the Hindus and I need not go to Bihar. And now, what about Noakhali? Suhrawardy Saheb says that because Gandhi released to the Press so many telegrams it probably led to the communal explosion in Calcutta. What Satis Babu has written makes everything clear. It is another matter if the charges are false and cannot be proved. But if they are true, it will be known to everyone. What is the point in hiding the guilt? It would be better if the newspapers publish the outrages committed by both Hindus and Muslims. People should know who has committed what crime. This will show what is the truth and what is the untruth and the poison will come to the surface. Just now people only make guesses while the poison works within. Suhrawardy Saheb says that his officers give him such reports. This is not a good practice. This is what the British too used to say. They also used to believe their officers' reports that all was well. The officers in Bihar and Bengal have given similar reports, but they are not reliable. Satis Babu and Suhrawardy Saheb are old friends. Satis Babu used to go round with him during the disturbances in Calcutta. Whatever he says is only after proper investigation. It is not right to say that he gives wrong information. He gives full details of arson and looting. It is futile to say that these are lies. Because of Noakhali I came here to serve the Muslims. I have a right to go on a fast. When I was in Bengal I had said that I would undertake a fast unto death if the riots in Bihar did not stop. (Vide "Blessings to Syed Mehbob", 14-3-1947) I have a similar right [to fast] on behalf of the Hindus of Noakhali. But it is not easy to undertake a genuine fast. I do not mean that I am going to undertake a fast right from today. It will please me very much if the reports sent to me about Noakhali are proved exaggerated and



Suhrawardy Saheb is right in saying that the Hindus have not suffered any loss. But what would happen to me if the fear proves well-founded and something happens to the Hindus who have stayed on on the assurance from Satis Babu and Haran Babu? I have told everyone that I would go to Noakhali, so I shall have to do something. Surely I cannot take poison nor hang or shoot myself. I can end my life only by fasting. Suhrawardy Saheb says the Hindus are in a minority in Bengal but the difference in the numbers of the Hindus and the Muslims is very small. The proportion may be 55 to 45 per cent. The Hindus of West Bengal have decided that Bengal should be divided. If I were in Suhrawardy Saheb's place I would have gone to the Hindus and asked them not to have any fears. I would have asked them what their trouble was. Why do the Hindus want separation? Let him satisfy them. You may have Pakistan or Hindustan, but it is wrong if the Hindus say that they would force the Muslims to stay on. And if the Muslims say that they would achieve their goal by resorting to force I would say that they would not get an inch of land from us. I would tell them they could turn the whole of India into Pakistan by persuading us and converting us to their view. I had said the same thing in Delhi. But what can we do in a situation as at present? Shall we also resort to violence? No, we shall lay down our lives, but we shall not let them have their way by force.

Bengal entered its New Year yesterday. India has a number of New Year days. I expect a day will come when the whole of India will observe the same New Year Day. By the grace of God may the Bengali New Year bring peace and comfort to the whole of Bengal. In the coming New Year the Hindus should learn new things. They should learn to die. They should learn to die not while engaged in plunder and arson but while pursuing dharma and serving others, for service of man is service unto God. Let all Bengalis learn this. The Muslims do not follow the Bengali year now. At one time they used to follow it. But even if only the Hindus of Bengal learn to follow the new path from the New Year, I would say it would be for the benefit of all and they would stand to gain by it.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 5-8

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## 53. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 15, 1947

PATNA,

April 15, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

While I was in Delhi I had received many letters from Bihar, some containing abuses, some in praise and few expressing doubt whether I would at all return to finish the work in Bihar or whether I had forgotten all about Bihar. The doubt expressed has no foundation. He who follows his own dharma commits no mistake. Praise is wholly unnecessary for him; dharma for him is a duty. One must return a hundredfold what one receives.

We must put up with the abuses hurled at us. They do not affect me. Do or Die is my motto and I must lay down my life doing my work wherever it might be. Some persons have accused me of leaving Noakhali and coming to Bihar not at the request of a Hindu but at the behest of a Muslim so that the Muslims may do what they like in Noakhali. But you know I have come here at the invitation of Dr. Mahmud. He is the son-in-law of the late Mazhar-ul-haq and is an able person. He has rendered great service to the Congress and has been a member of the Congress Working Committee. I knew his father-in-law Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haq even before I had heard of Rajendra Babu or Brijkishore Babu. He was my fellow-student in England. I had come to Bihar at the instance of Rajkumar Shukla and my prior acquaintance with Mazhar-ul-Haq proved to be a great advantage. I have known Dr. Mahmud since the days when there was no Hindu-Muslim tension of the sort which has now developed. I have come here at his invitation for he is an old friend of mine. According to me, by summoning me here Dr. Mahmud has done good both to the Hindus and Muslims. Bihar after all is my land, it has made me. My coming here is not a new thing. I have worked here and have become attached to it. My attachment to it is as pure as to a mother. It is true I have come here at the instance of Muslims but it is sheer folly to say that Muslims are devils and have drawn me away from Noakhali to do what they please there. How is it possible for Dr. Mahmud, who has done so much work and whose father-in-law has served the country so well, to do any such thing? Are all the Muslims in the world bad? Muslims also may say that all the Hindus are bad. So long as there is even one good man in the world the world belongs to the good. If everyone turns evil, the world will



go to Satan. But Satan has no real existence. In fact Satan is a name or evil. On reflection we will realize that even if there is one good man the world will go on as a result of his noble endeavour.

I stay in Dr. Mahmud's house and all the people in my party are treated as members of his family. Mr Muztuwa, Dr. Mahmud's secretary, takes great care to make us feel at home. Both Dr. Mahmud and Qaiyum are your ministers. Are they good for nothing? If you recognize that they are not true servants of the Congress you may remove them but they have been chosen by Hindu ministers. Ministries can be formed without Muslims being included if no honest Muslim is available: but it would be dishonesty not to have them when honest Muslims are available. Our good lies in taking all good men along with us. The Muslim League people who met me also say that non-League Muslims are not their enemies. The Bihar Muslim League President, Jafar Imam, is in fact a good friend of Dr. Mahmud. Badshah Khan is also a Muslim but he is a fakir. Khudai Khidmatgars are also Muslims but they have given complete protection to the Hindus though the Hindus there are fewer even than the Muslims here.

People may write to me what they like but you must understand that whatever may be the deterioration in the situation in Punjab, Bengal and Sind, Hinduism will be saved if Bihar at any rate follows the right path. Even if the Muslims in the Punjab, Bengal and Sind harm the Hindus there, and if Bihar shows true courage in protecting and comforting Muslims and their children, Bihar will have raised India in the estimation of the world.

To protect the minorities is not to appease them. This I expect from Bihar by right of service and because of its people's deep devotion to Rama. I have been constantly on the move but the doctors have advised me not to tour in this heat; they want me to go to a cooler place during summer, but I shall tour as long as my health permits. The tours will have to be curtailed. A lot of work remains to be done in Patna. I do not want to leave in a hurry.

I have many more things to tell you. But since these things must be properly explained I shall try to tell them tomorrow or some other day. (Gandhiji's speeches at prayer meetings were published by the Bihar Government in Bihar Samachar, a daily bulletin, for distribution in the villages.)

[From Hindi] Bihar Samachar, 17-4-1947



## 54. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 16, 1947

April 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I can only tell you this today. While I was in Delhi I met the Viceroy a number of times. I also met him just before coming here. He showed me an appeal (Vide “A Joint Appeal”, 12-4-1947) which he wanted me to sign. I told him I could do so with the consent of Pandit Nehru and the Congress President. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah was also to sign it. The purport of the appeal was that we are both in agreement that the recent acts of lawlessness and violence have brought the utmost disgrace to the fair name of India and the greatest misery to innocent people and unleashed a reign of terror everywhere. We are not to consider who were the aggressors and who the victims. We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder but also to avoid both in speech and writing any word which might be construed as an incitement to such acts.

To obtain my signature on such an appeal is not of very great significance, for I have all along been saying the same thing and will go on repeating it. But it is significant that the Quaid-e-Azam has also signed it. Everyone should now take care that riots do not take place. Though they break out even now we have now a right to expect that the riots will not occur in future. The Muslim League people are also here. They can assure me that my work has been completed and that I could now return and resume my work. My signature was not necessary at all, for I represent nobody. I am your servant because I have served Bihar. It is for you to tell me that having committed a sin once you will not repeat it. You may ask me why Pandit Nehru and Kripalani did not sign the appeal. I do not want to go into this matter but you must realize the significance of my signature. It will be very bad if you now kill any Muslim. It should not be that you applaud me and kill innocent people. Such applause would be my undoing. How long would you applaud me?

I had said the other day (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 14-4-1947) that I had a right to undertake a fast on behalf of Bihar but after coming here I have earned a similar right in case of Noakhali also. It is a different matter if I do not go to Noakhali or don't exercise my right. But the Hindus and Muslims of Noakhali must know that I have got



that right and I may sacrifice my life for them. I have also received an anonymous telegram which says that if I have to go on a fast I should do so immediately. But I do not act at other people's bidding. I shall undertake a fast when my inner voice prompts me to do so, for the inner voice is the voice of God. I have signed the Viceroy's appeal. The implication of my signature is that I shall be responsible if Hindu-Muslim riots break out anywhere in India. I have no power, no army, I have only my life which I can sacrifice. I do not represent the Hindus. I claim that all religions are equal. You just heard in the prayer about equality of religions, which means all religions are equal and I shall have to atone for the crimes committed by the people irrespective of their religions. I have taken a tremendous responsibility on my shoulders. You should realize my responsibility; Hindus and Muslims should live like brothers forever. I can make a similar claim on behalf of Shri Jinnah also. Today he speaks for the Muslims alone but there was a time when he was regarded as a representative of the whole country. He was a Congressman and had a high position in the Congress. He had put up a brave fight against the Governor of Bombay single handed and the latter had to yield. (Presumably the reference is to the anti-Willingdon demonstrations held to protest against the Governor's provocative statements regarding the Home Rule League leaders at the Bombay provincial War Conference on June 10, 1918 Vide "Speech at Public Meeting, Bombay", 16-6-1918) The Jinnah Hall in Bombay stands as a memorial to his good name. He can speak for everyone even today because the appeal is addressed to all the communities irrespective of their faiths.

I would also appeal to the Press to refrain from publishing reports which would incite one against another. A great burden has fallen both upon Shri Jinnah's shoulders and mine, since the appeal has been signed only by the two of us. Had the appeal been signed by 25 persons the burden would have been less. It is now the duty of every Hindu and Muslim to realize this and explain it to others.

The Viceroy has taken a very good step; we must thank him for it. But it would have been much better had Shri Jinnah and I drafted the appeal jointly and signed it. It would then have been a great thing. But the Viceroy who is an outsider had to initiate it. How good it would be if we agreed to act upon it! How great would India's reputation be! Let us bear no more ill-will against each other nor hurt others by any thought, word or deed of ours. Lest the world should look down upon us we should not profess one thing and practise another. We should admit our mistake and decide not to lose our heads again.



My understanding of the situation is that the Congress and the League should together open a new chapter. It would have been excellent if they could have arrived at an agreement without the intervention of a third party. However, I hope there would be no enmity or misunderstanding between the Congress and the League even if they were brought together through the good offices of the Viceroy.

[From Hindi], Bihar Samachar, 18-4-1947

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## 55. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 17, 1947

April 17, 1947

Explaining why he was late by 15 minutes Gandhiji said that he wanted the prayers to start 15 minutes later than scheduled because it was the time for namaz for the Muslims. He also said that even if the Muslims came in small numbers we must keep their namaz in mind. We should respect all religions. In our prayer we also recite some portions from the Koran. I have heard that some boys ridicule the recitations from the Koran.

We should not ridicule anybody's religion. If we do so, other people will ridicule our religion, too, and that would lead to strife. I cannot give up reciting from the Koran in the course of my prayer. The whole prayer consists of recitations from several scriptures. Not a single item can be omitted from it even if it comes to discontinuing the whole prayer. Even if you do not participate in the prayer, you must listen to it carefully, and even if you do not understand it you should not ridicule it.

**After the prayer Gandhiji said:**

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Some Muslims came to see me today and they gave me some painful news. They said that in PATNA city the Hindus have done considerable harm to the Muslims, and are still not repenting what they have done, and that they continue to threaten the Muslims. I had a similar report about Bihar-Sharif. There too the Hindus bully and threaten the Muslims in the same way and the Muslims are afraid to return. It is our duty to rebuild the houses that have been destroyed. How can this be done when the Hindus harass even those who go there as labourers? What would the Muslims do? This is a very complicated question. I was surprised to hear this and felt ashamed. At one time the Hindus and the Muslims of Bihar used to live as brothers. But now they treat each other as enemies. I have received complaints from other places too. I could not go to Monghyr and Bihar-Sharif, but I hope to go to other places. I have grown weak and it would be more difficult on account of the heat. There was time when I did not bother about these things. But I have now grown old. You can spare me that trouble if you wish. If you can carry my voice up to Bihar-Sharif, tell the Hindus there that they should not go on troubling an old man like me. My work can become easier if you wish. Some Muslims have demanded rifle licences. Personally, I would not like anyone to have a rifle. A rifle may be used for hunting. But we have no danger of tigers here. Today rifles are used by the Hindus and the Muslims to kill or intimidate each



other. If proper arrangements are made, rifles and guns would not be needed at all. It is said in the Bible that we should look forward to an age when no swords would be needed and the material used for making them could be diverted to make other useful things. It is said in the Ramayana that when Rama was asked how he would fight against Ravana, Rama said that he would have the armour of purity and his noble endeavour would stand by him. In my view the Muslims should not even think that they can have protection against the assaults from the Hindus if they possessed rifles. The Hindus should tell them that so long as they are alive no harm will come to the Muslims. They must tell the Muslims that their sisters and daughters are as much their own sisters and daughters and they will protect them.

Some big Hindu landlords came to see me today. Then some Muslim landlords also met me. I do not wish to convey to you everything they said to me. I shall speak about these things to the Ministers who can do something about them. Even so, I do wish to tell you a few things. I have come to know that the peasants and the workers have started thinking that they have become the rulers, and therefore they are free to abuse the landlords. They think that they can withhold the revenue and deprive the landlords of their due. This would do them no good. The peasants are harming their own interests. Even if they kill a few landlords, how is it going to help? The peasants and workers are too many and the landlords too few. What is the point of riding roughshod over the landlords and wanting to finish them off? It is said that the peasants are doing everything in the name of disobedience to law. But disobedience to law as taught by me does not involve ruining and annihilating others. I am leaving aside the Muslims just now. We cannot win freedom in this way. We must be friendly to all. Granting that the landlords had been plundering the peasants till now, it does not mean that now that we have achieved power we should plunder the landlords. Will the peasants remove the landlords and occupy their positions? We should do everything in a proper manner. If we follow violent methods we shall only spread violence. And, when that happens you yourself would turn round and ask if that was what Ramarajya meant. You would say that you were comfortable during the British rule and have no peace now. I should like to tell all the peasants and workers that they should not create chaotic conditions. Let them not think that they are the sole masters of the country. They should not think that just because the railways belong to us they can pull the chain and bring the trains to a halt wherever they want, or that they can travel without tickets and rob others. This is not a proper thing to do; it is rowdiness by



which we can achieve nothing. We therefore must do everything possible to stop such things. Let us go to those who indulge in such activities and persuade them to desist from such actions and explain to them that no one stands to gain by acting in this manner.

[From Hindi]; Bihar Samachar, 19-4-1947

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## 56. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 18, 1947

PATNA,

April 18, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Some landlords came to me yesterday and brought several complaints, one of which was that the peasants and labourers were out to ruin them. In this connection I said yesterday that this was a dangerous thing to do. By indulging in such acts they are only harming themselves. Abolition of zamindari is but a small matter. When the zamindars and the peasants develop cordial relations the former need not be eliminated. The landlords are like a drop in the ocean. It is no great problem to dispense with them. But this should not be done by force. The Mahabharata tells us that the Yadavas were themselves annihilated when they were out to destroy others. They took to drinking, and fighting among themselves destroyed each other. Similarly, if the peasants and labourers will think of destroying others, they will themselves be ruined.

A gentleman told me today that I was not fully aware of the situation. He said that the peasants and labourers did not try to force their way, still the landlords oppressed them. I told him that if the landlords and the capitalists still exploited the peasants and labourers, they were harming their own interests. They would never survive if they behaved like masters. They could if they agreed to act as trustees.

If I am a millionaire, I should spend my wealth on those who help me in my accumulation of the millions. It is only when I do this that I can be called a trustee. But I cannot be called a trustee if I appropriate Rs. 1,000 and indulge in luxuries when I actually need only Rs. 5 or Rs. 50. I can also take money for the upkeep of my children as for my own. But I cannot give my children shares worth 5 or 10 lakhs so that they own four or five cars and live in grand style. You should not find fault with me if I say that I cannot manage on Rs. 5, that I cannot take satttu (1 Flour of roasted grain) and need fruit and milk in order to be able to work. You should let me have the money to meet my needs. But I should not take even a pice more than I need. I had demonstrated in Champaran how labourers could assert their rights. The indigo planters virtually ruled the place. They had their separate colonies and the poor were not supposed to cross their way. But I saw that their rule came to an end. People did not set fire to the houses



of the planters to end their rule. Nor did they kill the planters. They only refused to work. Today also the proprietors must march with the times.

Some visitors told me today that a punitive tax had been imposed on them. A punitive tax is one imposed by the Government on the people of an entire village or neighbourhood. Suppose we harbour three goondas in our village and they misbehave with and kill the Muslim women and children of the village, the Government cannot arrest us because we are respectable people. Even if we are arrested the courts will acquit us for want of evidence. The rowdies also cannot be arrested because we harbour them. And so, the Government imposes a collective fine on the whole village by way of punishment. If some of us confess the crime and undertake to pay the tax, then the Government would not impose the tax on the innocent. But we do not reveal the names of those guilty of arson and assaults.

The visitors also complained that the persons responsible for the riots, who had attacked the Muslims and ruined them, were still at large and moving about freely. They said they could not return to their villages. I had said at Jahanabad that those who had caused the ruin and destruction should themselves help rebuild the houses they had destroyed. We should go to the Muslims and confess our guilt and ask for their forgiveness. We must reassure them that we would now protect them and act as their guards. We should ask them to return to their homes and should offer to meet their expenses. The people of the villages where the punitive tax has not been imposed should also inform the Government of their willingness to pay the tax. They should tell the Government that they would rebuild the houses of the Muslims and ask the Government to provide wood and bricks at the villagers' cost. But the Government should not sell it at a profit. This will be Bihar's atonement for the grave crime committed by it and it will thereby rise to great heights.

The villages harbouring such culprits should confess their crimes and seek forgiveness. For the Government can arrest a few criminals, but how can it apprehend a mob of thousands mounting an attack? If this is done the Muslims also would not clamour for retaliation against the Hindus. And if some miscreants create trouble, the other Muslims would stop them. Even the Muslim League supporters would stop them because Jinnah Saheb has expressed his view against the use of force in politics. Newspapermen should also refrain from inciting one community against the other. They can render great help in maintaining peace if they so desire.



If we honestly admit our crimes we would be reducing the burden on the Government. Just now the Government is overburdened. The present Government is a people's government. If the Ministers are not leaders but servants, they must inspire such confidence among the Muslims that they would testify that they would never leave Bihar, that they had nothing to fear here and that they would continue to live here of their own will.

There is a third point which, God willing, I shall talk about tomorrow.

[From Hindi] Bihar Samachar, 20-4-1947

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## 57. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 19, 1947

PATNA,

April 19, 1947

I intended to talk to you about two letters that I have received. One of the letters is written by a Bihari gentleman. He has mentioned his name but not his address. He writes: “There is no doubt about your being a great man. Everyone calls you Mahatma. And you are a god because people worship you. Who would challenge you in politics?” Poor Chanakya’s (Also known as Kautilya; Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya and author of Arthashastra, a treatise on politics) spirit must be running from place to place in fear! Then he suggests that I should retire to the Himalayas. He asks me, “What is the crime of the Biharis?” Again, if the Hindus of Bihar have oppressed the Muslims, why don’t I look at the Punjab where the Muslims are perpetrating so much tyranny? He says I am turning the Hindus into cowards. The other letter is from a woman from the Punjab, well known to me from her very young days. She tells me that she had till now believed in my creed of non-violence but believes in it no longer. Her letter expresses her anguish. Then she goes on to say that we need brave men today. Both these persons have written with great consideration. Of course they are both angry. The second chapter of the Gita says: “Wrath breeds stupefaction, stupefaction leads to loss of memory, loss of memory ruins reason and ruin of reason spells utter destruction.” (II. 63)

Those who are possessed by anger would find even my plain words harsh. It is said that women’s honour can be protected if their menfolk are brave and always keep their swords drawn. But let me tell you this is not true. Even if there are millions of brave men around, strife persists in the world. Even if India’s 400 million men turn brave nothing can be expected to happen, unless the women themselves become brave. When the women become brave no one will dare raise his eyes to them. You have seen how the people of Champaran suffered hardships for a century because of the custom of tinkathia. The indigo planters who ruled the province were not concerned about them at all. But when the peasants and labourers fought non-violently against their rule of terror, in six months their rule came to an end. The people of Bihar do not have to go far. They can learn a lot from Champaran.

Now, I too have signed the peace appeal along with Jinnah Saheb. God alone knows what the result will be. What I am doing in Bihar today is something which



cannot be postponed or dismissed. I am serving Bihar more this time than I did during the Champaran days. I appeal to you to give up this madness and make genuine atonement which will help Bihar raise the reputation of the whole country and set an example to the world.

The meetings of the Charkha Sangh and the Talimi Sangh will be held from today and will continue for the next four or five days. Today was the first meeting of the Charkha Sangh. I want to tell you something about khadi. The late Jamnalal Bajaj had started the khadi work while I was still in prison. He had also set up the Khadi Board. In the early days khadi was given primary importance in the Congress. But later the parliamentary programme was given priority and the constructive programme secondary importance. Khadi was made the centre of the constructive programme. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru called khadi “the livery of freedom” (Vide “Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel”, 30-7-1937 & “Livery of Freedom”). Our flag also carries the emblem of the charkha. From the time the Congress evolved its flag I had been saying that we would win swaraj with the help of the charkha. Today it appears that the British rule over India would end more or less within the next twelve months. The British soldiers will also leave the country. The British could stay on in free India but as our friends, as servants of India. Whether people accept it or not, khadi has contributed greatly towards our free-dom. Had all the people truly believed in khadi, every Indian would have been wearing khadi today, and there would not have been a single textile mill in the country. Khadi found a place in the Congress, but we did not give it the place in our hearts we ought to have. Today the khadi work is progressing very well and because of khadi several crores of rupees have gone to poor men and women.

You must understand the place of khadi very well. Khadi is widely used in Bihar. But if everyone had known the real significance of khadi we would not have witnessed the madness that prevailed here. People in the Punjab, Bengal, Bombay and Ahmedabad had fallen victims to a similar madness. They are in the grip of such madness even today. The hearts of those who wear khadi should be as spotless as the khadi they wear. Had people sincerely adopted khadi they would not have let themselves be swept away by such frenzy. Khadi shows to what extent we are nonviolent at heart, although God alone knows what we are truly at heart. But we ourselves cannot know our own hearts. He who does is the wise one. There is a saying in English that he who knows himself knows all. This means that we do not know ourselves.



Khadi is a symbol of non-violence. Hence, right from the time khadi came into vogue I have been saying that khadi ought to spread to the seven lakhs of villages of India. Once I was asked if khadi, being a sacred thing, could be used by prostitutes. I said it could be. Khadi is for wearing as food is for eating, whether by the pure or the impure.

Those who wear khadi should never commit an impure act. You might say that there would be barely half a dozen such individuals in the country. That is why I say that everyone should wear khadi. Today people wearing khadi caps are respected. They make their way into the assemblies and the Congress. Some people even deceive others by wearing khadi. I have heard that in Bihar people wearing khadi have even committed murders. Today we do not give khadi the respect due to it. That is why such things have been happening. Khadi is a symbol of non-violence. Man makes God in his own image. Good makes man, no doubt; but man also makes God. The God of the murderers prompts them to commit murders. We have made great efforts to make khadi the symbol of non-violence. In spite of my being a member of the Charkha Sangh, I must admit that even though much work has been done to propagate khadi, much more remains to be done.

[From Urdu]; Gandhiji ke Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 21-4

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## 58. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 20, 1947

PATNA,

April 20, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today again I shall talk to you about khadi. The second meeting of the Charkha Sangh was held today. Had I been your Chief Minister like Shri Babu and had I been in a position to have ministers of my choice I would have told you plainly that you would get no mill-cloth. I would have given you all facilities for the purpose. I would have provided you cotton, spinning-wheels and all the other things. I would have also arranged for the repair of the spinning wheels when they went wrong. And I would have told you that you had to make your own clothing as also your own slivers and weave the cloth as the Assamese women do. Assamese girls cannot find grooms unless they learn weaving. But the weaving in Assam is very poor. Assam grows a lot of cotton but it is not of good quality. However, things are improving now. The Trustees of the Charkha Sangh are very efficient and they are now introducing changes to improve the weaving. If our country can make good progress in weaving, we would be able to clothe the whole world because ours is a vast country. In the past we used to import Japanese textiles in large quantities. But now Japan is almost out of the picture. Even Great Britain does not produce enough cloth to meet the requirement of the whole world. Just as we arrange to cook our own food at home we should also do the same to meet our requirement of clothes. At one time it used to be so in our country. It was so during the medieval period. We often call it the dark age, but I do not agree. No doubt there were some disgraceful practices prevalent then. But we cannot describe the present age, either, as the age of truth. Today the black market thrives throughout the world. We should not close our eyes to the remarkable features of that age by calling it a dark age. Let us forget its bad points and follow the good ones. Even today, if we start substituting homemade roti by the biscuits manufactured in Britain or in India, we are going to ruin our health. As in the case of food, we should stop getting our clothing too from outside. Had I been in Shri Babu's place, I would put a stop to black markets. No accounts are kept for the roti cooked in the house. The flour is made in the house and so also the roti. In the same manner, we would provide a charkha to everybody and there would be cloth for everybody. But no one is going to make me a minister! I



have to address my words to those who are already occupying the ministerial chairs. I would tell them that no new textile mill should be set up in Bihar. The existing mills should not be burnt down, but all the cloth produced by them should be exported. In this way people all over the world would be happy and would praise us for sending to them finished textile goods while opting for handwoven material for ourselves. Thus we should earn as much foreign exchange as possible. But if we let black-marketing flourish even in this trade the result would be bad. Even now if the people resolve to manage with a few clothes only and cut down their requirement, something can be achieved. Today Bihar has been left completely free. It means now the work has been decentralized. The work of the Charkha Sangh in Bihar is now being looked after by Lakshmi Babu and his colleagues who have been entrusted with the entire Charkha Sangh work in the province. They may produce as much cloth as they like. They may work with the help of Shri Babu and his colleagues so that khadi is produced in the villages and consumed locally.

You might ask what the people of Patna would have for themselves. But the villagers can provide khadi for the citizens of Patna too. But even if they do not you can produce your own khadi if you wish. There are many schools and colleges here where boys and girls go to study. The boys go to study the English language but hardly achieve anything worthwhile. They may obtain the M.A. or B.A. degrees, but most of them cannot write English. They just manage to speak a little English, and consider themselves great. If all the students learn spinning and weaving for an hour or two daily they would be doing all the work themselves in a few days. If even those who are not studying give an hour or two to khadi work while sitting idle at home they can produce more khadi than they would need. Khadi does not need coercion. If you do this work voluntarily, you can produce khadi of every kind. The village people have been exploited enough. The townspeople consume the cloth produced by them. But I wish villagers would consume the cloth they produce. It should be so even for the townspeople.

Everything that goes with the mills comes from outside; so much so that even the spindle of the mill's spinning-wheel is not produced here. The textile engineers also come from outside. But all the components of the charkha can be produced here. If khadi is woven in the villages, every village can become self sufficient and meet its own requirements of food and clothing.





Bihar is now free from [the supervision of] the Charkha Sangh. Lakshmi Babu will demonstrate how decentralization works. If he fails I shall ask him if the people of Bihar are capable only of plunder and massacre and can do nothing good.

[From Hindi]; Bihar Samachar, 21-4-1947

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## 59. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 21, 1947

(It being Gandhiji's silence day, his written speech was read out.)

April 21, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today also I wish to speak to you about khadi. Its secret lies in hand-spun yarn. Spinning used to be the occupation of women who were regarded as slaves. Who would pay the poor souls the wage that was their due? In the middle ages women were compelled to spin for a mere pittance. Except in Assam, weaving everywhere was considered to be man's occupation. Weaving has survived even today, but if hand-spinning is not revived weaving too is certain to die out in course of time.

If every man and woman does not regard spinning as his or her dharma, that is, does not do carding, or make slivers and spin himself or herself, khadi is bound to die. I shall not call it khadi if a few wear it by way of fashion. My definition of khadi is that it should replace mill-cloth throughout India. I do not have the words to describe the strength it is bound to generate.

This will remain but a dream if men do not spin by way of atonement and the injustice done to women does not cease. The wages payable to women for an hour's spinning should be the same as are paid to men. There should be no inequality in the wages paid to men and women. The times have changed when man was regarded as woman's master. That we do not admit this is a different matter. God has made man and woman one complete whole. One must not lord over the other. An endeavour is being made to establish this truth through khadi. Time will come when a mill-owner's wife will herself become a worker and a carding woman.

Then there will be no need for millcloth. Women should prepare themselves to hasten the advent of such a day.

[From Hindi]; Bihar Samachar, 24-4-1947

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## 60. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 22, 1947

April 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Till yesterday I talked to you about khadi because the meetings of the Charkha Sangh were being held all this time. Today there was a meeting of the body formed for Nayee Talim, viz., the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. I wish to tell you about Nayee Talim today. Through you it would be known to the people of Bihar and then the information would spread throughout India. Nayee Talim is now seven years old. There is Congress rule in many provinces. In some provinces (Namely, Bengal and Sind) the Muslim League is in power. But actually, in all provinces, it is the people who rule.

The Congress introduced the Nayee Talim. Actually the Nayee Talim scheme was prepared some time earlier, but the Congress put its own stamp on it. Let us assume that where the Congress is in power the scheme of Nayee Talim would be carried out by its own workers. We shall carry it out since we have decided to do so. Even if the Congress does not adopt it, those who have accepted Nayee Talim would carry it out. Others would follow if they are convinced.

Now if everyone in Bihar understands how Nayee Talim works, no other scheme can be implemented. If we teach khadi work to all the boys and girls according to the Nayee Talim scheme we shall be able to produce khadi without difficulty. And then Nayee Talim includes many other things as well. People say that the Congress does not carry out all those things. The Charkha Sangh and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh are the Congress organizations; then, why does the Congress not carry out those things? For the present I do not wish to go into this controversy. During the day today the Nayee Talim workers held a meeting. Dr. Zakir Husain was also present. Zakir Saheb is all in all at the Jamia Millia. (He was the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia.) He has also received training abroad. Without his whole-hearted devotion the Jamia Millia could not be run as it is run now. The Jamia Millia came into being during the Non-co-operation days, when we had called upon boys and girls to come out of their schools and colleges. During those days the trustees of the Aligarh Muslim University said that the students were free to leave the University if they wished. A large number of Muslim students then gave up studies. Then came the problem of their future. It was then that Jamia Millia was born. I also played some part in it. The Ali Brothers were then with us. Zakir



Saheb was not there. But people had their eyes on him. When he came he took upon himself the responsibility and developed Jamia Millia into a great institution.

Aryanayakum and Asha Devi of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh have also come here. Nayee Talim includes a great many things. I shall not talk about all of them. Nayee Talim means training our boys and girls through the medium of such handicrafts as are to be found in India and thus contributing to their growth and development. There should be harmonious development of the body, mind and soul. If everyone is given this type of training, there would be no fighting among ourselves such as is going on in the country today. Countries like England, Germany, Japan, Italy, etc., rely on the sword. Hence training of their children also follows the same pattern. You would be convinced if I explained all the points to you. These countries train their people in the light of the course they want them to follow. Under such training there is almost no scope for spiritual development. It emphasizes only physical development and the people with such training are appointed to high posts in the army and the government departments.

We have followed the opposite course here. We followed the path of non-co-operation and achieved our aim through non-violence and truth. This in itself was Nayee Talim. When I called upon students to come out of their educational institutions I hardly had an idea about what was to be done with them. When we attained power, which was hardly of any use, I thought about our course of action and then we hit upon Nayee Talim and it came into being. (The Hindustani Talimi Sangh was formed on April 23, 1938.) The most wonderful thing about Nayee Talim is that under this scheme the students have to spend nothing on their training. Another remarkable thing is that it is self-supporting, i.e., it does not need funds from outside to run it. I shall elaborate on this point tomorrow. Only if everyone understands the importance of Nayee Talim, can it become true training? It does not need investment of crores of rupees. It is said that we would require crores of rupees if we try to train everyone in the country. But, in my view, it is futile to talk in terms of millions and billions of rupees. That is not the way to go about training 400 million people. Where are we going to get so much money? Nayee Talim has so many possibilities that it costs nothing [to carry it on]. These days education costs a lot, but true Nayee Talim is one which would be self supporting.

[From Hindi] Bihar Samachar, 24-4-1947

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## 61. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 23, 1947

PATNA,

April 23, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I keep my eyes closed during the prayer. Hence, I do not know if people take part in the Ramdhun. But Manubehn tells me that the women do not join the Ramdhun, nor do they beat time correctly. Those who come for the prayer meeting must abide by the rules of the gathering. Ramdhun is a collective prayer. When all men and women present at the prayer collectively utter Rama's name and meditate on it, they feel the love of God kindled in their hearts. If all the people do not join the Ramdhun its purpose is not fulfilled. One must practise the Ramdhun even at home.

Ramdhun occupies an important place even in Nayee Talim. Nayee Talim begins at the age of seven and till the fourteenth year basic training is imparted. But what should a child do till he is seven years old? Actually, the mother should start training the child from the time she is carrying him inside her. This is not my experience but of the whole world, that while the child is still in the womb the mother's work and discipline have a great influence on the child's life. This means that the mother can train the child from the time of conception till he is seven years old. This is followed by basic training till the child is fourteen years old. But Nayee Talim is necessary even for the old, in fact, for every man and woman as also for a labourer.

But from where to get crores of rupees for educating the entire population? India is a very poor country. And we must spread literacy among the whole population of 400 million and the education of the child is to start from the time he is born. One's head starts reeling when one thinks about making all the necessary arrangements, finding so many teachers and the resources to pay them. You might ask me if my head too starts reeling. I should say, no. You might then think that either I am a stupid fellow who understands nothing, or I am very wise and know everything about it. This, in fact, is true. My head does not reel. Nor am I given to talking in the air. Congress Ministers are ruling in seven Provinces. In some Provinces the Muslim League is in power. Let them be considered separate for the time being, though I do not regard them as separate. One day they are bound to be united with us. True, they might not agree to give this type of training and the Congress wants to implement the programme of basic



education. But how can I tell Suhrawardy Saheb that I want to impart basic education in Bengal? He would ask me what right I had to make any such suggestion. I can also work a lot in Sindh. If we can give basic education to the people there the whole face of the province would change. The Hindus want to run away from there. They come to me and ask me what they should do. What they should do is another thing.

All this time we had been having foreign education which also imposed a foreign language on us. This was because the British needed men to carry on their work and wanted their empire to expand. They needed clerks. I would have done the same thing if I were in their place. If I had needed doctors, engineers, etc., from where could I have found Englishmen for all these professions? How could Englishmen have communicated with the people of Bihar or those of Madras who speak Tamil? And so, they established big colleges and universities for the spread of English education. They started producing doctors and engineers, but in fact, they were turning out only loyal slaves. Even today we are living in the same age. Times cannot change merely by wishing. We are still enamoured of the English language. Work even in the Congress offices is being done in English. The notices I receive are also in English. Things have taken such a course that we cannot free ourselves from English easily. For that very reason the scheme of basic education has been prepared. It is a living education and a true education. English has not been given a place in it. A boy who has had basic education comes to his parents and proudly tells them what he has learnt. But if I study in an English school and my father from the village asks me what I learnt I would tell him only about England and the English people. If he asks me anything about my own place, about Bihar, I would not be able to tell him anything. But it does not imply that I should go on abusing the English people. As it is, I do not abuse anyone. The English say that this is our country and that they are going. When recently the Viceroy asked me to sign the peace appeal I said that I would sign in Hindi, Urdu, and I put my signature in Hindi, Urdu and English. This pleased the Viceroy.

Our average income today is Rs. 60-62 a year. Some people have an income of Rs. 60,000. This means that out of 400 million there must be so many without an income and they must starve. How can we educate all of them? Today we are almost paupers. How can we go on if our children do not get ghee, milk and clothing? We have to increase our income with the help of the right kind of training. Today our men and women have nothing to cover themselves with. I saw the same thing in Noakhali too. And let me tell you, in the old days—when I was in Champaran—the women had



nothing but a single sari. The women told me that they did not have more than one sari. How then could they bathe and what could they have to wear? And things were then far better compared to the present. Today cloth is so scarce. Food is also scarce. You must all get food to eat and clothes to wear. But the Government will not provide all these things for you. You must produce the grain yourselves. You must produce ghee and milk. You must make your own clothes. Your children would help you.

You have to make education self-supporting. Otherwise you cannot yourself become self-reliant. This virtue is to be found in Nayee Talim. The aim of Nayee Talim is not to make our children slaves. Nor does it aim at making them leaders. Its aim is to make all of them Indians.

There should be food for everyone; but food does not mean only a handful of grain, a pinch of salt. As a matter of fact everyone ought to have pure ghee and milk and enough clothing. Today all this appears to be a mere dream. But it would not remain a dream. Nayee Talim will not make all students barristers, engineers or doctors. It aims at developing the students into good human beings. And we have to make them nothing less than good human beings.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 33-6

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## 62. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 24, 1947

PATNA,

April 24, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I kept my eyes open during the Ramdhun to find out who among the women beat the correct time and joined the Ramdhun. I found some women moving and clapping their hands, but they were not keeping time! This wouldn't do. I had told you yesterday that if all of you want to recite the name of God in unison and with single minded concentration, you must learn the rules of collective prayer. When everyone recites the name of God with genuine feeling and with one voice, the blissful notes would give rise to a very pleasant, delightful feeling. I can see the women because they sit right before me. But the men stand at a distance and I am not able to see them well. The dais on which I sit has been made like the stage in a theatre. There is a special lighting arrangement so that people can have a good view of me, as of an actor on the stage. But the men stand in the dark. The light should be directed at the people. After all we are all in a way actors on the stage of life. I cannot see their hands but I can make out from the sound that they do not all join the Ramdhun. This is not good and it should not be.

Some Harijan workers came to me this afternoon. I talked to them for an hour. We had a long discussion. Then I went to the Sadaquat Ashram where a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was held. The Harijan workers told me that there was very little feeling of untouchability in Bihar. But I have heard that it is not true. Yesterday a shameful thing happened here. I came to know later that a few Harijan women had come to the prayer meeting, but some women did not allow them to sit down. They let their contempt be known and the Harijan women left the place. Had I known about it yesterday, I would have talked about it. Today Hari-jan workers, both men and women, came to me. After hearing their tales I felt sad realizing that if those who considered themselves high caste, did not give up their fancied superiority and did not discard their unfounded pride, we would not be able to preserve our freedom even if it came.

I say this not only for Patna or Bihar, but for the whole of India. Your Ministers are your elected representatives and they ought to guide you. Some people asked me





if it was enough to touch the untouchable. I said no. The feeling of untouchability cannot be wiped out just by touching the untouchable.

There was a time when the Hindus who considered themselves high-born never even touched the untouchables. But the people are now fairly enlightened. It is because of this awakening that we are now at the threshold of freedom. People no longer mind inter-dining. But inter-marrying is still unmentionable. There are a number of high placed men in Bankipur. If the untouchables come to their houses they are received with respect. They consider these men worthy of honour. But the untouchables cannot go to the houses of orthodox Brahmins or sanatani Hindus. These distinctions of touchable and untouchable are man made. Otherwise there is no such label of untouchability tagged on to anyone. I ceaselessly go on telling everyone that unless the blot of untouchability is removed Hinduism would be completely wiped out. I hope that the activities of the Charkha Sangh and Nayee Talim would be very useful in this field too.

Actually we have committed a great crime, for which we ought to atone. I am sticking to this place in the hope that Bihar will do as much good as it has indulged in wrongs. The Hindus should so placate the Muslims by their conduct that they should be convinced that the Hindus committed a mistake once but that they are really not such senseless people.

Another thing is that we must completely eradicate untouchability. I have already told you that Bihar is now independent of the Charkha Sangh. The headquarters of the Charkha Sangh are at Sevagram. Now Bihar has withdrawn itself from the central body and is free to produce as much khadi as it wants. Now you must think how Bihar should work. Bihar should take a concrete step in the right direction. I told you yesterday that Nayee Talim was a lofty tree and under its cool shade we could live in great comfort.

Let the women remember that they should not repeat their mistakes. And those who committed the mistake should make amends by each one bringing with her one untouchable woman a day.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar— III, pp. 37-9

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## 63. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 25, 1947

PATNA,

April 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am going to speak to you today about something which has just come to my notice. It is a subject close to the hearts of the Hindus, viz., cow-protection. I wrote a book called Hind Swaraj<sup>1</sup> when I was in South Africa. That was in 1909 (The source has 1908, a slip.), that is, 40 years ago. In those days too, I held the same views as I do now. There was a statement in the book saying that I considered the cow as our mother and I have an honoured place for her in my heart because she gives me milk. If I want to protect myself, I must also protect the cow. The cow is worshipped even in Bihar. But, as I wrote in 1909, even though we claim to protect the cow, in fact, we are killing her. Many Hindus were angry with me for making such a statement. But I was firm in my view.

Nowhere else in the world is the condition of the cow as poor as in India. If we look at the way we treat our cows, it would be clear to us that even though we claim to worship the cow, in our hearts we have no true respect for her. We treat the cow very harshly. Look at it from my point of view and think of the hard work we extract from the bullocks. It is a mute animal and cannot complain. But we yoke the bollocks to the cart and load it so heavily that we do not even bother to think that the cart might give way. And, when the bullocks cannot move we beat them mercilessly. We give no thought to the health of the bullocks. When I see their bones sticking out, I wonder how they manage to walk at all. The bullocks' condition is similar to the poor people's. Just as a poor man does not get ghee, milk, and so on, the cattle too do not get proper fodder. Experts say that either the animal world will destroy us, or it will be our duty to kill them in order to survive. If that happens people will ridicule us that we, the cow worshippers, have taken to cow-slaughter.

However, for protecting the cow, instead of laying down our own lives we kill others. And whom do we go and kill? The British? Of course not. How can we kill them? They are powerful, and even though they are few in number, they are the rulers. They possess arms. They consume as many cows as they wish. They trade in beef. They take away from India any number of cows of healthy and good breed to slaughter them.



These cows are not sold by the Muslims, for they do not keep cows in such large numbers. It is you who sell the cows to them. Then they sell beef tea to us which we consume. Our children consume it too because the doctors recommend it. I have a Vaishnava friend who had beef tea saying he had to take it because his doctor said that he would not survive without it. I have heard some Bihari Hindus complain that the Muslims slaughter our cows. Why then should the Muslims not be killed, they ask. Even in 1908 when I was in South Africa I used to be amused at the Hindus' claim that there were several societies for cow-protection. Here too people go about collecting funds for cow-protection. But how can we protect the cow when we kill our own brethren? You cannot kill the British because they are strong. Today if they are going it does not mean that you have grown stronger or that they have grown weaker. They have decided to leave because the force of our satyagraha has compelled them to go. It will have to be accepted that they are honest, because in the matter of leaving the country they have shown much honesty. When they came, you could have told them that they should not eat beef. You could have told them that if they ate beef, cow's ghee or milk would not be available and that they could manage to live without beef. But in America and England where people freely eat beef the cow is very well protected. They raise the cows very well and milk them properly, and they sell pure milk. But as for you, you sell ghee by adulterating it with fat. You also sell vegetable ghee. You consume beef tea and beef extract too; but if the Muslims eat beef you kill them. I once stayed with Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb of Firangi Mahal at Lucknow. He left us long ago. He said that if the cow was so useful to us, it was our duty also to protect her. In those days the Hindus and the Muslims used to be united and they had no quarrels. Had we maintained the same friendly relations, the Muslims would have given up beef-eating. You also said that a large number of cows were saved in one year. Nowhere in the Koran is it said that it is one's duty to eat beef. But if we forcibly stop the Muslims it would become obligatory for them to eat it. I wish to tell you about it because complaints have been made not by one but many Hindus. If we wish to create an atmosphere of harmony, we ought to give up such methods of coercion.

Some work of cow-protection is being done in the U.P., Bihar, Gujarat, the C.P. and other places. For that matter there are also some Hindus who insist on eating beef. They also quote a Sanskrit shloka which shows that in the ancient times even Brahmins used to eat beef. That is not incorrect either. It is another matter if the passage is interpreted differently. No one ever mentions cow-protection in Andhra and Madras.



If we want to protect the cow we must know our dharma, know what true compassion is, learn how to look after cattle. In our country this is not done properly even in the dairies. I have had a hand in the setting up of the Goseva Sangh. (In February, 1942.) It is our duty to protect the cow. In fact, I would say it is the duty of every human being, because taking cow's milk and ghee is beneficial to everyone. Even the non-vegetarians have to take ghee, milk, and so on. Buffalo's milk is not as good as cow's milk. But that does not mean that I do not wish the buffalo to exist. If the cow is saved, the buffalo would be saved too. But the cow cannot be saved in the way we are trying to do it at present. We are blinded by selfishness and a feeling of animosity. We ought to learn from England and America how to rear cattle. Our knowledge of the subject at present is very poor. There is a need for us to learn from other countries how to rear cattle, what fodder we should give them and the proper way to milk them. First of all we must try to cultivate humility in order to protect the cow. Let us not be angry with anyone. On the contrary, let us try to protect the cow by persuading others. That alone would render our efforts successful.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 40-3

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## 64. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 26, 1947

PATNA,

April 26, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Since I have to visit the Muslim brethren I do not wish to give you the whole of my time today. You must have heard of Maulana Shafi Daudi. I came to know about him when I had come to Bihar for the first time. Later I went to his house also. On his invitation I have promised to attend a meeting of the Jamiat-e-Islam. I therefore wish to leave early.

Please remember what I told you about the cow yesterday. I told the goshala people who came to see me today that they should all come to me together. Then I would tell them what could be done to improve the breed of the cow. They too agree that the condition of the cow anywhere in India is not as bad as in Bihar. This is an exaggeration, for the condition of cattle in some other parts of India is found to be worse than in Bihar. All the same, according to me, it would suffice to say that the condition of cattle in India is the worst in the whole world. This is a matter of great shame and a blot on us since we call the cow our mother and worship her. If we had been following our dharma India's name would not have been tarnished. We must remove this blot.

I hope you will think over what I have told you, for I shall say no more today.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, p. 44

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## 65. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 27, 1947

April 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The *bhajan* (और नही कछू काम के, मै भरोसे अपने रामके। दोऊ अक्षर सब कुल तारे, वारी जाऊ उस नामपे। तुलसीदास प्रभू राम दयाघन, और देव सब नाम के।) you heard just now was sung before also. I want to give you something of the background of this *bhajan*. It first echoed in my ears when I went on a fast while in jail. But while fasting one's memory becomes weak. None of my co-workers remembered the *bhajan* fully either. And so I sent a telegram and the *bhajan* was sent to me telegraphically in the Roman script. The *bhajan* delighted me so much that I forgot my fast. My grandson Kanu was with me at the time. At my request he sang it for me. There is nothing special about this *bhajan* by Tulsidas. He only says that he lives by two syllables (Namely, Ra and ma). Everything, he says, is accomplished only with the help of Rama. All other gods are amenable to offerings. For, when people go to worship the deities they offer a couple of paice before offering their prayers. The mother of a sick child offers a little money before praying for the recovery of her child. Another woman offers money to Lord Mahadeva pleading to be spared the nightmares she goes through. Some other woman who has too many daughters prays for a son. But all this is futile. Tulsidas says that God needs no flattery.

I told you yesterday that I was going to a meeting of Muslims. It was a function of Jamiat-e-Islam. In a way it is an association of fakirs. But they are not the fakirs who live by begging. They do not beg for money but they are fakirs at heart. If they eat at somebody's cost, they first do some work for him. They say that all human beings are servants of the One God and all should abide by His command. One cannot meet God merely by visiting a mosque or a temple; the real thing is to do His work.

I felt that someone might now think that since Bihar has just 13 or 14 per cent Muslim population and the rest are Hindus, why placate the Muslims? But I say that if the Muslims invite me with love I shall go to them even barefoot. But, though I am born in a Hindu family and brought up in the Hindu tradition, I will not go to visit a big Hindu if he orders me to do so. But here the Muslims are few in number, and so I would walk barefoot to their houses. Yesterday I went in a car because I had to go very far and I would not have otherwise reached there in time. If the Hindus think that I am trying to give undue importance to the Muslims, they are mistaken. I have come here



only to see that they get what is their due. The Congress is in power here and it was not strictly necessary for me to come and see it myself; but I came just the same.

It is also wrong to quarrel with anyone over the names—Rama or Rahim. For, whether we say Rama or Rahim, Krishna or Karim, God or Allah, we mean the One God.

There was a mention of the child Rama in the bhajan which was sung yesterday. Tulsidas has sung to the glory of Ramanama so much that you would find his Ramayana recited wherever you go in the country. Although there are many other epics in India they are not so steeped in devotion. On seeing an image of Krishna, Tulsidas is believed to have said: “Tulsi’s head would bow down to you only if you take up the bow and arrow (Weapons associated with Shri Rama).” He was a devotee of Rama. Hence he insisted that he would bow to Krishna only if he appeared before him in the form of Rama. Even you, if you are worshippers of Rama, should love everyone. There was a time when it used to be said that if one wanted to know what true religion was, one should visit India. That was because the Hindus did not kill anyone. But now there are robbers, dacoits and also murderers among the Hindus. Let me warn you, however, that if you let the fact of the Hindu majority turn your head and attempt to eliminate other people, Hinduism is not going to benefit in any way. On the contrary, it would perish.

Let me wind up by referring to the point about two syllables. If you are worshippers of Rama, you must also accept that Rama belongs to all. He is the Saviour of all, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Parsi. And whoever wishes to worship Rama should do so sincerely.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 45-7

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## 66. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 28, 1947

(It being his day of silence, Gandhiji's written speech was read out.)

PATNA,

April 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am sorry to let you know that I shall have to go to Delhi by the morning train the day after tomorrow. There is a call from Pandit Nehru. Congress President Shri Kripalani has also sent a telegram from Rajputana that I should be in Delhi by the first of May. The Congress Working Committee is to meet there the next day. It pains me to have to leave you at this stage. I do not relish the idea of leaving Bihar unless the Mussalmans have completely shed their fear and both the communities allow me to leave cheerfully. I felt the same thing when I left Noakhali. For both these places I have the same motto before me "Do or Die". The cause in both places is the same. My non-violence bids me dedicate myself to the service of the minorities. It would be a new birth for me and would give me new strength if the Hindus and the Mussalmans of both these places become friends and shed their animosity. God alone knows what will happen ultimately. Man can only try and perish in the attempt to do God's work. God is all in all. We are only zeroes. The same mission takes me to Delhi, that is, to work for Hindus and Muslims. I hope to return within a short time and be among you.

You may be astonished to learn that I continue to receive letters charging me with having compromised the interests of the Hindus by acting as a friend of the Muslims. How can I carry conviction with the people by mere words if the sixty years of my public life have failed to convince them that by trying to befriend Muslims I have only proved myself a true Hindu and have rightly served the Hindus and Hinduism? The essence of true religious teaching is that one should serve and befriend all and should be enemy of none. I learnt this in my mother's lap. You may refuse to call me a Hindu. I would only quote a line from Iqbal's famous song which means "Religion does not teach us to bear ill will towards one another". (मजहब नहि सिखाता आपसमें बैर रखना.) It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends, but to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is true religion. All else is mere business.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 48-9

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## 67. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, April 29, 1947

April 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

This is my last evening here. Tomorrow I shall have to go to Delhi. I beseech you not to come to the station to see me off. I do not like people shouting and making noise. My ears cannot stand noise. If there is no noise around I can even sit down to work as there is always a lot of work pending with me. But if a lot of people gather round and raise a din I cannot work. Nor can I rest when I want to. Two or three persons who would be escorting me would be enough. I grant that people come out of love. But forming such big crowds is no sign of true love. What is that love which makes a nuisance of itself?

Major General Shah Nawaz came to me today. He is working in Masaurhi. The Muslims who are going to settle down there are being looked after by him. The Government is no doubt doing all this work but help from those who can give it is also welcome. Shah Nawaz Saheb is doing this work very well. He talked to me about his work. I asked him to put down his points in writing. I shall give you the gist of what he has written down for me:

A meeting was held at Atarpur at which a panchayat of the local Hindus and Muslims was formed. The head of the Panchayat came to Patna and exhorted the Muslim refugees to go back to their homes. He told them that they should regard him as their friend as before and trust him. He assured them that he would protect them at the cost of his life. His words had some effect and some fifty Muslim families returned to their villages. They are now living there in peace and they no longer require police protection. The Government also provides them food through General Shah Nawaz. When he distributed the foodstuffs to the Muslims, the Hindus protested. They said the Muslims had suffered at their hands and so they would arrange for their food. And they have been doing it. The local Hindus are also helping the Muslims in harvesting their crops.

Shah Nawaz Saheb also went to Bir. A Muslim from that place went up to him and said that he wanted to return to his village. But he saw danger in going there. The General permitted him to go and, providing him a police escort, asked him to proceed without fear. But as he was going, a few Hindus of the village Panchayat stopped him



and asked why he had the police escort with him. The Muslim villager was scared. He said he was frightened to go alone. The Hindus said it was a shame on them that he should go under police protection. They urged him to trust them and said that they would look after his safety and he should not have the police to escort him. The Muslim villager was persuaded at last. He realized that the Hindus were after all his friends and he sent back the escort.

The third thing is that there are also some Sikhs working with Shah Nawaz Saheb who are discharging their responsibilities very well. One among them is Lt. Kartar Singh. He carried the beddings of the returning Muslims to their respective houses. The Muslims appreciated this gesture. They thought they need not be afraid of men who had been offering such services to them. When somebody died in one of the Muslim families, Kartar Singh dug the grave all by himself. This has been very largely removing the fear from the hearts of the Muslims. And the work is proceeding well. But that does not mean that things are going on equally well in all places. If, in all the places where the Hindus have committed grave crimes, work is done along the lines followed in these three places, the Muslims would certainly return to their homes. There is no doubt about it. The Government would of course rebuild the houses that have been destroyed or damaged. But you too should help in putting up the houses again.

All the houses should be ready by June. This is what Shah Nawaz Saheb also desires. Hence you must give your full help.

If all the Hindus here start treating the Muslims in a friendly manner, the fire that is raging today would be extinguished. This fire should be put out at once. If no attempts are made to extinguish the fire at its source it would reduce everything to ashes. Bihar is a big province. If all is well here Calcutta and the other places which are going through fire will return to normal.

I wish that when I return from Delhi your hearts would have changed so much that all the Hindus and Muslims of this place would be able to tell me that I need not stay here and that I could go back.

[From Urdu]; Gandhijike Dukhe Dilki Pukar—III, pp. 50-3

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## 68. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 1, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 1, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It has been only twenty days since I left Delhi. But even as I went I had a feeling that I might have to return soon. But my place was then in Bihar and Noakhali and I could not stay back even for a fortnight. That was why I went to Bihar. I had told you that I was Jawaharlal's prisoner and would return whenever he sent for me. I came back as soon as I received the summons from him and Kripalani.

You will be happy to learn that when I went to Bihar people left me in peace. They did not bother me on my way. I slept in peace, I was not tired and could even do some work. But that was not the case on my return journey. People created noisy scenes at every place. It did not occur to them that an old, infirm man like me should be left in peace, and his sleep should not be disturbed. Today I felt exhausted as I was not able to sleep well. Even so, I did work during the day, because it is work that sustains me. I cannot live without work; but I could work very little. What I really cannot stand is shouting by the people and the slogans they raise. Through you I wish to convey to all people that they should not greet me with noise and should not raise slogans. It would be all right if the people gathered at the railway stations if they wished, for, if they came, some collection would be made for the Harijan Fund. But they should not make noise.

I wish to tell you what I did in Bihar. The work done there is considerable. Gen. Shah Nawaz has installed himself in a small place. He is now meeting with success in his work. The Muslims who had fled to Asansol under duress have come back. They had to undergo too many hardships at Asansol. They realized that people could be comfortable only in their own place. Their children had grown so emaciated that their bones were sticking out. They were not looked after in any way there. Now these children are provided with milk. It is impossible to get fresh milk because our cattle have gone dry. Hence, these children are being given powdered milk. Powdered milk does not have the vitamins fresh milk has. But the inherent nutritive property of milk is preserved in powdered milk. After their return from Asansol these children have



regained health because of the powdered milk and they have started putting on weight.

Then there was the question of rations for the adults. How to provide food for so many people who have come back? They were afraid to go out and buy the rations themselves in a place where they had been persecuted. The Government arranged to have the rations sent to them. But their Hindu neighbours protested saying that the Muslims were their guests and they would themselves bring the rations to their houses, and that it was not necessary for Government officials to trouble themselves on that account.

In another place, where Muslims had been killed in large numbers, those who had survived were hesitating to return. Some I.N.A. men escorted them so that they could get over their misgivings. On seeing the I.N.A. men going with them some Hindus told them that they need not take the trouble. They were going to serve these Muslims. They would protect them even if it meant death. The I.N.A. men said that they were obeying the command of their General, and they could not go back. Then the Hindus pleaded that they would not always be mad. Earlier they had really lost their heads. Was it any bravery that ten thousand people should come together to kill one thousand? They would never do it again. Thus the Hindus drove away the fear from the hearts of the Muslims, and encouraged them to return to their homes. As a result the Muslims themselves asked the I.N.A. men to go back. I am confident that if the situation in Bihar turns out well, the trouble continuing in various parts of India would come to an end. All I wish to say is that all of us have to be courageous. But I hear that people are now indulging in dastardly acts in Delhi also. Every day crimes are being committed insidiously. Shameful things are happening in Dera Ismail Khan too. (Murders, arson, loot, destruction of property and conversions on a large scale had been reported in Dera Ismail Khan and Hazara Districts.) They have not yet ceased.

People ask me what has happened to our signatures. Why is peace not being established? I did not affix my signature after meeting and consulting Mr. Jinnah. The Viceroy insisted that I should sign the appeal. I asked him what authority I had to sign the appeal. I am not even a four-anna member of the Congress. What good would my signature be? I am a small man. Of course the Quaid-e-Azam is a big man, his signature would carry much weight. But the Viceroy told me that Jinnah Saheb was keen on my signature. He was not ready to affix his own signature unless I affixed mine. He said



that if I gave my signature, he would at least know what Jinnah Saheb really meant. Thus I put down my signature. I will not discuss what followed.

Signing a peace appeal is nothing new for me. All my life I have done that and I continue to do it. But Jinnah Saheb's signature is a great thing. If all Muslims are under Jinnah Saheb's influence, they must now abide by his words; for he has signed on behalf of the Muslims. But have I given my signature because I am a Hindu? I have influence over none. I belong to no party. I belong to all. If the Hindus of Bihar act in frenzy again I shall fast unto death. In the same way, if the Muslims in Noakhali lose their heads, I shall lay down my life there. I have earned that right. I belong to the Muslims no less than to the Hindus. I belong to the Sikhs, Parsis and Christians in the same measure. I may be crying in the wilderness, but whatever I say would be on behalf of all and addressed to all.

But Jinnah Saheb presides over a great organization. Once he has affixed his signature to the appeal, how can even one Hindu be killed at the hands of the Muslims? I would tell the Hindus to face death cheerfully if the Muslims are out to kill them. I would be a real sinner if after being stabbed I wished in my last moment that my son should seek revenge. I must die without rancour. But why in the first place would a Muslim kill at all when he has been asked not to do it?

But the thing is that they still have to realize that in politics force cannot avail. People ask why our signing the peace appeal is not having any effect. Why are the Muslims still not contained? Why are Dera Ismail Khan and the Frontier Province rocked with violence? Dr. Khan Saheb and Badshah Khan tried to stop it but the people there claimed that they belonged to the Muslim League.

If the people of the Frontier Province, even as supporters of the Muslim League, do not honour the words of Jinnah Saheb, I would venture to suggest that it is his paramount duty to leave everything and work to restore peace. Why is he not following that course? Is he going to achieve Pakistan by following his present course? If he wishes to have Pakistan, let him have it by adopting peaceful methods. When someone achieves something by force, it is snatched away from him by a greater force. Jinnah Saheb's idea of achieving Pakistan by force can never succeed.

But I want to ask even the Viceroy why he is not able to do anything after getting the signatures from both of us. Why does he not take me to task? Why does he not take



Jinnah to task? If the Hindus and the Muslims continue to fight even after that, if the Sikhs continue to fight, the British should step aside.

But what would you do if the British continued to stay here? You say you would take up arms, but the British are not going to be frightened by your arms and give you anything. Even now, they are not talking of granting us freedom because of our arms. They think that India has shown a new way to the world. That is the reason why we are getting our independence. As it is, there are too many people in the world who meet force by force. They even talk of killing two for one, let alone one for one. But, I say there will never be any peace even if you kill not ten but a hundred for one. There is nothing brave about dying while killing. It is an illusion of bravery. The true martyr is one who lays down his life without killing.

You may turn round and ask whether all Hindus and all Sikhs should die. Yes, I would say. Such martyrdom will not be in vain.

You may compliment me or curse me for talking in this manner; but I shall only say what I feel in my heart. While you are listening to me patiently, I shall only express my heart's anguish and ask you to be courageous and not get frightened. If someone wants to scare us into surrendering anything we would part with not even a cowrie. If he comes to persuade us we may give him even millions. If you cannot show such courage and if the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs all become mad, whatever the British may do for us and whatever they may grant us, will never remain in our hands. What we want to achieve we must achieve through persuasion. If we learn this art all will be well with us; otherwise there is absolutely no doubt that India is doomed to perish.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 54-8

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## 69. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 2, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 2, 1947

After a passage from the Quran was recited, a young man shouted, “Stop it. Victory to Hinduism.” Hearing this Gandhiji stopped the prayer and said: Very well, let his wish be granted today. Gandhiji asked the man to calm down but he continued to shout. (In the meanwhile the police arrived and took the man away.) Gandhiji said:

If my words can reach the policemen I would request them to release the man and allow him to come over here. I do not approve of the police coming here to maintain order during the prayer. If the police go on arresting people every day and I rely on them to hold the prayer, it would be no prayer at all. I can hold the prayer only when all the people gladly allow it to proceed peacefully. You saw that I stopped the prayer when the young man wanted it to be stopped. I would again stop the prayer if he wants me to do so tomorrow. But “Victory to Hinduism” cannot be won in this manner as he has said. He must realize that religion only declines by such acts. How can we protect our religion by preventing others from praying? But I do not blame him. Today the atmosphere is such. Today everything is seen upside down. No one understands the obvious thing. Hence, if someone asks me to stop the prayer, I shall submit to the demand.

But what pains me more is that he created a disturbance in the midst of the prayer. I would not have started the prayer at all if he had made his intention known in the beginning. Where was the need for the police to intervene? It is a matter of shame to me that so many police forces should stay here to maintain order during the prayer. How can the police protect my religion? My religion would be protected only when I myself will try to protect it. Or rather, it is pretentious to say that I would protect my religion. It is God who would protect my religion. If there is prayer in my heart, God is bound to protect me. What does it matter if the external prayer is not conducted?

But what can you do? You are all sitting quietly. You have come here to meditate on God and imbibe some goodness. All of you have to suffer because of one person. But you are not going to realize God by getting together to suppress a single individual and carrying on the prayer by force. That would be only betraying yourselves.



I wish that the young man had calmed down and heard what I had to say. I would have brought him round. He would have been convinced if not today then tomorrow, if not tomorrow, then the day after. Whatever it may be, we have to remember that force cannot be employed in furtherance of religion. One would have to lay down one's life in the pursuit of religion. There has been no religion in the world which did not call for the sacrifice of life. Only after one has mastered the art of laying down one's life does one's religion attain strength. The tree of religion is watered only by those who are prepared to die. Religion progresses through one who recites the name of God, who works for God, who praises Him, who undertakes vows and fasts and pleads with God to show one the way since one cannot find it oneself. Then the people know him as a devotee and follow him. Religion takes shape only that way. No religion has grown by killing. It has grown only by dying. This is the basis of religion. Sikhism has progressed only in this way.

Prophet Mohammed also fled to Medina without fear in his heart and God saved him and Hazrat Ali from thousands of enemies because of their faith in Him. Prophet Mohammed, as it were, strengthened the roots of Islam by risking death.

Similar is the story of Christianity. And Buddhism too, if we regard it as separate from Hinduism, grew only when some people sacrificed their lives for it. I have not found a single religion which did not in the earlier stages call for sacrifices on the part of its followers. When a religion is well established people in large numbers come forward to follow it. This gives rise to bigotry. Now even the followers of Hinduism have stooped to killing and slaughtering although Hinduism never advocated violence.

Today people are scared at the mere mention of religion. I wonder why people are so scared. The Hindus, the Sikhs—why, the whole of Punjab is in a tumult. And from the other end one hears the shrieks from Bengal. People say that Punjab and Bengal should be partitioned. But if they have to be divided, why do they go to the Viceroy? Why do they not come to me? Why do they not come to you? If Pakistan is being granted, is it for the purpose of annihilating the Hindus and Sikhs?

Jinnah Sahib has stated that the Hindu and the Sikh minorities would be absolutely safe in Pakistan and that they would not be persecuted. But why are such conditions not obtained today? I can have a glimpse of Pakistan in only what is happening in the Punjab and Bengal, isn't it? If that is not what Pakistan is going to be, why does not Jinnah Saheb bring about what he says? Why is not every Hindu in the





Muslim majority places protected? Why do the Hindus of Sindh, who form only 25 per cent of the population, have to live under the shadow of fear? Does Pakistan mean that all the nonMuslims, the Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and those belonging to other religions have to live as slaves? If that is so, it would not be a true Pakistan. Hindustan too can be considered true Hindustan only when no harm is done even to innocent Muslim children in the Hindu majority provinces.

Jinnah Saheb can question us about the deeds of the Hindus. The Hindus of Bihar have behaved no better. Indeed they are at fault. But today the Hindus of Bihar are repenting. Even the Chief Minister owns his guilt. If the same thing happens at all places I would know that something worthwhile has been achieved. But today everybody has given up his religion, and if others follow their religions people rush to attack them. This is not correct. The Muslims in their turn should tell their minority neighbours that they could all follow their own religions and that they would not come in their way.

After all, why should we let a thing slip from our hands when we are about to have it? But everyone is acting like that only. The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, all should free themselves from this sin of internal quarrels and there is only one way of doing it, namely, to fear God. Then there would be no demand for arms. Then no one would clamour for military [protection] or for weapons. But today there is an all-round demand for kirpans such as the Sikhs have. Again the demand is for big kirpans as the traditional ones are small. But whom are they going to kill with these weapons? If there are going to be such weapons in all the houses, you would not find me anywhere around.

I have only one solution whereby we can completely wipe out even the firmly entrenched British power. That method is to say 'No', i.e., to non-co-operate. They would be completely uprooted by peaceful non-co-operation. It is a great thing. Once it is adopted we shall not have to go in for military training.

[From Hindi], Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 59-62

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## 70. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 3, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You must now be quiet as you are every day. You come here for the prayers, hence you must sit quietly as you arrive. We can always talk. You can talk when you disperse after the prayer. But till then you must remain silent because silence is the essence of prayer. (Someone then objected to the recitation from the Koran and Gandhiji stopped the prayer.)

It appears that the rest of the prayer is allowed, but there is objection only to the recitation from the Koran. Hence, from tomorrow I shall start the prayer with Auz-o-Billahi. So far the prayer used to begin with a Buddhist hymn which is in the Japanese language. A Japanese monk (The Rev. G. Haishao) used to stay with me at Sevagram. He used to sing this hymn in a strong, melodious voice as he circled round the Ashram for one hour every morning sounding his 'dimdim' (A percussion instrument). He expressed a desire to sing the hymn in the prayer, to which I agreed, and since then the prayer has always begun with the singing of this hymn. But from tomorrow I shall begin the prayer with Auz-o-Billahi and the prayer would be carried on if there is no obstruction from anyone. Otherwise, you will all sit in silence and pray in your hearts, and go back peacefully.

However, I would request you to carry in your hearts the prayers of all religions when you go back. Please understand that all religions are good. Have faith that all religions are lofty. The fault does not lie with any religion. If the fault lies anywhere, it is with the people who follow these religions. Every religion has produced some evil men. It is not as if any particular religion has a monopoly of producing evil men. Hence it is our duty to see the good points in every religion rather than those evil men. Let us pick up the gem-like qualities from every religion and thus enrich our own.

Now let me tell you what I propose to say today. We find ourselves in a very delicate situation these days. India is such a big country that the whole world is watching us. You saw in the Inter Asian Relations Conference convened by Jawaharlal that all eyes were fixed on India. Sjhariar (Dr. Sultan Sjhariar, Premier of Indonesia) is not an



ordinary man. He is quite a big man. But even he has his eyes on you, that is, on India. Even the people of the Arab countries look up to us with the hope that the Asian countries would be able to follow suit provided India takes the lead. Japan could do precious little. There is no doubt that Japan showed great courage. She also acted shrewdly. But where is she now? She has not been able to lead Asia. She has lagged behind. One feels sad looking at that country.

As for us, we have not even attained our independence yet. But even now the world is keen to know how we act. This is because we struggled for our independence in a manner no other people did. Such struggles had been carried on in the name of religion. But among struggles for freedom this one is the first of its kind. On April 6, 1919, we took our first step in the direction of independence which now is but a matter of time. And it is universally hoped that with India becoming independent, the whole of Asia and then Africa too would become free. This would mean a new birth for the whole world.

The delegates to the Inter-Asian Relations Conference returned with this understanding. When they came here the atmosphere was vitiated. But they did not look at the dismal things here. Rather they looked forward to our freedom. Those who understand know that when a river is in flood the water goes turbid. Similarly in our country the approach of independence has vitiated the atmosphere. There is a surge of independence in our country and it is likely to cause some disturbances. But it is our duty to see that in course of time we make our freedom pure like the waters of the Ganga which become clear once the floods subside.

How can this be done? India cannot be protected by looking upon irreligion as religion. Nor can we have religious freedom that way. But what is happening today? What happened in Dera Ismail Khan? What happened in Hazara? Why is there such a holocaust in the Frontier Province? Why is there such a race for getting swords and spears and guns? Why are those things collected openly as well as secretly? Why are bombs manufactured secretly? Why do people go on proclaiming that they would resort to force and violence and would get things done under threat?

With all this we can protect neither ourselves nor others. In this way neither India nor Asia would be able to achieve freedom; the rest of them would too would fail to attain freedom.



Let us all then pray and clearly understand that all religions are one. It would be a great thing if we could be good even as individuals.

The next thing I want to talk about is the Press. One of the newspapers has published reports about the Viceroy's talks with our Ministers. They have also circulated reports about the discussions at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee. It is not a small newspaper. Nor is it run in the interests of our opponents. It is a paper supporting the Congress. It has drawn certain conclusions about the Viceroy's plans. It is highly improper that newspapers should indulge in such speculation. They should let the Viceroy himself make a public announcement about what he intends doing. And why should any surmises be made even about discussions at the Working Committee meeting? Only the official report issued by the Working Committee should have been published.

I know there are a great many journalists who scoop up bits from different places and manage to build up a story. But I would say that these people are grabbing at left-overs of a meal. It is not the function of a journalist to depend on left-overs.

The British have sent here a nice man from amongst them. He has come to save Britain's honour. He has been acting with the same good intention with which he has been sent. Then, what right do we have to give publicity to his actions without consulting him? What right does anyone have to wheedle information out of everybody by sweet words, draw inferences from here and there and then publish them in the paper?

I too have been a journalist for the past fifty years. I know how newspapers are run. I also know how newspapers are run in England and America. But why should we ape the evil practices prevailing in England and America? We shall perish if we imitate the bad things in others.

I do not say that everything this journalist has reported is wrong. Some of the things he has written are correct, some are incorrect. He has just made a hotch-potch of the thing. I totally disapprove of this kind of journalism.

Through you I wish to address myself to all journalists that they should not try to make money in this manner. If we cannot earn our livelihood in a straightforward manner, let us perish. But why should this journalist talk in a manner that would harm the country? He has even invented a headline no one would have dreamt of.



It would be good to ignore whatever is unwholesome about England and America and adopt their good points.

Today Jawaharlal expressed his sorrow over this to me. How many people can he reach by expressing his feelings? And moreover what consolation can I offer him? We have led a crusade of dharma and it is with dharma that we are going to win our independence. I would also request journalists to help us with this.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 62-6

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## 71. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 4, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today the prayer will start with the recitation from the Koran, but before that I would ask if there is anyone who does not want this large gathering to have the prayer. If anyone objects to the prayer after it is started the prayer would be stopped; but that would be an uncivilized act. Hence if anyone has any objection he can stop the prayer before we begin it. Is there anyone among you who wants to do so?

A man cried out from the audience: "Yes, I object."

GANDHIJI: Why?

There can be no recitation from the Koran in a temple.

Do you wish to come in the way of such a large gathering?

Yes.

You must all listen. I shall talk to this man. Let us try to know his mind.

Then, turning to the man Gandhiji said:

You need not get excited. Kindly explain to me coolly why I should not pray in this temple today when I do it every day.

The temple belongs to the public. You should not hold your prayers in a public temple.

It is a public temple, no doubt, but the priest and the trustees of the temple are not preventing me. Then why do you want to stop so many people who have come to chant God's name? I really do not understand.

Because I too belong to the public.

Well, then you will not allow the prayer?

No, I will not.

Well, then I stop the prayer. But I want to explain to you all the places of harmony and non-violence in religion. If you continue to stop my prayer every day, you humiliate not me but yourselves. The right thing should be that if one person is



unwilling to respect the wishes of so many, he should himself leave the place. How can a single man stand in the way of such a large gathering? This is possible only with me, i.e., in the world of non-violence. Of course the temple belongs to everybody, but this does not mean that one man may go about creating obstructions at his whim. If such a thing is allowed all the activities of the temple would come to a halt. Had I been alone and he had stopped me, it would have been a different matter. But if he went on shouting in the midst of so many people and I continued the prayer, you would all be provoked. You would hurl abuses at him and hand him over to the police. What credit would it bring us? If that happened, what would the world say about us?

Hence I stop the prayer. But they cannot stop the recitation of *Auz-o-Billahi*, etc. It is very much in my mind. We shall not recite it today. We shall observe silence for two minutes during which you will offer the same prayer. True, you do not know *Auz-o-Billahi*, etc., by heart, but while observing silence you should bring it to your mind that Rama and Rahim are but one. In other words, Hinduism and Islam are both great religions and there is no difference between them. I fail to understand why any two religions should be at loggerheads. Hence I wish that your mantra while observing the silence should be: 'Thou art God, million are thy names.' I had told you that in Hinduism the recitation of Vishnusahasranama (A hymn containing the thousand names of Lord Vishnu) is very much in vogue. I even believe that God has as many names as there are human beings in the world. Ishwara, Bhagawan, Khuda, God, or Ormuzd - whatever name you prefer to say—these are all His names. And, He is over and above all these names. How can anyone ever talk of stopping people from reciting the name of God who is so great that none can know Him? Such an act is sheer impudence, it is barbarism, it is violence.

It would be still better if you could sit with your eyes closed as you observe silence. If, in the meantime, the gentleman sees reason and decides against obstructing the prayer we shall hold the prayer. If not, I shall tell you what I have in mind. (The gathering then observed two minutes' silence.)

I had to go to the Viceroy today as you already know. (For a report of the interview as recorded by the Viceroy, vide "Interview with Lord Mountbatten", 4-5-1947) We sat together for one and a half hours and had a nice and useful discussion. I can-not reveal everything to you here. However, I shall talk about one thing.

The Viceroy told me that I should tell my people on his behalf, or, if I had trust in him, on my own that he had come to transfer power and wind up the British Raj in



this country. It was not possible to wind up such a vast empire in a day. Such a large army could not be moved out just by snapping one's fingers. But he assured me that the British had no intention of staying here beyond June 30, 1948. He said he had come here to do this task and was doing his utmost to accomplish it.

But he complains that he is upset by what appears in our newspapers. That obstructs his work. It is his complaint that on the one hand we fight among ourselves and on the other blame and discredit the British. Maybe, the British Government committed errors in the past. But now we must forget about the responsibility of the British for our quarrels. Nothing worthwhile would be gained by harping on the responsibility of the British for this and that. He has advised us not to talk in this vein and to forget the past in deciding the issues that belong to the future.

The Viceroy says that our newspapers do exactly this and their obduracy hampers his work. He says he had said nothing from which the Press could have any clue. Nor had any of his close associates said any such thing.

The Viceroy expects the people of India to behave with a reasonable degree of decency. The headlines carried by the newspapers also largely twist the point. On what basis had the Press reported that Khan Saheb's Government in the Frontier Province would be overthrown? When the nationalist papers indulge in such writing, the Muslim papers try to outdo them.

This, the Viceroy said, would only spread poison on both sides and he had not come here to spread poison. If the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians lived together in peace it would give a good name to the British that they left behind a united India.

The Viceroy also wished to say that if the people of India desired freedom they must remain reasonably peaceful. He said they did not want to leave us quarrelling among ourselves. That is why he is trying his best to solve all issues whatever the result. He carries on his work on the assumption that they are definitely leaving by June 30, 1948.

Appealing to my faith in him he assured me that he took every step in accordance with his conscience. Although he is a naval commander and believes in physical force he has utmost faith in God too as I have, and is guided by nothing but





his own conscience. He acts according to his own lights such as God has granted him. Moreover, he could serve the British nation in no other way.

He would try his utmost to see that our people worked together in harmony. He did not wish to do anything which might jeopardize the interests of the minorities. Otherwise it would be said that they had granted everything to the Hindu majority by suppressing the Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, etc. Who was going to intervene if we chose to fight after they had gone? Right now he was silently making efforts for a compromise. But once his patience came to an end, he would not keep quiet. He said now even the Defence Minister (Sardar Baldev Singh) was our own man. But if he too would appear to have failed in handling the situation the Viceroy would exercise his responsibility with the help of the Englishman (Claude John Eyre Auchinleck), who was still the Commander [-in-Chief] of the British army, which was by no means small, and the personnel trained by them. But if the people accepted his advice straightaway, it could somewhat lighten his work.

No doubt, the Viceroy's task is difficult; but the British are not people who would run away from a difficult task.

This was not meant to be conveyed to you. But I felt that since we have gathered here in such numbers I might as well tell you about it today, and through you, convey it to the Press.

I told you yesterday that unless Lord Mountbatten proves guilty of a breach of trust, we should not talk about him irresponsibly. If he does nothing even when we behave well, we can tell the British people that their Viceroys come in succession to grant us freedom but all they do is to suppress us.

We need not express it in an impolite way. Everything can be expressed in an agreeable language. If we behave in an uncivilized manner, we cut our own throats.

It would make their departure difficult if we continue to fight among ourselves. Defence, of course, is in their hands, but that is only to resist foreign aggressors. How can they stop our internal quarrels? They would merely say that the Hindus are condemning the Muslims and the Muslims are condemning the Hindus. What can they do about it? They have got to go. If we went on fighting till the end of June and they failed to do anything we would tell them that they had no more right to stay on and they should quit.



If they stay on, they can stop the Hindus and also the Muslims from fighting by using force against both as they have done before. Thousands of men have been done to death for the killing of a single Englishman. But they cannot do such a thing at the moment of their departure. Hence, it is our duty to make their departure easier by demonstrating our faith in them. Let us not add to their troubles.

But what is happening today? There is scarcity of food and clothing—you and I do get them, but there are millions in the country who do not get any food or clothing. A minister from Madras who came to me today told me that there were floods in the State and that but for the disturbances, it would have been possible to reach food to the poor people. One does not think in terms of Hindus and Muslims in the matter of distributing food—it has to be provided to all the people of the country.

But today everyone has but one thought, i.e., of killing and slaughtering, and that too in a savage manner. The Muslims kill any Hindus they come across and the Hindus kill any Muslims they come across.

If we stoop to such beastly ways and say that we shall mend our ways once the British have gone, it is a wrong attitude.

Let me tell you one more thing. General Shah Nawaz came today. He has been working in Bihar even after I came away from there. He draws no salary. Even so, he has taken formal leave for fifteen days and is going home. He says that even those Muslims from Bihar who were hesitating to return and who were intimidated by the Hindus have now started coming back. That was because the Hindus realized their duty when they were persuaded and worked continuously for two days and cleared the way for the return of the Muslims and also helped in putting up the huts that were razed to the ground. Similar good work has been done in other villages as well.

If work proceeds along the same lines all the Muslims who have fled from Bihar will come back. The Government is helping them financially; but the Hindus should bring round those who are terrorizing them or are creating obstacles in their way. Then alone would things get done.

In short, there are some decent people even in the midst of the cry to kill and slaughter. Not every Muslim, every Sikh, every Hindu, is a bad man.

Just as peace is restored in Bihar, so will it be in Dera Ismail Khan and the Frontier Province.



If Jinnah Saheb means what he has written, he has got to stop the riots. The army cannot stop those riots. The riots can stop only when the people are persuaded to stop them. If they do not stop, it means that the people do not pay heed to Jinnah Saheb's words, or, Jinnah Sahib is not keen on stopping the riots.

But why should we harbour unkind thoughts about Jinnah Saheb? When things do not seem to be going well, one does start getting suspicious. If I affix my signature to something and my action is quite contrary to it, it is bound to arouse suspicion. Hence some doubts in his case too. But we shall have to watch Jinnah Saheb's actions till the last moment.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 66-72

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## 72. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 5, 1947

(Owing to inclement weather the written speech could not be read out on May 5. The following day Gandhiji could not return in time from a meeting with M. A. Jinnah, the prayers began at 6.30 p.m. Again there was objection to the recitation from the Koran, two minutes' silent prayer was, therefore, offered and this was read out.)

NEW DELHI,

May 5, 1947

In order to escape from the evil one, I seek refuge in God. O God! I begin every task with the remembrance of Thy name. Thou art the compassionate and the merciful. Thou art the Creator of the universe. Thou art Lord and Master. I praise Thee alone and desire only Thy help. Thou will mete out justice on the Day of Judgment. Show me the right path, the path which Thy saints have trod, not the wrong path of those who have offended Thee. God is one. He is eternal, all-powerful, uncreated. There is none other like Him. He has created all things. None has created Him. This is a translation of the verses read daily from the Quran-eSharif. It passes my comprehension how anyone can object to their recitation. I affirm that the enshrinement of this prayer in our hearts can only uplift and make better men and women of us. I shall not say more today.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, p. 73

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## 73. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 7, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 7, 1947

As soon as Gandhiji arrived at the prayer meeting he inquired whether smt. Uma Devi had come . . . She was persuaded to sit on the platform at Gandhiji's insistence. Gandhiji also invited Smt. Vibhavaribai Deshpande and said that these two women had protested against the recitation from the Koran. Gandhiji referred to a letter signed by some twenty persons suggesting that the prayer should not be stopped because a few persons protested.

Do you think there are only two or twenty people who think like this? I think that all of you who do not protest and sit here silently day after day have the same thought in your minds which is expressed in the letter.

But I would like to request you to be patient. Religion can be pursued only with patience. Hinduism has given great importance to tolerance. Shankaracharya has stressed the importance of patience so much that he has said that we need greater patience to attain moksha (Salvation) than to transfer the waters of the ocean to another pit drop by drop with the help of a blade of grass. Now suppose a man starts emptying the waters of the ocean with the help of a jug, if not with a blade of grass, and even finds a hollow place big enough where he can transfer those waters, and if moreover the man lives for hundreds and thousands of years, he may be able to empty the limitless expanse of the ocean. But what would happen to the fresh water pouring into the ocean? How much patience would then be needed to dry up the ocean? Naturally Shankaracharya is speaking of the infinite patience expected of a person desirous of attaining moksha. He says that with one foot on the stirrup of a neighboring horse and the other ready to mount, we cannot ask our guru to tell us what Brahman is. That is not the way one can know Brahman. All of us who have gathered here have come with a desire to learn. We all desire to attain moksha. But do we have the capacity to cultivate the necessary patience? If not, let us at least cultivate enough patience to pray. What good will it do us if we go on praying while a child may be howling away? A prayer to God has to come from the heart. God is not so gullible as to accept words from the lips as prayer. Prayer does not mean mere chanting of words! And why should we insist on such utterance when we are facing opposition of any kind? What we in our superior strength do after having threatened the young man into silence—would you call it pursuit of dharma? Dharma lies in putting up with the



young man. I am glad that you who have gathered here in such large numbers followed your religion peacefully and tolerated an ignorant person.

But today we are not faced with a young man but with a lady. I find that she is even younger than my adopted daughter. She is the wife of a secretary (Of the Akhil Bharatiya Deshi Rajya Hindu Mahasabha, who ran Rajasthan Samachar, a daily). She has sent me a letter. I shall discuss it first.

The contents of the letter show not knowledge but sheer ignorance of Hinduism. This manner of protecting religion is, in fact, one that would degrade it. I wish to tell all Hindus and Sikhs that they should not adopt such misguided methods. I shall reply to the questions of this lady one by one.

1. It is not correct to say that a temple is defiled by reading the Koran there. How can praise of God in a temple be contrary to dharma? No one protested when the meaning of *Auz-o-Billahi*, etc., was explained (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 5-5-1947) here in Hindi yesterday. Would it be an irreligious act if someone recited the Gita in its Arabic translation? If there is anyone who says so, he is an ignoramus. There was a rule in the Frontier Province that the Koran might not be subjected to translation. But Dr. Khan Saheb, who is now the Premier, is a sensible man. He said that if the Koran were translated, it would spread wider. More people would read it and understand it. If Khan Saheb offered his namaaz in this temple, would the temple be defiled? The namaaz consists of recitations from the Koran. Would such recitation be a sin?

2. You might say that the Muslims have sinned against the Hindus. But have the Hindus lagged behind? You should know what the Hindus have done in Bihar. They killed women and children, set houses on fire and chased the Muslims out of their homes. Now if a Muslim came forward and said that the readers of the Bhagavad Gita had committed great sins, what a travesty of truth it would be. To a certain extent I am willing to admit that the Muslims have committed atrocities, that they have sinned. But what is beyond my comprehension is the contention that because a reader of the Koran happens to be a sinner the Koran itself is sinful. That way, the Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas, in fact, all religious books, can be proved to be sinful. People draw different meanings even from the Gita. Some people interpret the Gita in quite a different way from how I do. I find in the Gita the message of non-violence, while others say that the Gita ordains the killing of the 'atavayi' (One who is guilty of heinous crimes,



viz., the incendiary, the poisoner, the assassin, the robber, the usurper of land and the ravisher (I. 36)). Can I go and stop them from saying so? I listen to them and do what I feel is correct.

3. Saying that I have not read the Gita in a mosque only means that I am a coward, does it not? Granted that I am a coward and am afraid of saying my prayer before the Muslims in a mosque. But if I am a coward in one place, need I be a coward everywhere? Do you want me to be a coward here also?

You ought to know that in many places I stay with the Muslims, where I regularly offer my prayers without hesitation. And, while I was touring Noakhali I often held my prayers very near the mosques although not actually inside one. Once I held the prayer within the enclosure of a mosque, in a building on its premises. And I used to have all the paraphernalia of the prayer with me. There used to be the beating of the drum and Ramdhun with the clapping of hands. We did not have the drum with us but we did have Ramdhun with clapping of hands in the premises of the mosque. I told the local Muslims that just as they took the name of Rahim, I would take the name of Rama. I said that it was not worthy of those who took the name of Rahim to stop people from taking the name of Rama. And they did not stop me from taking the name of Rama.

You talk of atrocities. There have been many atrocities in Noakhali. But let me tell you that the atrocities committed by the Muslims in Noakhali are not equal to those committed by the Hindus in Bihar. I am a witness to this fact. I have been to Noakhali and I have also toured Bihar.

Anyone who says that I cannot go and offer my prayer before the Muslims does not know Gandhi. What does this poor Uma Devi know of the stuff Gandhi is made of? I am not ashamed of myself but of what she has been saying. I am ashamed of this gentleman of a secretary who, in spite of holding office in the Hindu Dharma Sabha, is so terribly ignorant. When the ocean catches fire, who can extinguish it?

But the fact is she is not opposed to the particular prayer but to the Arabic language. Yesterday, when a translated version of the Koranic portion was read out it did not hurt anyone.

**Gandhiji then repeated the translated version.**

Now see, I have read out the whole prayer again. It has not hurt even this lady. She finds nothing wrong with it. Had she found anything sinful, would she have allowed



me to read it? Would she not have stopped me and said: 'Keep quiet. I do not wish to hear it.'

But how could she stop me? In what other way can I pray to God? Does she want me to not refer to God as Aja (The Unborn)? Or that I should not consider Him Immortal? Or that I should not call Him Almighty? Or that I should not refer to Him as the Lord? What else can I say in my prayer? What ignorance, then, to say that whatever we wish to say in our prayer becomes sinful when we put it in the Arabic language? We must save ourselves from this gross ignorance.

Let us then pray to God to protect us from darkness. In our Hindu prayers even the words chosen say: "Lead us from darkness to light." (तमसो मा ज्येतिर्गमय. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, III. 28. Vide "Ashram Bhajana-vali") I feel very bad that instead of appreciating such an unparalleled religion we should discard it like a stone. And it hurts me all the more when the wife of a man who wishes to serve religion is bent upon bringing down religion by such acts. In our society the husband is entrusted with high duties. It is his duty to prevent his wife's thoughts from going astray. But this gentleman has imparted to his wife a training in utter intolerance. How can religion survive under such conditions?

If we continue to be like this, Hinduism is certainly not going to survive. Nor will India be able to survive. We shall not be able to save India even if the British quit. In Independent India we have to live like brothers. Those who are enemies today will become friends tomorrow. Would you then tell your Muslim neighbour that he should not read the Koran? Would it in any way raise the status of Hinduism?

Hence I am asking you to pray in silence. For, if so many people sit silently and pray and do not betray their anger against a couple of individuals, we shall be purified, we shall become pious.

You all know that I went to meet Jinnah Sahib yesterday. I cannot tell you everything that took place between us. We have come to an agreement that what we talk about would remain between us, and not be allowed to leak out. Nonetheless, I have conveyed to Badshah Khan, Pandit Jawaharlal and our other leaders the gist of my talks with Jinnah Sahib. Here too I shall briefly mention it. We both have signed a document (Vide "A Joint Appeal", 12-4-1947) which involves two points. The first thing is that we shall not coerce anyone to fulfil our political objectives. Each side will try to





convince the other about its own point of view and would never resort to threat or bullying.

The other point is about restraining the people from indulging in acts of violence and other atrocities. You must have realized from Jinnah Saheb's Press statement (Which was issued with Gandhiji's concurrence; vide "M. A. Jinnah's Statement to the Press", 6-5-1947) yesterday that we have clear political differences. Jinnah Saheb wants Pakistan. Congressmen have also decided in favour of acceding to the demand for Pakistan. But they insist that the Hindu and Sikh [majority] areas of the Punjab and Bengal cannot be included in Pakistan. Only the Muslim [majority] areas can be separated from India. But I for one cannot agree to the idea of Pakistan on any account. I cannot tolerate any proposal for vivisectioning the country. There are many things happening which I cannot bear. But they still do not stop. They go on happening. But in this case, when I say that I cannot bear it, I mean that I do not wish to be a party to it. In other words, I am not going to be influenced by them in this matter. If they want to have Pakistan, let them settle it with their fellowmen. I cannot talk as a representative of any one party. I represent everyone. It is my attempt to be a trustee of all the Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis, Jains and Christians living in this country. I wish to be their trustee even if I do not have the capacity or fitness for it. Hence, I cannot be a party to the formation of Pakistan. When I know that what Jinnah Sahib wishes to do is a dangerous thing, how can I put my signature to the proposal of acceptance of Pakistan? I conveyed this point to him very patiently. We did not quarrel. We talked to each other cordially.

I told Jinnah Saheb in polite words that he could not have Pakistan by resorting to force. He could not compel me to acquiesce in the formation of Pakistan. None but God can compel me. If he wishes to have it by persuasion, why, he can have not only Pakistan but the whole of India.

I have joined him in issuing the peace appeal and in order to make that appeal effective I have requested Jinnah Sahib to take from me whatever work he might wish to take. I told him that I would go with him even a thousand times if that was necessary.

Let me also tell you that everyone had tried to stop me from going to Jinnah Sahib. They asked me what I would gain by going to him. But did I go to him to gain anything? I went to him to know his mind. If I have not gained anything by going to him, I have not lost anything either. I claim to have his friendship. After all, he also



belongs to India. Whatever happens, I have to spend my life with him. How can I refuse to go to him?

We shall have to live in amity. We should not compel anyone even to live in harmony. I would say that if they want Pakistan they should bring us round to their point of view. Let them also convince others that [the formation of] Pakistan is in the interest of everyone in which case I would definitely agree to their proposal. But if they expect to force me into granting it—well I am not going to give my consent.

You might ask me why India cannot be divided. You might wonder what harm it would do. Let me tell you my head is not empty. I have in my head many ideas concerning this matter. But please read and hear [from others] about these ideas. Today I have given you a fairly good amount of my time.

Now I am going to Calcutta. I do not know what I would be able to do there. Nor do I know how long I would stay there and when I would return. I have given my word that I would come whenever Jawaharlal, Kripalani or the Viceroy sent for me. And I do hope I shall be seeing you again.

In the meanwhile, please understand that nothing will be gained by preventing me from holding the prayer. I get the advantage of remaining silent. Nor would you people who have suppressed your anger and remained silent benefit less. But those who cause the obstruction have everything to lose. You people should help them see reason. You would remember that when there was trouble during the prayer the other day, the Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha had pacified them by persuasion. You should also persuade them in the same way. You should win them over not by threats and force but with a peaceful argument that in Gandhi's prayer there is only religion, not irreligion. If they fail to be convinced I have the patience to offer silent prayer. Even in this temple I would offer the same prayer all by myself. The same prayer was offered the day before yesterday when it rained. It was the same temple and the same Hindus were present. But again today there was a protest. This is the sad state to which we are reduced.

Hence I request you to convince these people by your nonviolent behaviour so that they may tell me that I am free to have my prayers here, whether it is in Arabic or Persian or Sanskrit.



Now please sit quietly for two minutes and offer silent prayer. Better still if will keep your eyes closed.

[From Hindi] Prarthana-Pravachan—Part I, pp. 74-81

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## 74. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 9, 1947

(The report in Amrita Bazar Patrika has been collated with the version in The Hindu.)

SODEPUR,

May 9, 1947

Gandhiji said that he had not expected to come to Calcutta but when he had reports from friends about the events in Calcutta he thought that he should come to Calcutta and put in his work in pursuit of the same object that had taken him to Noakhali and then to Bihar. They saw Gurudev's portrait with floral decorations. The 25th of Baishakh was Gurudev's birthday. That was why they had two hymns from the pen of Gurudev sung to them. Great men never died and it was up to the people to keep them immortal by continuing the work they had commenced. The second hymn that was sung to them, namely, 'Hinshaya unmatta prithvi' (the world was mad with violence) was most opposite at the moment when Hindus and Muslims were fighting. The purport of the hymn was that God should take them from darkness unto light, from untruth unto truth and from misery unto bliss indefinable. That was the mantra with which he had armed Deenabandhu Andrews and Pearson (William Winstanley Pearson) when he permitted them to proceed to South Africa. These two were amongst the best of Gurudev's numerous devotees throughout the world.

It was a good thing, proceeded Gandhiji, that Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's words uttered to the Pathan deputation that had waited on him were to the same tune. They should read those words for themselves. If they all followed the advice India would truly become a unique land of real peace.

You know that I am joint signatory to the document (Vide "Talks With Sikhs", 12-4-1947) on nonviolence. That at once imposes on me the duty of fasting unto death if either Hindus or Muslims descended to the level of savages or beasts. Let the Hindus of Bihar and the Muslims of Noakhali remember the fact.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that he had earned the right of fast by the service he had rendered and was still rendering to the Muslims of India. The poet Iqbal had taught them already that true religion did not teach men to hate one another. Let them all take that lesson to heart and render India a land of peace and brotherhood amongst men.

The British are surely going to quit India and if we have any differences between ourselves, let us make it completely our own affair and not approach the British for a settlement. As for the latter, they have no duty except to quit at the earliest possible moment. If they fulfil that part of their task, all else can be settled between ourselves as between brother and brother.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 10-5-1947, and The Hindu, 10-5-1947

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## 75. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 9, 1947

SODEPUR,

May 10, 1947

Speaking at the prayer gathering Mahatma Gandhi addressed himself to two questions that were asked of him. In view of the sourness between Hindus and Muslims that seemed to be daily growing, was it possible for the two to become friends? He answered emphatically that the enmity could not last forever. They were brothers and must remain so in spite of temporary insanity. But perpetual feud was not an impossibility between communities as it was not between two individuals. He hoped that that would not happen, for he prophesied that in that case they would bury the two religions in India and would sell their freedom for a mess of pottage.

The second question was, could partition of Bengal be avoided in view of the rising Hindu opinion in its favour. Gandhiji recognized the force of that opinion. He was not in a position to pronounce an opinion. But he could say without fear of contradiction that if there was partition, the Muslims majority would be responsible for it, and what was more, the Muslim Government that was in power. If he were the Chief Minister of Bengal, he would plead with his Hindu brethren to forget the past. He would say to them that he was as much a Bengali as they were. Differences in religion could not part the two. He and they spoke the same language, had inherited the same culture. All that was Bengal's was common to both, of which both could be equally proud. Bengal was Bengal. It was neither Punjab nor Bombay nor anything else.

If the Chief Minister could possibly take up that attitude, he (the speaker) would undertake to go with him from place to place and reason with Hindu audiences and he made bold to say that there would not be a Hindu opponent left of the unity of Bengal, the unity for which Hindus and Mussalmans had fought together so valiantly and undone "the settled fact" (The partition of Bengal which took place in 1905 was described later by Lord Morley, the Liberal Secretary of State for India, as "a settled fact" but was annulled in 1911.) of so powerful a Viceroy as Lord Curzon. If he were Suhrawardy he would invite the Hindus to partition his body before they thought of partitioning Bengal. If he had that sturdy love for Bengal and Bengalis, whether Hindus or Mussalmans, that love would melt the stoniest Hindu heart. As it was, fear and suspicion had seized the Hindu mind.

He could not forget Noakhali or even Calcutta, if all he heard was true, as it was equally true of the Muslim mind in Bihar and he had not hesitated to tell the Hindus of Bihar that they should remove all suspicion and fear from the Muslims mind. He believed in the sovereign rule of the law of love which made no distinction of race, colour, caste or creed. He was glad that he had in Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah a powerful partner in the belief, which was no secret from the world.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 11-5-1947

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## 76. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 11, 1947

(There was a mammoth gathering, representing all communities.  
Many had to turn away for want of space.)

SODEPUR,

May 11, 1947

Mahatma Gandhi said that he had the privilege of receiving Shaheed Sahib at Sodepur. He had wished to go to the latter's house but he would not let him go to his place. He had no information to give on the interview save that he had to repeat what he had said yesterday.

Gandhiji then addressed himself to the two questions put to him at the prayer meeting. The first was: "You have advised us to work for an undivided Bengal. But can there be an undivided Bengal with a divided India? What can we do to preserve a united Bengal in a united India? "

The answer was that if what he had said was well understood it followed that nothing could happen without the joint wish of both Hindus and Muslims. If a third party was not to decide their fate it would only be decided by their joint will. Then there was no question as yet of a divided India. If the distant event unfortunately did come to pass, the joint and free will of Hindu and Muslim Bengalis would decide which of these divisions to join.

The second question was: "The British have not quit. Should not that be our first demand? Can we not wait to settle matters between ourselves after power is really transferred to the Indian people?"

This question really did not arise for, when the whole of Bengal had one united mind, it was irrelevant whether it was expressed today or after the British power had actually withdrawn.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12-5-1947

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## 77. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 12, 1947

(It being Gandhiji's silence day his written speech was read out.)

SODEPUR,  
May 12, 1947

The thought that is uppermost in my mind today is how to combat the goonda rule that seems to be fast enveloping us. This I say of all India, perhaps it is true more or less of the whole world.

Let the Hindus not deceive themselves with the belief that it is well with the Hindus. As a devout Hindu that I claim to be, I wish to affirm that we Hindus will be living in a fool's paradise if we harbor any such thought. Goondaism is no preparation for taking the place of foreign rule. The thoughtless interference at prayer meetings is not a small symptom of the disease I am describing.

Intolerance is a form of goondaism. It is no less disgraceful than the savagery which we see announced in the daily Press. Let all political workers, be they Hindus, Muslims or any other, ponder well over what is happening before their eyes. Let it not be said by the future generation that we were trying to learn how to lose the liberty before it was even gained. I would ask all the schoolmasters of India, now that they are no longer under the observation of the foreign masters, to recognize their true function even at the risk of their lives and give the right bent to the minds of those whom it is their proud privilege to mould.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 13-5-1947

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## 78. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 13, 1947

SODEPUR,  
May 13, 1947

At today's prayer meeting Gandhiji dealt with the questions that were put before him.

The first was: What could we do to save ourselves and our culture—whether Hindu or Muslim?

Gandhiji said that he thought that nobody else could protect their culture for them. They had to protect it themselves and could destroy it by their folly. Thus, if Bengal had one culture, as he believed it had, it was for the people of Bengal to protect it.

The second question was: When everything at the top goes wrong, can the goodness of the people at the bottom assert itself against its mischievous influence?

In answer, Gandhiji said that if the people at the top went wrong, it was certainly open to, and it was the duty of those at the bottom, to remove the wrong top even as he would remove an umbrella which appeared to be at the top but which was sustained by him.

Thus Pandit Nehru was at the top. But in reality he was sustained by them. If he went wrong, those at the bottom could remove him without trouble. Coming nearer home if they found Suhrawardy Saheb to be unworthy, they at the bottom could certainly remove him, not by physical force but by the way he [Gandhiji] had had the honour of putting before them. The argument that he was elected by the Muslim voters was beside the point.

It all boiled down to the fact that if the people at the bottom were ignorant, they would be exploited. Such was the case with the English. When the people realized their strength and the fact that the bottom sustained the top, it would be well with them. Therefore, he would say that if the top was wrong there was something radically wrong with the bottom. Let them, therefore, dispel their ignorant helplessness.

Before he dealt with the question, Gandhiji told some demonstrators that they need not be afraid of him doing anything that they did not like. He represented nobody





but himself. He could only give advice which they were free to accept or reject. Therefore, if Bengal was divided or united, it would be their act.

Harijan, 25-5-1947

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## 79. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 14, 1947

SODEPUR, May 14, 1947

Gandhiji said that he was leaving for Patna and then proceeding to Delhi, and hoped to return to Calcutta after his work in Delhi was finished.

He had spent two hours visiting the scenes of the recent disturbances in the company of the Chief Minister and could see that the destruction was small compared to the August disturbances (3 Of 1946). He hoped this was the last of disturbances in Calcutta.

Gandhiji then replied to the two questions put to him. The first question was: Calcutta has virtually become divided into Hindu and Muslim zones. What can be done by the citizens so that normal life can once again be restored? Gandhiji replied: The only way is for at least one party to be wholly truthful and non-violent. Then they will fear no one but God. Such men are men of courage. All parties will make friends with them and even goondas will shed their goondaism before them. I know of no other better way. I have appealed to the Muslims who are in the majority to take the lead.

The second question was: Why do you ask the Hindus to study the Koran also? Is it not enough if they study their own religion? Replying, Gandhiji said:

It is the duty of everyone to study the scriptures of other religions besides his own. This enables people to keep their religion pure and rid it of blemishes. Moreover we have Christians, Muslims, Parsis and followers of other religions amongst us. I believe the Hindus should study their religious books if they regard them as their brothers.

Harijan, 25-5-1947

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## 80. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 15, 1947

PATNA,  
May 15, 1947

Gandhiji addressed the prayer gathering today in Bankipore Maidan at Patna after a fortnight. In the interval, he said, he had been to Delhi and Calcutta. He had not foreseen his visit to Calcutta. For, his vow of do or die was taken only for Noakhali and Bihar. But what he heard about Calcutta made him feel that he might be of some use there. And he could say that he had not been entirely unsuccessful. In Calcutta also he was serving Bihar. For the cause was the same. By going to Calcutta or elsewhere, where he might be called upon to go in future, though the possibility was very remote, he did not leave Bihar or Noakhali. It only extended the field of the operation of his do or die mission. He felt that success at one place would be followed by success at other places. The future was, however, in God's hands.

During his absence Gandhiji had kept himself informed about the work going on in Bihar. During the day he had received more information. Affairs in Bihar moved slowly. The Biharis were, however, not slow when they committed acts of madness. There was no reason why they should be slow in making amends. The rains were coming. They were working against time. The Ministry had concentrated the control of rehabilitation work in Ansari Saheb's hands for the sake of efficiency. General Shah Nawaz, who had gone on a short leave, would be presently in their midst. If sufficiently capable women workers imbued with the spirit of loving service came forward to work among the Muslim women, he felt sure the work would go forward.

Gandhiji was sure that if Bihar succeeded in instilling confidence in the Muslims, her influence would be felt throughout India. Some Hindus wrote to Gandhiji to ask if he expected them to flatter and fawn on the Mussalmans. He, as a life-long fighter, with truth and ahimsa as his weapons, could not countenance that. What he counselled was the control of their baser instincts of anger and hatred. And if avoiding harshness and adopting perfect gentlemanliness was flattery, he would not hesitate to use that word.

Gandhiji then informed the congregation that he could not bear the strain of touring every place in the heat. He had to content himself with holding his prayer meeting at different places every day.

Harijan, 25-5-1947



## 81. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 16, 1947

GULZARBAGH,

May 16, 1947

Gandhi referred to his visit to the refugee camp<sup>1</sup> nearby prior to the prayer meeting. He had not been able to see it as thoroughly as he would have liked to do. But what he saw and heard from the Superintendent made him really glad.

The camp was being run on the principle of self-help. Men worked and were paid their due. The children also worked, though they were paid more than what they would be otherwise entitled to. Such self-help bred self-respect.

They were innocent men and women, who had suffered at the hands of the Hindus who had gone temporarily insane. It was their duty, therefore, to make all the amends they could. They should go and visit the refugees in the camp, interest themselves in every detail of their lives, and seek to help them in every way they could. If they did that, Gandhiji said, it would be in part payment of the debt that they owed to the wronged refugees.

Similarly, they need not beg the refugees who had left the province through fear or due to false propaganda, to come back. They should win them back by the magnetic power of their love. If they could create such an atmosphere of affection and brotherliness most of the Muslims who had left the province would return. His work and that of the Government would be considerably lightened. And Bihar would truly become 'vihar' (a garden), as its name signified.

The Indian Nation, 18-5-1947

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## 82. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 18, 1947

(As Gandhiji was observing silence, his written speech was read out.)

PATNA, May 18, 1947

It pained me that yesterday though men and women had assembled in large numbers my voice could not reach them all owing to the clumsiness, or inefficiency, of the volunteers, or because of some defect in the loud-speakers. (Vide "A Letter", 18-5-1947) As a result people failed to maintain silence. It is a matter of shame for us. We ought to learn how to maintain perfect silence even when we gather in hundreds of thousands. If we fail to learn this, we shall not be able to protect our independence. Democracy requires everyone, man or woman, to realize his or her responsibility. This is what is meant by panchayat raj. A single limb of the body ceasing to function properly throws the whole body mechanism out of gear. Similarly, the whole of India is one body and we are its limbs. If we become lax, the whole country would be affected likewise. That is why I lay so much stress on the need for discipline at meetings, on trains or on railway platforms. It is on such occasions that we are tested. I go so far as to say that if we had learnt to keep order at gatherings of hundreds of thousands, riots like those in Bihar would not have occurred. Today, the smallest disturbance is given a communal colour, with the result that it provides an opportunity for a communal flare-up. Volunteers, therefore, should understand this and educate the people to keep order at meetings, etc. This will not be accomplished by merely attempting it when meetings are actually being held. Training in this respect must find its way into the very homes of the people. I would suggest that they tell the people that yesterday's meeting failed in its purpose because of the noise, and that in order to have me again in their midst they must learn to keep silence. I become apprehensive about our future when I see slackness around me in everything. Lethargic people can never accomplish anything, nor can they develop courage. We have to be vigilant if we desire to raise independent India to the highest position in the world. (According to the source, this and the following five prayer speeches are reproduced from Bihar Samachar.)

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 83. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 19, 1947

BARH,  
May 19, 1947

The day before yesterday I went to Dinapur. A big crowd had gathered there, as it has here, but in the absence of any proper arrangement there was too much noise and din. I don't know what went wrong but our purpose was defeated. In all that noise what could I speak and to whom could I address my words? When I speak I do so not to hear my own voice but in order that people can listen and I can explain to them their dharma. What is the point in addressing people if my voice fails to reach them? By God's grace we have today peace and order. I congratulate the volunteers as well as the organizers on their achievement. Now the role of our volunteers has changed. Formerly they were expected to teach people how to fill the jails not to create disturbances or use abusive language. While fighting with the Empire we had to have cool courage. With cool courage we were able to achieve a lot. Of course, we cannot claim that everyone had acquired that courage. Even then we used to get a kind of training. But now the Government is our own and we have to impart training of a different nature. Noise creates disorder which leads to disturbances. Even then there used to be riots, etc., but it was never like this. Today we are fighting with one another. If it continues, I have no doubt that we will lose the independence we are about to attain.

But this is not the subject I am going to talk about today. A full report of the recent riots here should have reached me by this time. But it could not be. However, the people working here have confessed to me today that they had committed a grave error. India is undergoing incalculable sufferings as a result of the sins committed in Bihar and she might have to undergo more in future. If we want to get out of it we shall have to atone for it.

Atonement does not mean merely expressing it in words, it implies a change of heart. We should resolve not to err again. The bad people who have indulged in nasty acts and still continue to intimidate the Muslims, threatening them with physical violence, should confess their guilt and stop behaving like that.

The work of rehabilitation has been entrusted to Ansari Saheb. No doubt it is a difficult task. If the Muslims do not return, whose fault is it? When we do not deal with them in a friendly manner, do not plead with them to return, how can they come back?



They would surely return if we sincerely wished for it and pleaded with them in a gentle and friendly way. If you want to atone for your sins you should confess them and bear the punishment awarded for them. This is the way of true atonement. Even if you wish to escape punishment you should confess your guilt. The court also awards a lighter punishment to a culprit if he confesses his crime and frankly admits it in the court. There is no other way but this to escape the consequences of your acts. At present people are running from place to place but how long can they evade punishment? Some day or other they are bound to be arrested. If the Government is afraid of them and does not arrest them it means it is in-efficient and corrupt. It ought not to act like that. If people justify their sins with the argument that by killing and punishing the Muslims of Bihar they had avenged the crimes committed in Noakhali, which were a sequence of the happenings in Calcutta, well, it is the law of the jungle; it is beastly behaviour. Have beasts ever attained freedom? If you have heard of it, please tell me—at least I haven't. People ask me what they should do when the Muslims indulge in such excesses; should they retaliate with two slaps in answer to one? Some persons even do it. But this is the way of the beasts. I tell you that this method of retaliation and violence would not help the world, certainly not India. You have witnessed what the world has come to by following it. Germany, Italy and Japan are all ruined. Those who commit violence and instigate riots are bound to perish. This is the way of cowards. I never preach such cowardice—on the contrary I have always been teaching the lesson of true bravery. In [South] Africa the Indians were only a handful among the Negroes. The English could have suppressed them, and then how could we have lived there? In spite of that we courageously fought them. You have yourselves witnessed how here in Champaran too we put up a brave fight. Not a trace of the indigo planters' reign of terror, which had lasted for hundreds of years, is to be found today. It is a different matter if some of our people have turned out to be like the indigo-planters. In Champaran we did not kill or persecute anyone; we abolished an evil system through satyagraha. The peasants told the indigo-planters that they would not work for them and they stuck to their decision. They proved no cowards. Today we have to develop the same bravery, but to a much greater extent.

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 84. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 20, 1947

HILSA,

May 20, 1947

On my way I have heard all about Hilsa. Here the Hindu brethren have played havoc. It is a matter of regret and shame for us, not of joy. The greatest sinner becomes the greatest saint provided he makes genuine atonement for his sins. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are full of such instances where great sinners turned great saints through sincere atonement and pious deeds. What is the remedy for the happenings in Bihar? I am wondering how best to act or speak to you so that it might change your hearts. Committing a wrong is as bad as being in hell. But then no one remains at peace in hell. One would like to run away from there as soon as possible. In fact, committing an evil act is even worse than being in hell. If this is the reaction on the body, what about the spirit? It would prove beneficial for the Hindus, for India and the world if we atoned for the evil deeds committed here. How can we atone for it? It has been suggested to me that I should stay and work among those who had resorted to violence and should go from house to house; it might perhaps change their hearts. But owing to the hot weather I am not able to follow this advice. No doubt the heat of agony and shame is more unbearable than that which affects the body, however severe it might be. But man cannot get over his love of life. He is afraid to work in this heat lest he should fall ill. It might be called lack of faith. But if my own faith is not firm enough what can I say to others? I quietly bear with whatever is said about me. With whatever strength and gift of speech that God has granted me, I try to speak to you to the best of my ability.

I observe that the Muslim brethren who return to their villages go back again because their houses which had been destroyed or burnt down are yet to be rebuilt. The rains are approaching. When shall we rebuild those houses and persuade the Muslims to return? No doubt that is the responsibility of the Government. But I suggest that all of you who belong to the village should take up this responsibility and rebuild the houses. Till the houses are rebuilt you should vacate your own houses for the Muslims or accommodate them in your own houses. Thus you should persuade the Muslims to return and atone for your sins. I hear there are amongst you men who are not touched by remorse. It is a matter of great shame. You have all assembled here





in large numbers to listen to me and we are having a huge meeting here. I would urge those who are able to hear me to follow my advice. In following it you will not be put to any inconvenience. We do welcome relatives coming from the Fiji Islands or from South Africa and accommodate them in our homes, don't we? In the present case we are the offenders. Let us now welcome the Muslims as our friends whom we had turned into enemies. The people of Bihar are great workers. Those who have the strength should live with the Muslims as if they were their blood-relations. Let one be an uncle, another a brother and a third one a sister, and so on. Then enmity will become a thing of the past. If you act on my advice and cleanse your minds and hearts, welcome back those who have migrated and accommodate them in your midst, it will be a wonderful achievement.

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 85. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 21, 1947

BIKRAM,

May 21, 1947

First, let me congratulate you on the perfect silence you maintained throughout the prayer, in spite of the mammoth gathering here, and on the correct beating of time. Those who beat time should learn to do it well which would show that they were praying wholeheartedly. I will request the sisters to learn it well.

I hear there was no outbreak of lawlessness in this thana (Police circle). The Congressmen and others here came together and saw to it that there was no trouble. Usually once a riot starts it spreads like an epidemic and infects all. It is good that the people here curbed the riot before it could spread. Chand Saheb, Secretary of the District Congress Committee, told me that tension did prevail and people were afraid of the possible trouble. As a result many Muslims fled. Some of them have since returned but not all.

I advise those who have returned to persuade all the others to return. There has been no damage to property. You should clean the houses which are lying vacant. On hearing the news that their properties are being looked after they will all come back. If this is done in all places, it would be very good.

I shall tell you now what I was going to say yesterday. The Congress has come to have a tradition of its own. For years—for more than sixty years—it has fought the British Government. As Tulsidas says, “The name of Rama has become greater than Rama Himself”; similarly the name of the Congress has become greater than the Congress. But what is the condition of the Congress now? Congressmen think that now it is their Government. Formerly there were not even a hundred or two hundred rupees in the Congress fund which would need any elaborate accounts to be maintained. With great difficulty a crore of rupees were collected for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. An equal amount could never be collected again for the Congress. Now in every province crores of rupees come to their coffers and the Congress leads thousands of people. But truly speaking one can only be a servant of the people, not their leader. It would be a misfortune if the spirit of service disappears and everyone thinks only of grabbing a share out of the crores of rupees. It would be no service to the nation if devoid of the spirit of service we concern ourselves only with serving our own ends or



those of our relatives and friends by seeking the favours of the Chief Minister or by capturing the Congress office to further our own interest. Everywhere Congressmen are thus scrambling for power and favours. This is true not only of Bihar but of all provinces. If this continues, I am afraid, we shall not be able to hold the reins of the Congress firmly, nor will those who are in the Government be able to run it efficiently. A government seems to have only military power behind it, but it cannot run on the strength of that power alone. What is the real power of the Government? The real power is in your hands. Their power is only what you delegate to them. Therefore once you have your own government you become your own master. It is a different matter if you fail to recognize your own strength and remain in darkness. But if we realize that real power is now in the hands of India, i. e., in our own hands, we should use it judiciously. No doubt, there had been riots all over the country, not only in Bihar. But if we do not hold firmly to the power that has come to the hands of the Congress, if we do not have harmonious relations among ourselves and refuse to fulfil our duties, I am afraid our whole purpose would be defeated. And I too shall not be able to do what I have come here for. It might be suggested that I should finish the work of establishing good relations among the Hindus and the Muslims, for which I have come here, and should not take up any other task; that first the Hindu-Muslim conflict should be settled and any other problem should be tackled only after that. But it is not like this, all these problems are interrelated. In tackling one problem others too have to be tackled.

A rot has set in the Congress. It means that Congressmen are no more honest. If those who are selfish capture the Congress it cannot function well. Now there are various groups in the Congress and all of them have the one thought of capturing the Congress. But in this way none of the groups will be able to hold the organization. The Congress would slip from their hold and pass into the hands of unscrupulous men. And they are white-[clad] goondas who appear respectable but are goondas at heart. How can our purpose be served, if the reins of the Congress pass into their hands? We will all perish if we ourselves disintegrate into groups such as the Forward Bloc, the Socialists, and so on. We all belong to the Congress. The Congress aims at serving the whole nation, not any particular party or group.

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 86. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 22, 1947

FATEHPUR,

May 22, 1947

It was my good fortune that last evening I could congratulate the people at the prayer meeting on maintaining proper silence and correctly beating time to Ramdhun. Today I am again fortunate to congratulate you here. I would also like to congratulate the volunteers because, while I was coming in the car, in spite of quite a few people having gathered along the route, there was no noise or shouting. As a result I could carry on my work as I wanted. The purpose behind holding prayer meetings at different places every day is that all people can attend them and I can tell them what I want to say. To walk four five miles is nothing for the young, even for little boys and women it is nothing much. I would suggest that you define a circle with the venue of the prayer meeting as its centre. It would be nice if people living within a radius of five miles from the point come to attend the meeting. This would be a sort of training for setting up panchayat raj. It is a good idea.

If the work being done in Bihar continues to progress well, it would be a great thing for the whole country. I have been told that a peace committee has been formed here and it has both Hindus and Muslims on it. In Bihar the Muslims form only 13 or 14 percent of the population. But we ought to cover them all through the committee. Then alone will a peace committee in the true sense be formed. The work of the peace committee is easy enough. It has to compensate for the damage caused by us and repair the houses which have been burnt. If it succeeds in doing this much, the rest would be easy to accomplish.

A sister has asked me how women could help in this work. The sisters who are sitting here do not observe purdah. They can work in these areas. True purdah should be of the heart. What is the value of the outer veil? I go so far as to say that even the Koran Sharif does not mention outward purdah. How rapidly the times we are in are moving. Today we are here, tomorrow we will have moved far ahead. In such times what is the point in continuing the worthless custom of purdah? If the Hindu women here have sincere love for their Muslim counterparts, I would ask them to go to them and try to relieve their suffering. For this one need not be a B.A. or an M.A. It is enough to be true and sincere.



Today I heard from a sister about an incident at Masaurhi, where Maj. Gen. Shah Nawaz is doing [rehabilitation] work. At the milk distributing centre there a Muslim sisters did not allow her child to take milk as she thought it should not drink milk from the container used by Hindu children. I would only say that although this is not good we should not take offence at it. It is we Hindus who observe untouchability; Islam does not know it. It does not admit untouchability in any form. It rather preaches the lesson of peaceful co-existence. We were the first to observe untouchability. Later on it spread to the Muslims and now it is being taught to the children as well. Those sisters who are sincere and have realized that we have plundered and massacred the Muslims and ostracized them should go among the victims. They should visit the women of the neighbouring Muslim families. Our greatest dharma is to go and work at places where atrocities were committed. We should also go to places where no untoward incident happened and bring about unity of hearts between the Hindus and the Muslims. They have to make the Muslim women their true sisters and teach the lesson of true love to the children. My grand-daughter who had been in the hospital recently related to me an incident that occurred there. The people at the hospital have come to believe that Congressmen have grown very arrogant. They now seem to think that everything belongs to them, even the hospital is their private property. To think like this is not wrong. But it is misinterpreted and misused that is certainly wrong. It is not as if donning a white cap or khadi alone entitles one to rule over others or makes one a saheb. My grand-daughter told me that since she had a fever the gate-keeper at the hospital had orders not to allow anyone to visit her. But when a khadi-clad gentlemen came to visit her and was stopped he created trouble for the gate-keeper protesting that he could not be stopped. He was an M.L.A., and no one could stop him. How arrogant we have grown! I would say, let alone an M.L.A., even if Dr. Mahmud had been there he should have been stopped. It is the doctors and the nurses who are the authorities of the hospital. Their words should prevail there. Even Shri Babu cannot interfere in such matters. In a way Congressmen have a right in all matters, but regarding the internal affairs of an institution the officer in charge should be the sole authority. Without discrimination all patients should be accommodated in rooms which are vacant. Even for a minister no one should be asked to vacate his room. My granddaughter is sharp enough. She asked me if nothing could be done about this. I wish that the rights we have acquired should not be abused. It would be good if my message reached the educated too.



I would like to say one more thing. I hear black-marketing is rampant in Bihar. It is difficult to say whether it is more widespread or in the U.P., or in the States like Orissa, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Since I am now here, I take it that black-marketing flourishes on a large scale in Bihar. Rajendra Babu was saying the other day that there would be great scarcity of food-grains in July-August and we would be able to manage only if we got some from outside. I feel very unhappy when I hear this. India is not a country which should face scarcity of food-grains. We had always fed our granaries used to be full and everyone had his fill, such used to be the food position. And if it is no more so we can still bring about that state. People should be told that they must put in hard labour to produce and store more food-grains. It is essential to work hard. Hard work alone would keep them in good health. All this can be done in Bihar. I grant that there is scarcity of foodgrains and cloth in the country. But the fact is that a thing not available in the open market is available in the black-market, though at a higher price. In other words, what cannot be obtained honestly in the open market can be had through dishonest means in the black-market. This is a complicated problem. It is a problem for the Ministry, the Congressmen and for everyone. But things would be all right if everyone resolved not to buy anything in the black-market. Matters would improve if the traders decided against black-marketing. But people succumb easily to corruption. Trades are to be carried on to serve the people, not only to fill the coffers of the traders. Money can be earned through honest means as well. What shall we do if we did not get foodgrains from outside? When we made a request to the Australians for wheat they asked for linseed in return. They have a right to ask for it and we would also give it to them if we had it in surplus. But in case we do not have linseed in surplus, they should accept money instead. But such are the conditions nowadays that we have to accept the terms they lay down. If we do not, they become aggressive. If we hit them they hit back with double force. I would, therefore, say that if all the traders carried on their trades in an honest way; it would also facilitate their business. Bihar is the land of King Janaka and Lord Buddha. It would be a great misfortune if the people here turn dishonest and resort to corrupt practices. I earnestly appeal to the black-marketeers to run their trades honestly so that they may word off the difficult times looming large before us.

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 87. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 23, 1947

MANER,

May 23, 1947

About eight hundred years ago Saint Makhdum Maneri lived in Maner. Though communal tension did prevail here, with the efforts of the Congressmen Maner was spared the devastation that followed a riot. As I had said (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 21-5-1947) [the day before] yesterday, since most of our social problems are interrelated I cannot help mentioning other problems along with my present task of rehabilitating the people who had fled to other places. Take for instance the question of the zamindars. You all know that the century-old reign of the white indigo-planters was brought to an end by the will and concerted action of all the people and their leaders, prominent among whom were the late Brijkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu. But I have been told that the tyranny of the white rulers is being continued even today by the Indian zamindars. They exploit their ryots economically, terrorize them through their officials and escape due punishment through collusion with the authorities. If it is true, the zamindars are digging their own graves. They can survive only if they become trustees of their ryots.

But as a devotee of truth and justice I must discuss the other side of the problem as presented to me by the zamindars. Because of my friendship with all, the zamindars also regard me as a friend, although they know my identification with the masses. They tell me that with the Congress coming into power and drawing its sanction from the masses the ryots feel that they can commit all sorts of excesses, dispossess the zamindars of their entire property, destroy their crops and terrorize them by other acts of violence. Similarly, under the influence of false propaganda, labourers in the mills think that they can become the masters of the mills by damaging them.

As one of the masses I can only say to the peasants and labourers that they are only harming their own cause by following this senseless policy. They constitute the real masses and they should realize their own strength. In a mad fury, the millions can easily destroy the handful of zamindars but ultimately their madness would bring about their own ruin.

I have heard destructive criticism of the Government by the people who can neither wield the power that has come to the nation nor let others who deserve wield



it. The ministers on the other hand should be true servants of the people from whom they derive their power. They should not show any partiality while allocating jobs to the candidates, should be free from the evil of bribery and mete out equal justice to all.

If all the three—the zamindars, the ryots and the Government in Bihar—do their duty, Bihar would set a noble example for the whole nation.

[From Hindi] Harijan Sevak, 1-6-1947

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## 88. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 25, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You know that we should maintain silence during the prayer. You gave me the taste of peace here and your example is followed by people everywhere. You will be glad to know that in Bengal this time even huge prayer meetings were peaceful. Usually when I am travelling crowds gather and people, out of affection, raise loud slogans. I do appreciate this affection but now my health cannot stand the din. I am grateful to you that in spite of the disturbances you maintained silence at the previous prayer meetings and set a good example to others. Prayer meetings in Bihar were also as peaceful as in Bengal. In Bihar people gathered in much larger numbers. I am not now physically strong enough to travel far in this terrible heat. Hence in Bihar I travelled for an hour or an hour and a half by train or car, and went to different places where we used to have prayers. In one place by a river bank more than a lakh of people had gathered. Every little while fresh crowds arrived and raised cries of 'jai'. There was so much noise that I could not hold the prayer. But barring this one place, I could hold regular prayers at every place in Bihar. The gatherings in Bihar tended to be larger than those in Bengal. The people of Bihar knew me but still came round to have a look at me. We are 400 million people and how long can we remember an individual by seeing and hearing him only for a while? People are always eager to see me. They wonder what Gandhi looks like. They want to see if he is a creature with a tail and horns. Thus people used to gather in huge numbers. The Muslims were so few there that the Hindus could well have clamoured that they would not hear any prayer in Arabic. But not a single person in such large gatherings said any such thing. Why should anyone have said so? Why may not one recite from the Koran?

You too are maintaining silence here. But peaceful though you are, you also create disquiet. As here, so in Bengal too, a young man had the audacity to obstruct the prayer. I thought that in the name of non-violence it was leading to violence. I did not pay any attention to him. He realized the situation and kept quiet. Fortunately the police did not intervene. We held the prayers at the Khadi Pratishthan and, in spite of the large numbers, the gatherings were always peaceful.



Obstructing the prayer has become a regular feature here. Now women have started writing letters to me. Today I have received a letter from a lady in Marathi. She says in her letter that she is not in favour of the recitation from the Koran in a temple. In other words she means to say that all of you are against it because the Muslims who recite the Koran have perpetrated atrocities on thousands of innocent women and children.

But now I am not going to give up the prayer because of these obstructions. Non-violence should not be allowed to prevent something [good] from being accomplished. I cannot be a witness to the commission of violence in the name of non-violence. Hence, even if this lady creates a disturbance my prayer will go on. I would like to tell the lady and her husband, if he is here, that such impudence does not behove us. For the sake of a single individual we cannot offend thousands. If they are not in favour of this prayer they should not come here. In spite of this if the lady creates trouble no one will do her any harm. She needs no fear. Let not even the police, if they are around, arrest her. I shall continue with the prayer even if I hear her voice or those of her supporters. All of you have also put up with enough. I do hope that there are no supporters of this lady's view among you. But, in case all of you subscribe to her views, I would say that all these young men with me would not offer the prayer. I would do it all by myself and you can all get round together and kill me. I would die smiling with the name of Rama on my lips. When you are so many I cannot kill you all by myself. Nor can the police stop you from killing me. But I hope that except for this lady there is none other among you who is opposed to the Koran. I would request you not to heed the lady's shrieks and shouts. Let no one even touch her. Let the prayer be carried on peacefully.

**After this the prayer was held. At the end of the prayer Gandhiji said:**

I compliment the lady for being satisfied with my reading out her letter to you. The same pattern will be repeated tomorrow. Whatever the opponents may have to say will be conveyed to you but the prayer will go on. But I do hope there will be none tomorrow wanting to obstruct the prayer.

I wish to tell you that the Hindus in Bihar have not lagged behind in committing atrocities. Not only were the atrocities of Noakhali avenged, but much more was done. And then the chain reaction reached as far as Dera-Ismael Khan. In the light of the atrocities suffered at the hands of the Hindus of Bihar, if the Muslims started saying



that they would not allow the recitation of Tulsi's Ramayana, the Gita and the Upanishads and the Vedas, would it be right? If there are any Muslims who talk like that I would ask them what harm the Ramayana or the Mahabharata had done to them, and what crime the Vedas, the most ancient treatises, had committed. What harm had Ramachandrajī done to them? But the same argument would apply to the Koran and Mohammed Saheb. What harm have they done us? You will therefore realize that because I wish to read the Ramayana and the Gita, I also think it necessary to read the Koran.

Now you will want to know what I did at Calcutta and Patna. I cannot tell you now about everything I did in Calcutta. There I met Suhrawardy Saheb and had talks with him. Now we shall have to await the outcome of those talks. Whatever it is, people felt a little reassured by my going there. Sarat Babu is doing his best there. But violence has not yet completely ended there.

In Bihar too there is not much improvement. Refugees are returning to their homes, but the Hindus and the Muslims are not yet free from anger against each other. They are still not in a position to say that they are no more scared or that they will not now indulge in any excesses. But the atmosphere is clearing and there is no doubt about it.

Now the question is: why did I come here?. Frankly, I do not know why I have come. But one thing is certain. I have served the Congress for many years and people remember me as their servant. They want to know my views though they may or may not accept them.

But I wish to tell you that the tendency to look up to London is not desirable. We are not going to have our freedom sent over from London. The Kohinoor of India's freedom is not going to come to us from the hands of others. We can have it with our own hands.

I am not referring to the Kohinoor which is kept in the Tower of London. I am referring to the Kohinoor of our freedom. This Kohinoor is coming to us. We may throw it away if we wish or keep it with us if we so desire. Whatever we decide to do is up to us, not others.

Why then should we look up to Lord Mountbatten? Should we wait to see what he brings for us from England? (The Viceroy had left for London on May 17 for consultations.)



Our newspapers are all filled with predictions about what Lord Mountbatten is likely to bring from London. But why should we not look to our own strength?

What would happen to the other minorities? Granted that the Hindus, the Sikhs and others are not looking up to the English. But the Muslims are looking only in that direction. Should then the Hindus and the Sikhs too start looking towards them? If they do start looking towards them and Lord Mountbatten heeds them to some extent, what would happen to the rest of the Indians? Would Lord Mountbatten care to listen to the Parsis who are a very small minority? And there are many other people in India for whom neither the Viceroy nor anyone else cares.

Under these circumstances I have to do my duty. In other words, India has to fulfil her own duty and thus attain independence.

Some people among us have lost their senses. We all come to these prayer meetings purely to become truthful. In order to be truthful we should be slaves to none but God. Then independence is just within our reach. Should we also lose our senses? And do you wish that so long as those few fanatics do not come to their senses Lord Mountbatten should keep them under his control and stay on here?

I do not approve of this. I have taught you something else. Ever since I returned to India in 1915. I have been saying that each one of us should look after ourselves. If we do it, not only England or America or Russia but all the three together cannot destroy us. Nobody can deprive us of what belongs to us as a birthright. It is our freedom and, if our intentions are honest, it has got to come.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 82-6

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## 89. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 26, 1947

NEW DELHI,

Monday, May 26, 1947

I had written out the speech for today. Then after 5 p.m. or so I received a letter from the lady who had objected yesterday saying that I had broken my promise by holding the prayers. This was farthest from my thoughts. I appealed to you and called upon you to hold yourselves in restraint in order to protect the objectors and you agreed to have the prayer. It will be discourteous on my part if I do not hold the prayers because of such obstruction. Generosity in that case would amount to avarice. That is not how ahimsa works. The lady, therefore, should forgive me, for the prayer will go on.

I must repeat what I told you yesterday. Public prayer is a precious duty. It cannot be lightly thrown away. One who objects to it commits a crime, but it is good to pray silently if there is a possibility of the objector being molested. You responded to my entreaty by maintaining complete peace and order and did not molest the objectors but when I felt that this restraint was being abused I decided to follow the other course. I was glad that the lady who had objected remained calm. Whatever be her own opinion. I hope she will maintain her composure. One must at least observe a minimum of decorum. I would like you to continue the prayers in future in spite of the objectors but at the same time you should be generous with them instead of being angry.

I had told you yesterday that it was unbecoming on our part to keep looking towards London. The British cannot give us our freedom. They can only get off our backs. This they have already promised to do. But it is for us to safeguard our freedom and give it a concrete shape. How should we bring this about? In my opinion we are unable to think coherently whilst British rule continues in India. It is not for the British Government to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw from India, if possible in an orderly manner, maybe even in chaos, but withdraw in any case on or before the date it has itself fixed.

There is an additional reason why no vital change in the map of India is possible in the present state of the country. A joint statement (Vide "A Joint Appeal", 12-4-1947) has been issued by the Qaid-e-Azam and me that violence should not be used for achieving



political ends. If, in spite of that appeal, people continue the mad course of large-scale violence and if the British Power yields before it in the vain hope that everything will be alright after this fit of madness is over, it will have left a bloody legacy for which not only India but the whole world will hold it guilty. I would therefore urge every patriot and certainly the British Power, irrespective of the worst kind of violence, to leave India under the Cabinet Mission's document<sup>1</sup> of the 16th May of last year. In the presence of the British Power today we are only demoralized by the orgy of bloodshed, wanton killings, arson and worse. After it is withdrawn, I hope, we shall have the wisdom to think coherently and keep India one or split it into two or more parts. But even if we keep on fighting after that, I am convinced that we will not be so demoralized as we are today, though all violence is bound to cause a certain amount of demoralization. I still hope against hope that a free India will not again offer an example of violence which has already made her so miserable.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 86-8

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## 90. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 27, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today also I have received a long letter from the Maharashtrian lady. She has complained in her letter that the volunteers did not act properly in stopping her. She has also said that the Koran ordains the killing of non-Muslims and hence there should be no recitation from the Koran. I have read the Koran and I found nothing of the kind in it. On the contrary the Koran lays down that one should have love for non-Muslims as well. If those who read the Koran do not obey its teachings, how can we blame the Koran? Even on our side, who follows in practice what is written in Tulsi's Ramayana, the Gita and the Vedas?

I do not intend to follow irreligion in the name of religion. I utter every word with the fear of God in my heart. I am pained to find that the lady insists on writing something about which she has no knowledge. Why does she believe that such and such a thing is written in the Koran because somebody says so? But you must be firm in your mind. You must concentrate on the prayer even if she protests. But even if all of you start talking like her, I will continue the prayer till my last breath.

Her second complaint is that the male volunteers touched her while removing her. In my view, there is nothing objectionable about it. It is the function of the volunteers to stop troublemakers from creating disturbance, whether they be men or women. Of course, they should not raise their hands against women or beat them. They must persuade them gently. When there are no carnal thoughts in the mind, there is nothing sinful if one happens to touch a woman. I too rested my hands on the shoulders of girls while walking. Am I committing any crime? They are all like my daughters. If I have evil thoughts in my mind, it would definitely be sinful. Volunteers also should treat the women who come to attend the prayers as their mothers or sisters while looking after the arrangements of the meeting. A volunteer may touch a woman as she would his mother. That is his duty. (Then the prayer was conducted. Despite shouts from the lady to stop the prayer, Gandhiji insisted that it should continue. What follows is the speech after the prayer.)

It is quite late today. Hence, I shall be brief.



You all know that I am working in Bihar. There are very few Muslims in Bihar. They would be hardly 14 percent of the population. Similarly, the Hindu population in Noakhali is also small. I went to Bihar in connection with my work in Noakhali.

I have received a phone call from a friend working in Bihar that people there have started thinking about June (Lord Mountbatten was to return from Dondon on May 31 and make an announcement on June 2 about the country's future.). In the same way they were in panic about the 9th when the Constituent Assembly was to meet. I used to receive letters from all corners asking me what should be done. People in Noakhali were being threatened that although during the November riots some Hindus were allowed to survive, this time all the Hindus would be converted. I had then told them that I would return there if they so desired. But there was nothing much I could do there except lay down my own life. But they did not send it to me. They prepared themselves to face any eventuality. As a matter of fact, I do not think that the plan of converting all Hindus to Islam can ever succeed.

Similarly, the Muslims need to have no fear in Bihar. Why should we have any fear of the 2nd of June? Granting that the Viceroy is bringing laddoos, why should we be so eager? As I have already said, they are of no use to us. Only the things we have produced ourselves would be of use to us.

I am asking you, why should the Bihari Muslims panic? Would not the Hindus who recite the name of Rama think of their Rama?

Similarly, why should the Hindus in Sindh be afraid? Why should they panic? I have a letter from there saying that the Hindus are overcome with fear. But instead of being frightened, why do they not take the name of Rama? The people of Sindh want me to go to them. I have not been to Sindh for many years but I have maintained such close relations with the people of Sind that at one time I used to call myself a Sindhi. I used to have Sindhi companions also in South Africa. Sindhis, Marwaris, Punjabis, all have cooperated with me. Some of them even drank and ate non-vegetarian food. In spite of their inability to give up these things they called themselves Hindus. I was friends with all of them. One of them asks me in a letter if I have forgotten him and Sind. But how can I forget?

People everywhere are filled with fear about the announcement to come on June 2. It is being said that the Muslims are making massive preparations. But what





preparations? Are they preparing to turn themselves into brutes? Do they not pray in their mosques that God may make them all good human beings? The Hindus also are not writing to me to say that they would pray to God in silence that He should grant the British the good sense to quit India and wisdom to all those among the Muslims who have been possessed by a frenzy.

They are apprehensive also in Punjab because they are in a minority. There the Hindus have the Sikhs also with them. Why should the Sikhs be afraid? Why is there fear on both sides as to who would be the first to raise the sword?

If the Hindus of Bihar slaughter the Muslims, they would be killing me. I say the Muslims of Bihar are like my blood-brothers. They are glad to see me. They are convinced that at least this one man belongs to them. Anyone who kills them kills me. If they insult their sisters and daughters, it is insulting me. From this platform I want to convey this to all the Hindus of Bihar.

Why should the Muslims of Bihar be afraid? Two excellent Muslim workers are serving them. Then, Shrikrishna Sinha runs the Bihar Ministry and he is very much on the alert.

It is being rumoured these days that Gandhi wants to go to Bihar and get the Hindus slaughtered. But I would like to proclaim at the top of my voice that even if all the Muslims lose their heads, not a single Hindu should follow suit.

As for the Sikhs they claim that a single Sikh is equal to one and a quarter lakh [of others] and five Sikhs are equal to six lakhs. I like that they talk this way. The Granth Sahib and the Guru are as much mine as theirs. If I can call myself a Muslim, what is there to be ashamed of in my calling myself a Sikh? And the Sikhs have done brave deeds in a spirit of satyagraha at Nankana Sahib. But today they are thinking of the sword.

They do not realize that the age of the sword is past. They do not realize that no one can be saved by the strength of the sword. This is the age of the atom bomb.

Guru Govind Singh preached the use of the sword. But that cannot be applied today. Of course his teaching that a single Sikh is equal to one and a quarter lakh is useful even today. But it would become true when the Sikh dies for his fellowmen and the whole country.



There have been equally gallant women. In one place when all their menfolk were killed and there was no hope of any help, instead of quietly surrendering they chose to die. This really happened. Some seventy-five women died in this manner; they first killed their children with their own hands, because they did not want their children to be ill-treated by others.

I would say that only when people have behaved like this has their religion remained alive whether they were Hindus or Muslims. I would say the same thing to the Sikhs, namely, that if each one of them is equal to one and a quarter lakh they should all concentrate on God and die with the cry of 'Sat Sri Akal' on their lips. What greater act of bravery can there be?

I don't mind if anybody calls me a coward. God alone knows whether or not I am a coward. We should accept a lesson in bravery even if it is offered by a coward. I do not want to be a coward. I have not made anyone a coward, nor am I one myself.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 88-92

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## 91. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 28, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am happy that no one created trouble or raised any protest today, I am sure the frenzy cannot last forever. The same applies to Hindu-Muslim clashes. I continue to get letters, a few of them nice. Some good Muslims write to me that it does not matter if Hindus and Muslims follow different religions. They should not feel separate at heart on that account. Some Hindus even threaten me with dire consequences if I do not stop the recitation from the Koran. They say that they would come here with black flags. (The reference is to the warning given by the members of the Anti-Pakistan Front of Gujarat.) And what will they do after coming here? The atmosphere is such that people do not bother to see or hear anything, they just create rows. They too will come and disturb the prayer. But even if such a thing happens, our prayer will continue to be held so long as you give me your peaceful cooperation. But if all of you should come with black flags, I would have my prayer by myself. I would continue to recite Ramanama even if you assaulted me. Even if I have the police to protect me from you or I wield a sword or a gun I have to die ultimately. Then what is the harm if I die with the name of Rama on my lips? When I die in such a manner, you would feel remorse. You would tell yourselves that you did a terrible thing and gained nothing by killing me. But if I have police protection or if I beat you up, you would remark after killing me that it was just as well that I was killed. But I hope you will remain as peaceful as you were when you came.

Today I would like to answer some of your questions. Of course, I cannot answer all the questions today. Yesterday, somebody asked what we should do with a mad dog — whether we should kill it? That is an odd question. He should have actually asked what should be done when a man goes mad. But the fact is that if we have God in our hearts even a dog cannot behave madly with us. Once a friend of mine came to ask me what should be done with a mad dog that was biting everyone. I told him that the dog should be killed and the responsibility would be mine. But it was a matter concerning a dog. It cannot apply to human beings. I remember when I was about ten, a brother of mine had gone mad. Afterwards he was cured. He is no more. But



remember him well. In a fit of madness he would rush out and strike everyone. But what could I do to him? Could I beat him? Or could my mother or father beat him? Nobody in the family beat him. A vaidya was called in and he was asked to treat my brother in every possible manner except by beating him. He was my blood brother. But now I make no such distinctions. Now all of you are like my blood-brothers. If all of you lose your sanity and I happen to have an army at my disposal, do you think I should have you shot? Even an enemy may not be shot if he goes crazy. Anyone who goes mad should be sent to a lunatic asylum. You ought to know that there are a number of such asylums in India. I have actually seen such mad people who really deserve to be shot. But we leave them to the care of the doctors.

I used to have an intimate friend who was almost like a brother to me. His son became mad and when seized by madness would rush out to kill people. I did not suggest to my friend that his son should be shot. I could have had him shot if I wished, because I was called a Mahatma. And, in our country, a mahatma enjoys the right to do anything. He may commit murder, indulge in acts of debauchery or whatever else he chooses; he is always pardoned. Who is there to question him? But I feared God. I thought that I was answerable to God, if to no one else. As a matter of fact there is no mahatma in our midst these days. All are alpatmas (Little souls).

Anyway, I had the boy sent to a doctor. He ran away from him too. He is still not restored. He has children, and all the members of the family are with him. We must try to find a way of dealing with this madness, as in the case of my friend's son.

Today our blood is boiling. We hear from all sides speculations about June 2. At first there were clashes at three or four places. Now there is talk of killing all the Hindus. And the Hindus would ask why, if the Muslims kill us, we should not kill them in turn. They too would want to spill blood. If this is not madness, what else is it? I trust that you, who are seated here so peacefully, would not give in to such frenzy. If the people who are caught in the frenzy are bent upon killing us, we would let them do so. Would they be cured of their madness if we let ourselves be killed? The prevailing madness is not such as would blind us to all reason. Even when a really mad person rushes towards us with a knife in his hand, we should face the danger. We do not panic. Similarly, if the Muslims come with raised swords screaming for Pakistan, I would tell them that they cannot have Pakistan at the point of the sword. They must first cut me to pieces before they vivisection the country. If everybody talks to them in



the same vein, God would cleave their sword asunder. I am a poor helpless fellow. But you will see my courage when the occasion arises. I will not then wield lathi against a lathi. I wish we would not meet madness with madness. If we remain sensible the madness on the opposite side will disappear. Their [craze for] Pakistan will die down too. If theirs is a true Pakistan, it would have to be the entire Hindustan.

If you got into a frenzy the British would ask if non-violence was meant only for them. They would accuse us of indulging in mutual violence, and ask us whatever had happened to our nonviolence. They would describe themselves as superior to us, as paragons of non-violence and say that even if they resorted to force, they at least maintained order. They have to rule after all; and they may quite justifiably argue thus. But I would tell them that they should not do so. They have got to go and they will go because of our non-violent struggle. Here millions of people have shown the courage of non-violence. You did not bow down to the Union Jack. You courted imprisonment and allowed yourselves to be ruined. It is as a result of all this that we are about to be independent. But now we are not talking about gaining independence on the strength of that courage. Today we are behaving in a manner that must invite the world's contempt.

But we must never do such a thing. You will attain true freedom when, instead of killing others, you die yourselves.

Lord Mountbatten is coming. All are apprehensive about what he might bring. If he offers something to the Hindus, why should the Muslims get into a state? And, if he offers something to the Muslims, why should the Hindus get frightened? Let us not look up to him, nor watch for June 2; let us look at ourselves.

If he does not give us anything, shall we all become so mad as to massacre old people, children and women?

The second question is why the members of the Interim Government are dancing to the tune of the British. Are there only three communities in India, namely, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs? Why are Parsis not consulted? Is it because they possess no arms? And if the Parsis were to be invited, for what fault are the Christians to be left out? And then, why not the Jews? The question is quite pertinent. I am also pained by this situation. The Congress is for all. All people support it. Then why is it wanting in courage? It does not belong exclusively to the Hindus. True, the



majority of Congressmen are Hindus but there are others too. If the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs come to an agreement among themselves, would they crush the Parsis? Would the Jews and the others have to perish? And, after coming to a settlement with them, what shall we do with the rest? Shall we discard them? They would ask if that was their reward for supporting the Congress in its first stages. They would want to know why the Viceroy should talk only to certain members of the Interim Government. Is it because Jawaharlal is a very big man? Or because Sardar is the hero of Bardoli? Or because Rajendra Babu is a great scholar and Rajaji has a great intellect?

I wish to tell you that these are not the only persons in the Congress. All of you belong to it. All those who have stood by the Congress and worked for it belong to it. Those who do not go on deputations and are not vocal are as much members of the Congress as anyone else. If these three communities come to some settlement in utter disregard of the others, it would be a very unhappy situation and their curse would fall on us. Hence, let us realize that whatever we do should be equally in the interests of all the communities.

When the Muslims also realize this, things will proceed very well. Then the document signed by Jinnah Saheb and me, that we should not resort to violence for the attainment of political objectives, will be accepted by all as reasonable.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 93-7

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## 92. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 29, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Please remain silent till the prayer is over and I finish saying whatever I have to say. I wish that so long as I am here and alive, those of you who come here out of devotion—let us not talk of those who come only to watch the spectacle—would join me in reciting the name of God. Then please listen to what I say in silence. I am going to talk to you about something very important today. (The prayer was then conducted. What follows is the speech after prayer.)

There are only a few days now before June 2. In the coming days I shall deal each day with some aspect of the problem which is uppermost in your minds. You have drawn me to you by remaining peaceful and by exercising restraint, and thereby compelled me to open my heart to you. How nice it would be if the people who consider themselves the children of this country would think calmly and be courageous. It is indeed a difficult thing to do while the Press continues to give publicity to frightful stories of arson and loot and killings.

I am not at all worried about what June 2 will bring, or what Lord Mountbatten will say on his return. I am not in the habit of worrying over what the Government might say. It has been my way ever since I came here in 1915.

I was born in India. I left the country at the age of 22. It was like being in exile. After spending twenty years, i. e., the best years of my youth in South Africa I returned home. I did not accumulate any wealth in the intervening period. Right from the beginning I had realized that God had so shaped me that I should not run after money, but serve Him. God made me feel that I would not succeed in doing anything else. I learnt the way of service from the Gita which says that whatever we possess is not ours but belongs to God. Then came the question of how God could be realized. I learnt that God resides in every human being in the world and he who serves mankind serves God.

Then we come to the mantra from the Ishopanishad (verse 1) which says: “Gods pervades everything in the world.” I used to explain the meaning of this mantra every



day when I was in Travancore. The mantra further says: “Leave everything, do your work and do not covet wealth that belongs to another.”

This is a simple thing which even a child can understand. But its deeper meaning is something not easily understood. We are all grown-ups and we must understand this meaning. That is why I spoke to you about his great thing. If we understand this meaning, what have we to quarrel about?

This is a big thing I have talked about. Let me now come to the main point which I want to touch upon today. I have had some trouble today. Do I have the time to write out my speech in English every day? Our English newspapers must publish my speeches. But how can our journalists render my speeches into English? Are they able to understand English perfectly? They possess B. A. and M. A. degrees of course. But they do not have adequate knowledge of the English language to convey my Hindi statements correctly in English. English is not their own language. It is a foreign language for them. Here, however, I shall speak in Hindustani because it is almost a mother tongue for me and entirely so for all of you. Hence you are able to understand correctly whatever I say in this language. This lady here (Dr. Sushila Nayyar) translates my speeches into English because she knows English fairly well. Still there are some defects in her rendering. That is why today I spent some time writing my speech in English. Today I shall talk to you bearing this thing in mind. But newspapers will publish only my written speech. (The written speech is not traceable.)

So, I would like to begin by mentioning the letter in which I have been cursed for continuing the prayer. It says that I am a liar and do not answer questions properly. Those who write such things are childish. They may be adults in age, but they are still children in terms of mental growth.

What pricks them most is the fact that I keep calling upon them to lay down their lives instead of rousing them to kill. They want me to call upon the Hindus to avenge violence by violence, arson by arson. But I cannot deny my whole life and be guilty of advocating the rule of the jungle instead of the law of humanity. If someone comes to kill me I would die imploring God to have mercy on him. Instead, these people insist that I should first ask you to kill and then die if need be. They tell me that if I am not prepared to say such a thing, I should keep my courage to myself and retire to the forest. But why do they say that to me? Because the Muslims are killing people? On that account, should the Hindus also stoop to kill? And should both sides thus give





themselves up to frenzy? If the Muslims go wrong, should we also go wrong? They maintain that all Muslims are sinister; that they are wicked at heart. They also claim that all Hindus are angels. But I cannot accept such a claim.

I have received a letter from a Muslim woman. She asks me why I do not recite the “aazubillah” in the Urdu verse. I would like to say in reply that if I started reading it in Urdu verse the Muslims would be enraged and ask me what authority I had to translate it from Arabic. What would I tell them when they threatened to beat me up?

The fact is that a thing sounds sweet in its original language or in a version over which many people have laboured. Bishops have laboured hard and seen to it that the English of the Bible is very sweet. Somehow, that English has turned out sweeter than the original Latin. Students of English must definitely study the Bible. I do not hate the English language. Rather I admire it. But it becomes clumsy in the wrong place. Hence I am not prepared to sacrifice the sweetness of the language of “aazubillah”. We do not have poets who can translate it into something equally sweet.

Today I shall not speak about the eternal law of non-violence much as I believe in it very firmly. If the whole of India adopted this law after due deliberation she would become the unquestioned leader of the whole world. Here, however, all that I wish to stress is that no man should ever yield except to reason.

But today we seem to have given up reason altogether. Reason can hold sway only when we have courage. There is nothing brave about what is going on today. It is a sheer negation of humanity. We have well-nigh turned into beasts. Our papers scream at us every day that the Hindus have played havoc in one place and the Muslims in another. Both the Hindus and the Muslims are indulging in wickedness. I am prepared to accept that the Muslims have played greater havoc. But while both are playing havoc, it is futile to find out who surpasses whom. Both are equally guilty.

News has come that many villages of the neighbouring district of Gurgaon have been burnt down. I am trying to find out which of the two communities is guilty of this arson. But it is difficult to have correct information. People might ask when so much is happening in my vicinity how I can sit idle and wax eloquently. But when you people have come here and when so much is unfortunately happening in Gurgaon, I shall definitely tell you what is in my heart. All I have to say is that even if there is fire burning all around us we must keep calm—why, we should even let ourselves be consumed



without being perturbed. Why should we, out of fear, go about saying that such and such a thing is going to happen on June 2? For those who will keep up their courage, nothing is going to happen on that day. Be absolutely sure about it. Each one of us has to die one day. No one is born immortal. Why then should we not resolve that we will die with courage but never do wrong till the very last breath, that we shall not deliberately kill anyone? Once you resolve to do this you will be able to maintain your mental balance, and will not need to look up to anyone. You would make it clear to those who want to have Pakistan under threat and intimidation that they would not get even an inch of Pakistan that way. If they will be guided by justice, convince us with reasoning and persuade the world, they can have the whole of India for themselves. But we shall never grant it under coercion.

And what can I say to the British? It will be an act of betrayal if they do not stand by the proposals of the Cabinet Mission. We shall not betray nor shall we allow them to betray us. We are both concerned with the proclamation of May 16. The Constituent Assembly is sitting in terms of the May 16 paper. (The following two sentences are reproduced from Harijan). It is for the British to hand over power and quit. The government of free Indians formed under the constitution worked out by the Constituent Assembly can do anything afterwards—keep India one or divide it into two or more parts. We shall go ahead on that basis. We know nothing more than that if we face reality in terms of the welfare of our own country, we should first agree to establish peace in the country, telling the turbulent elements in the country firmly and boldly that there can be no departure from the document of May 16 until they stop the sanguinary strife. (This sentence is from Harijan.) But we shall not be cowed down.

We shall achieve everything if we learn this lesson during these four days. Let them try out all the arms they have accumulated. When we stood firm against such a mighty empire and were not afraid of all their arms, when we did not bow down to their flag, why should we falter now? Let us not make the mistake, on the eve of our hard-won freedom, of thinking that we are likely to lose it if we do not yield, even though it be to brute force. That way lies perdition.

I do not take the cables from London seriously. I must cling to the hope that Britain will not depart by a hair's breadth from the letter and the spirit of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16, unless the parties, of their own free will, come to an agreement on any variation. For that purpose they have to meet and hammer out an



acceptable solution. That statement has been accepted by the Congress and the British Government. If either of them go back on it, it will be a breach of faith.

The British officials should know what the people are whispering. (1 This and the last two sentences of the preceding paragraph are from Harijan.) It is said that the British officers in India are dishonest. It is said that they have a hand in these riots and that they are even inciting both the communities to fight. But we must refuse to believe the serious charge unless it is established beyond doubt. In fact, I would say, how can fighting break out unless we want it? If I do not wish to quarrel with my daughter here, who can force me to do so? And Lord Mountbatten's task is not easy. He is a great commander, he is brave, but he cannot show his bravery here. He has not come here with his soldiers. He has not come here in his military uniform. He has come here as a civilian and says that he has come to grant India freedom from British rule. Now we have to see how and in what manner they leave. Lord Mountbatten has to lend dignity to the office of Governor-General that he is occupying. He has to prove his intelligence and true statesmanship. It would not be fitting if he commits a slip or loses time. Hence let us all pray together that God may grant him good sense. And let him understand that he cannot force any change in the statement of my 16. If he does anything, it will be betrayal and betrayal helps none. Betrayal can never bring about a good result.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 97-103; and Harijan, 8-6-1947

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## 93. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 30, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 30, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Please do not look up to London. Do not look up to the Viceroy. Not that all Englishmen in Britain are dishonest. A large number of them are noble. Lord Mountbatten is also a noble person. But they are all good in their own places. When they come here and interfere in our affairs they all turn wicked. Now the old idea that our future depends on the protection of the British no longer holds good. We are not duty bound to retain the Englishmen in our civil services. The civilians may stay on if they wish. Similarly, the businessmen may stay on too, if they desire. But no English soldier will be kept here to protect them. They can stay here only on the strength of their service and the affection of the Indian people. We shall not be responsible if in a frenzy anybody harms them. It may be some time before the British finally quit India. They have fixed June 30, 1948, as the target date. It will be exactly one year from today [sic]. They must leave before that date if they can. But they cannot stay on even for a single day after that date. It is like honouring a promissory note. If the money on the promissory note is to be paid on Sunday, the payment cannot be postponed to Monday. Similarly, the British cannot stay on after June 30, 1948. They have to abide by the command of the British people. After all, the Viceroy is the servant of the British people. On the 2nd or 3rd June he will reveal what he intends doing and in what manner he will leave. It is his duty and he has to fulfil it. We have to look to our own duty.

And then I wonder who I am. Whom do I represent? I left the Congress many years ago (In 1934). I am not even a four-anna member of the Congress. But I am a servant of the Congress. I have served it for many years and I continue to do so. Similarly, I am a servant of the Muslim League and also of the Princes. I serve everyone but represent no one. Of course I do represent one person. I represent the Qaid-eAzam, because I have signed the peace appeal along with him. Both of us have together said that no political objective may be attained by violence. This is a very big thing. The appeal deserved to be signed by other people too. But Jinnah Saheb insisted



on having Gandhi's signature. And so I became Jinnah Saheb's representative. Apart from him I represent no one else.

But I did not sign the appeal in my capacity as a Hindu. I was born a Hindu, no doubt. No one can undo the fact. But I am also a Muslim because I am a good Hindu. In the same way I am also a Parsi and a Christian too. At the basis of all religions there is the name of only one God. All the scriptures say the same thing.

I have read the Koran and I do not share that lady's belief that the Koran ordains the killing of the infidels. I consulted Badshah Khan and Abdus Samad Khan who recited the Koranic passages so beautifully today and they also confirmed that the Koran did not ordain the killing of non-Muslims. No Bihari Muslim told me that since I was a non-believer they would kill me. Nor did the Maulvis in Noakhali say any such thing. On the contrary, they allowed the Ramdhun to accompany the dholak. All that the Koran says is that an infidel would be answerable to God. But God would demand an explanation from everyone, even from a Muslim. And He would not question you about your words but your deeds. But then those who are keen on seeing dirt can find it everywhere. There is nothing in which good and bad are not mixed up. Why, our Manusmriti talks of pouring molten lead into the ears of the untouchables (As punishment for hearing Vedic verses being recited)! But I would say that that is not the true teaching of our scriptures. Tulsidas gives the essence of all Shastras in his statement that compassion is the root of all religions. No religion ever teaches us to kill anyone. We must act in accordance with the following couplet of Tulsidas:

**Sentient and insentient, good and bad, are all creations of God. The man of God takes the good and leaves the bad even as the swan which drinks the milk and leaves the water.**

We shall have to tell the Muslims that that is not the way to achieve Pakistan. They cannot have Pakistan so long as the arson and killings do not stop. In the same way Hindus also cannot force the Muslims to stop harping on the theme of Pakistan. But my question is: Why should you needlessly quarrel in the name of Pakistan? After all, Pakistan is not a spectre? True Pakistan is that which guarantees the safety of every child. Whether it is Pakistan or Hindustan, people with different religions and ways of life ought to be able to live in safety there, no matter whether they are Brahmins or Banias or Pandits or belong to any of the other creeds. Hence, I would like to invite Jinnah Sahib to join me on a tour of the whole country and work to end these acts of violence.



I would like to tell my colleague Jinnah Saheb and the whole world that we are not prepared to hear anything about Pakistan so long as these excesses continue. Once they stop, we shall sit down and decide whether there should be Pakistan or Hindustan. When we sit together like brothers, we shall distribute sweets and have illuminations. It is through friendly relations that Pakistan can come into being and through friendly relations alone can Hindustan survive. If we keep on fighting, Hindustan will be destroyed.

The Statement of May 16 of last year is the basis for the settlement. Not a comma can be removed from it. The British have no right to do anything which falls outside the purview of this Statement. Nor are we demanding anything more than what is contained in the Statement. We must make it clear that even if we all have to die or the whole country is reduced to ashes, Pakistan will not be conceded under duress.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 103-6

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## 94. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, May 31, 1947

NEW DELHI,

May 31, 1947

As Gandhiji came on the platform he asked the people to be quiet, telling them that during the prayer one's eyes should be closed and one's ears open.

That man (According to the source, he had protested against the recitation from the Koran, but the prayer was carried on peacefully.) Wearing a hat like an Englishman is demanding that Jinnah should be arrested. Does he really want to arrest Jinnah? You may have the power to do so. I too possess such power. But my way of acting is different. Ever since I came from South Africa I have been training you in my way. I am not such a great teacher at that. But then, even a mad person can speak out his mind. For the past fifty-four years I have been regularly saying that we must hold our enemy. For you Jinnah is an enemy, but I regard none as an enemy. I have said it and it is the perfect truth that I have become his representative. How can I then regard him as my enemy? Even the British had become my enemies. But I did not become their enemy. I became their friend, their representative, and I told them things that were in their own interest.

There are two ways of 'holding' one's enemies. One way is the way of coercion, the other is the way of love. I have 'held' you by love. When I ask you to be silent, you remain silent. You must have realized that I have used the term 'holding' as a joke but you must have taken it in the right sense. What I mean is that at times we shall no doubt succeed in holding Jinnah Saheb. Do you think the police would arrest him? The police cannot do so. The police cannot arrest me, nor Khan Saheb. Of course the British authorities can arrest him at will. But even Jinnah Saheb would not be quite imprisoned. He would be truly held if I could bring him here and make him stand before you.

There was a man called Mir Alam. He belonged to the Frontier, Badshah Khan's land. He was even taller than Badshah Khan, who is himself a mountain of a man. He was my friend at one time. But the Pathans are very simple-hearted. That is why they are Badshah—noblemen. Somebody told this man, Mir. Alam, that Gandhi had taken £15,000 from General Smuts and had betrayed the Indian community. That was enough. One day Mir Alam confronted me as an enemy. He carried with him a heavy-



headed stick. He hit me with it right on my neck. I fell down on the pavement and broke my teeth. I survived because God willed it. Mir Alam was caught by a few Englishmen who were passing. But I had him released. I told the Englishmen that he had been misled by a rumour that I had succumbed to money and it was no wonder that the honest Pathan's blood had boiled and he had rushed out to hit me. Thus it was that I held Mir Alam. He became a close friend.

God willing, Jinnah Saheb too will come and sit here one day and say that he is not, and never has been, our enemy. He will say that he is asking for Pakistan, but his Pakistan will be a great thing and will be in the interest of everybody. Then we would all gather and have illuminations and distribute sweets.

I am not saying this from cowardice or by way of flattery. I am talking only of being brave. We have to be brave like the Sikhs, one of whom is equal to one and a quarter lakh of others. I have already explained to you how one Sikh becomes equal to one and a quarter lakh. That is not because of the kirpan which he always keeps to show that he would never be afraid of it. Whether one and a quarter lakh together or a single one of them come to attack him, he would never raise his hand. Who can say that a person who can die in this manner is a coward? Everyone would call him a truly courageous person.

I said yesterday that we would not let Pakistan be formed by threat of force even if the whole of India were burnt down; but if they influenced our hearts with reason and persuaded us and if we were convinced that they had no evil intentions at heart, we would accede to the demand for Pakistan. But then you will have to inspire confidence in us that no one needs to fear the Muslims in Pakistan. When you have declared, with God as you witness, that there would be no violence for the attainment of political objectives, how can you adopt violent action for attaining Pakistan?

We want neither Birla's nor the Nawab of Bhopal's raj in India. Birla says he is not keen to rule. In the same way, the Nawab of Bhopal also calls himself a friend of his people. He too is unwilling to accept power by going against his subjects. Who then would hold the reins of power? They would come into your hands. Not only into your hands, but into the hands of the poor.

There are many Birlas in the country. What is their power? They have to get their work done by labourers and they can get it done only when they pay for it. When





the workers refuse to work, the millions would remain stuck with the rich. If these rich people own land, they are not going to till it themselves. If they do not find anyone to plough their land their vast stretches of land would lie useless. Similarly, all the swords and spears and horsemen of the Nawab of Bhopal are going to be rendered useless. After all, how many people can they kill? Over whom would he rule after killing his own subjects? He would be able to rule over his subjects only by becoming their trustee.

Instead of this, if anyone says that because the Nawab of Bhopal is a Muslim, Bhopal would be a Muslim territory and that in Kashmir a handful of Brahmin would wield power, this will not be conceded at all.

Take the case of the Nizam of Hyderabad. It is said that the moment he has an opportunity, he will try to bring the whole of India under his rule. But who precisely is going to do it? His subjects are Hindus.

The British would be betraying us if they thought that they would find a place for themselves in Hyderabad, Bhopal, Rajkot or some other place after they quit India. But I have not gathered any such impression. I believe that the British intentions of leaving India are perfectly honest. Now that they are leaving India, their sovereignty also ends. How are some footholds here and there going to be of any help? And, when the British are gone, the Princes are going to have their place in the midst of their subjects. Once when Malaviyaji went to Bombay, I accompanied him. Both of us went and met some Maharajas there. They made us sit on elevated seats, and themselves sat at our feet. Those were the days when British power was at its peak. Now when the Imperialist power is withdrawing, they will at once realize that they can retain their position only when they listen to the people. The only way of responding to the people is by coming into the Constituent Assembly. If they take an obstinate stand and refuse to join the Constituent Assembly, they cannot remain rulers.

No Muslim Prince in India can say that he will kill all the Hindus. If anyone says such a thing, I would ask him why he was their protector all this time, why he lived by their food. Similarly, any Prince, just because he is a Muslim, would not be entitled to say that he would join Pakistan. Nor can a Hindu ruler, because he is a Hindu, say that he would be with the Congress. Either would have to follow the wishes of the people.

In the end Gandhiji announced the death of Chakrayya, a young Harijan from Andhra.



He was an inmate of the Sevagram Ashram. He was trained under Nayee Talim. He was a hard-working craftsman. He was not given to weaknesses like falsehood, fraud and anger. By some misfortune he developed some brain trouble. He was a believer in nature-cure but his friends insisted that he should be operated upon by surgeons. The disease had affected his eyes. Yet with great effort he wrote me a letter before he was taken to the operation table. He said in this that although he liked nature-cure he was willing to undergo the surgery and if he had to die in the process, he would do so reciting the name of Rama. Eventually he passed away on the operation table in a hospital in Bombay.

I feel like crying over his death; but I cannot cry. For whom should I cry and for whom should I refrain from crying? If Mother India should have any children, they should be, as Tulsidas has said, either generous or brave. Chakrayya was generous because he was a selfless worker, always content. He was also brave because he welcomed death. He was a Harijan but knew no distinctions of Harijan and *savarna* and of Hindu and Muslim. He regarded all as human beings and was himself a true human being.

Today I have talked in one breath about the Nawab of Bhopal and Chakrayya. In India there is room for both. Let the Nawab of Bhopal be a trustee of his people. And let us have millions of young men like Chakrayya. Then alone will India be able to live in peace and happiness.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan I, pp. 106-11

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## 95. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 1, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 1, 1947

Today also a Brahmin objected to the recitation from the Koran, but the prayer continued. Two young men from the audience took him by the arms, made him sit down and tried to silence him. This created some disturbance in the meeting. When the police came in to take him away Gandhiji said:

Please, constable, don't take him away. Let him sit where he is. Please only see that he does not create any more trouble. The recitation from the Koran is already over. Now we shall have some bhajans provided this gentleman allows it. If he does not, we shall have no bhajans for the day.

At this the Brahmin gentleman smilingly raised his elbow and said: "Just look, in this scuffle, I sustained these bruises. Is this your non-violence?"

Well, forget about your bleeding. You just tell me whether I should continue the prayer. We shall have bhajans if you say 'yes'. If you do not agree, we shall have no bhajans today.

The gentleman cheerfully agreed to listen to bhajans.

Hinduism does not belong only to you. I am a Hindu too, and a perfect sanatani. Now, why should we read only the Gita? Why should we not read the Koran too? We must gather pearls wherever we find them. Power is now about to come to us. The Viceroy is impatient to hand it over to us. Would you, at this moment, quarrel like this and show your folly? You must learn to be courteous. You can learn courtesy from Badshah Khan. Today when Manu went to bring him to the prayer he said he would rather keep away as some Hindu might be hurt by his presence. I then sent him a message saying that he was huge as a mountain and I was a mere Bania, and if I was not scared, why should he be? And now, having come here, there he sits more gentle than a lamb. We too should be well-behaved like him. Granted that there are some uncharitable things in the Koran. But is there any work which does not contain such things? I have lived in the midst of hundreds of Muslim friends. No one has ever told me that I was an undesirable person because I was not a Muslim. A Muslim friend (Umar Jhaveri, a businessman of South Africa) who is no longer alive, and who, a jeweller that he was, possessed also the qualities of a jewel, had warned me to beware of Muslims since all of them were not angels. But I told him I need not look at the darker side of



things. I was happy to have found such a good friend. And he was not the only one. I can give you quite a few such names. I had even accepted one of them (Hussain Main) as my own son. He was always ready to serve people. But God took him away. When such wonderful persons can be found among the Muslims, I say the Hindus should not lose their heads because of what a few Muslims do. The British kept us under control by the force of arms. Shall we start fighting when they are leaving? This is certainly not worthy of us.

After the bhajans and the Ramdhun had been gone through in an orderly manner, Gandhiji complimented the people as well as the Brahmin gentleman for remaining peaceful and said:

If people would act with a little understanding, independence is almost in their hands, because Jawaharlal is the Vice-President in our Government. True, the Government is headed by the Viceroy; but he has to keep silent now. Your real king is Jawaharlal. He is a king who wants to serve not only India, but through it the whole world. He has acquainted himself with the peoples of all lands and is adept at dealing with diplomats from all countries. But how long can he go on doing it all by himself?

This uncrowned king is at your service. Should he put down your disturbances with bullets? If today he suppresses one person, he will have tomorrow to act similarly in another case. And that would not be swaraj, not Panchayat raj either. Only when you remain disciplined will Jawaharlal be able to lead us and our freedom be safe.

Here is an example of the discipline to which Jawaharlal submits himself. Last year when he had gone to Kashmir Lord Wavell wanted to meet him. Maulana Saheb wanted to send it to him. When I persuaded him he abided by the order of the Congress President and came here leaving the problem unresolved over there. (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 22-6-1946)

Today also Jawaharlal's mind is in Kashmir, where Sheikh Abdullah (Leader of Kashmir National Conference—a nationalist organization fighting for a democratic set-up in the State, to which the Maharaja was opposed.), the leader of the people, is locked behind bars. I told Jawaharlal that he needed more here. I told him that if it was necessary I would go to Kashmir and do his work, and that he should stay here. I also told him that although I was bound by my word to do or die only in Bihar or Noakhali, I could still go to Kashmir because there too the problem of the Muslims was involved. I would go there and befriend the Maharaja of Kashmir and work for the good of the Muslims. But Jawaharlal has not yet agreed to this.



In short, now that we have attained swaraj, each one of us should act with discipline, humility and understanding. Then alone would India deserve her independence.

Yesterday I talked to you about the Princes. Similarly today I want to talk about the trading community. Yesterday I said that India would not be ruled by a Birla, nor by the Nawab of Bhopal, nor the Nizam nor the Maharaja of Kashmir. The Princes would be only servants of the people.

It cannot be that the people of India should become free in one place and be under subjugation in another place. When freedom comes, it shall be for all. Now freedom is definitely coming. Because if the British are honest, and it is my impression that they are, they have to quit. The Viceroy Lord Mountbatten says that he wants to leave as early as possible. And he will stick to his word.

When the British go, will we become the rulers of the country? And shall we quarrel among ourselves when we become the rulers of India? Will the Princes then ride over us? No, they will all become the trustees of the people. In other words, they will be servants of society like Chakrayya. Only then can they continue as our rulers.

In the same way, we should not be ruled by the business community either. We want the rule of the Bhangis. The Bhangis are the highest of all because their service is the greatest. That is why I have volunteered to be a Bhangi myself. By the rule of the Bhangis I mean that once you make a scavenger your minister, you must respect his word as much as the British respected the word of the seventeen-year-old Queen Victoria, and everyone, big and small, did his duty. I have seen with my eyes the manner in which the British perform their duties.

I have been to London several times. On one occasion I stayed there for three years. But I was then a mere boy. I have gone to London twice or thrice subsequently. There the people are so reasonable and law-abiding that the police are never obliged to wield firearms. They have in their hand only a baton. People know that the police are their servants. Hence they follow the instructions of the police. The police also try to help the people to the maximum. Things are not done there through bribery. The police do not accept bribes even if offered.

Our Indian police too should follow this example now. They should not accept any bribe at all. If they are not getting enough to subsist upon they can ask the Sardar



for higher wages. Let them approach Baldev Singh (Defence Member in the Interim Government.). Let them go to Nehruji. When big officers and ministers get thousands, why should the policemen receive meagre salaries? These people would do something about it. But the policemen must give up taking bribes.

I also want to say something about businessmen. They must all come together and proclaim with one voice that they all want to become true Banias and true Marwaris. A true Bania is one who weighs things correctly. All the Banias and all the Marwaris and all traders must get together and resolve not to indulge in black marketing and not to give or take bribes.

If they can do this much Rajendra Babu's (Rajendra Prasad was Minister of Food and Agriculture.) helplessness in providing food for the people would be removed. I have received a letter which says that even though I had the salt tax repealed, salt is now costlier than before. How is that? I say after the repeal of the salt tax we should get salt almost free. For such a thing to happen the traders will have to do business for the sake of India instead of for their own sake. They should forget black-marketing altogether. When that happens, the ministers of the Interim Government would be able to carry out their respective tasks, and Rajaji, Rajendra Babu, Jawaharlalji, Matthai (John Matthai, Member for Railways and Transport in the Interim Government ), Bhabha (C. H. Bhabha, Member for Works, Mines and Power in the Interim Government) and all the four League Ministers (5 They were: Liaquat Ali Khan for Finance, I. I. Chundrigar for Commerce, Abdur Rab Nishtar for Communications (Posts and Air And Ghazanfar Ali Khan for Health) would be able to serve you in every way. Even after that, if India cannot have enough food and clothing and there is no progress in the country, you can remove them from office. But how would you remove them? Would you have them ousted by the Viceroy's action? No. You would ask the Viceroy not to bother. You would 'hold' the Ministers yourselves in the manner in which I said yesterday I would 'hold' Jinnah. Then you would be able to make them do as you wish.

I have learnt from Jawaharlal that people are starving in London. I was sorry to hear that. However guilty the British might have been in our case, they must certainly get enough to eat.

Ours is a very vast country. If our traders behave properly and if they are sensible we can say that so long as India is alive, the world cannot go hungry. We would provide food for the world. I am Bania and I know something about trade. If all the



Banias and traders cooperate with me and also cooperate with the Interim Government, and if all the Muslims cooperate, I can provide food for everyone. I am not at all prepared to accept that we do not produce enough in our country. If we work hard enough and act with reason and if by the grace of God there is sufficient rain, we can have plenty to eat. But it is not possible to clap with one hand. This can happen only if I can have cooperation from all, and then it would be such a thunderous clap that all of you would be happy and the whole world would be happy.

I tell you in no uncertain terms that if everybody in independent India does his duty well, the whole country will be happy.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 111-6

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## 96. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 2, 1947

DELHI,

Monday, June 2, 1947

I am unable to tell you what has happened or is happening on the political plane. But I would like to repeat what I have been saying these last three or four days, namely, that the common man should not concern himself with what the Viceroy has brought from England. We should concern ourselves with what our duty should be in any situation that may arise. The one thing the country should make clear is that it will accept nothing through force.

Continuing, therefore, the thought that I have been developing these last few days, I should like to ask what our doctors and scientists are doing for the sake of the country. One finds them readily going to foreign countries to learn new ideas and the latest treatments for curing diseases. I would suggest that they should turn their attention to the seven lakhs villages of India. They will then find that all medical men and women can find work to do there. Not in the Western fashion, of course, but in our own fashion in the villages. They will then also know many indigenous remedies which they will be able to make use of. There are so many herbs in India that we have no need to import drugs at all. But more than through drugs they will help the people by teaching them the right mode of living.

What shall I say to the scientists? Are they giving their attention to growing more food? And this not with the aid of artificial fertilizers but through proper methods of tillage and by use of organic manure? In Noakhali I saw people using even the water hyacinth which grows wild and blocks the flow of river water. This our scientists will do when they learn to live for the country rather than for themselves.

I spoke yesterday of the invaluable work that Jawaharlal is doing. I had described him as the uncrowned king of India. He cannot be replaced today when the Englishmen are withdrawing their authority from India. He, who was educated at Harrow and Cambridge and became a barrister, is greatly needed to carry on the negotiations with the English-men. But the time is fast approaching when India will have to elect the first president of the Republic. I would have proposed the name of Chakrayya, had he been alive. I would wish with all my heart to have a brave, selfless and pure-hearted scavenger girl to be our first President. It is no vain dream. We can certainly come





across such Harijan girls if only we make an effort to find them. Had I not selected little Gulnar, the late Maulana Mahomed Ali's daughter? But the silly girl went and married Shuaib Qureshi. At one time she led the life of a fakir and had met me when the Ali Brothers were in jail. Gulnar is now the proud mother of many bright children, but she cannot now be my successor.

Our future President will have no need to know English. Of course he will be assisted by men who are proficient in political matters and who also know foreign languages. These dreams, however, can be realized only if we devote all our attention to our villages instead of killing each other.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 116-8

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## 97. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 2, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

If in our view the League has not acted in a praiseworthy manner, let us say that the League has not acted in a praiseworthy manner. Similarly, if the Congress has not acted rightly let us tell the Congressmen too that their action is not right. Only then will democratic rule be established. One group functioning according to its own will does not constitute democratic rule.

Democracy is where even the man in the street is heard. When we are out to establish a democratic order, the Viceroy's House, or even Jawaharlal's house, is not the seat of the Government. I have described Jawaharlal as the uncrowned king. And we are a poor nation. We are so poor that we shall walk rather than ride in a car. Even if somebody offers us a lift in his car, we shall decline his offer saying that he can keep his car, we would rather walk. If we are over hungry, we shall eat a little more. Thus democracy means the rule of the man in the street. One who always goes about in a car is spoiled. One who lives in a palace cannot rule the Government. That is why I say that we are not going to benefit from what the British, who have ruled over a world empire, might propose for us. Even if the rulers of India think something which does not appear proper to us, we ought to say so.

I said yesterday that the Banias were to blame for the black market. The difference between an ordinary trader and me is that I work for the good of the whole country while other traders fill their own coffers. Like Rajendra Babu I am also worrying about providing food for the whole country.

I am told that these days not much trade is left in the hands of the Banias. There are very few traders who can indulge in black market practices and the whole confusion is due to the Government Departments since the whole thing is managed by the Government. It is up to Rajendra Babu, who is the king of Bihar, to provide food. And it is in the hands of Rajaji, who has been a popular minister in Madras, to provide clothing. Still these things do not reach the people because corruption is rampant among the civil servants. If Rajendra Babu and Rajaji are surrounded by wicked persons



whom they are not able to control, then they too should be considered responsible for the rot.

I do not know how far it is right to present the Government servants in this light. But I would certainly say that none from amongst us should resort to black-marketing. If there are some Government officers who give to their favourites twice or thrice the number of ration cards that their families are entitled to, those who receive these cards and those who give them are both guilty. It is possible that hitherto things could go on because of the awe of the British. But if this state of affairs continues even now, God alone can save India. But such things should not continue now. Today it is not necessary to act according to the order of the boss, regardless of whether it is fair or unfair. We are not under foreign bosses any more. Rajendra Babu cannot issue orders in this way. He does not have under him the police that would force people to accept orders. Even Rajaji or Nehruji or the Sardar cannot compel people to obey their orders through force. Sardar Baldev Singh does have the army under him but even he cannot threaten to have the entire military force cracking down on the people to subdue them. You could not remove the British officers, but you can remove these people. They can rule over you only by pleasing you. I wish to inform you that your Panchayat Raj has begun from today. It will be twelve months before we acquire full power. In the meantime, God alone knows what may or may not happen. But you must accept the method of democratic rule right from now. Let no one among us fill his stomach by harming the country.

To all those who are in the Civil Service—be they white or Black, Hindu or Muslim, in the Secretariat or in the higher echelons of the police, to all whom my voice can reach I would say that their duties have now become ten times heavier. you must all now become clean and straight. Then alone will the whole task of our independence become easy and each one of us experience freedom.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I pp. 118–20

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## 98. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 4, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You know that I am coming straight after meeting the Viceroy. Not that I had gone to get anything out of him. Nor had he called me in order to give me anything. Actually the talk between us was not even finished. But I excused myself saying to the Viceroy that I would not like to miss the prayer time so long as it was humanly possible. He appreciated my point and said that our talk could be resumed later. (For the Viceroy's note on the interview, vide "Lord Mountbatten's Note on Interview with Gandhiji", 4-6-1947)

I told you that we would not give even an inch of land as Pakistan under coercion. In other words, we would not accept Pakistan under the threat of violence. Only if they can convince us by peaceful argument and if their proposal appeals to our reason would we concede Pakistan.

I cannot say that this whole question has been treated rationally. The Congress Working Committee insists that they have not granted anything under duress. They are not scared because so many people are dying and property is being destroyed. It is not at all true that they have accepted defeat in the face of violence. I should not take them to be a timid lot. They have taken this course because they realized that it was not possible to get around the Muslim League in any other way. For, once the Muslim League agrees to at least some points, our task becomes easy. In short, the Working Committee claims that they have accepted the vivisection of the country into Pakistan and Hindustan not out of fear but after realizing the prevailing situation. We do not wish to force anyone. We tried hard. We tried to reason with them, but they refused to come into the Constituent Assembly. The League supporters kept on arguing that they were afraid of the Hindu majority in the event of their joining the Constituent Assembly.

What can the Viceroy do under these circumstances? He says that whatever happens, he wants to quit by June, 1948. He would not like to stay beyond that date even if you wanted him to.... He says they must grant full independence to India. Why he insists on this is another matter. You might say that the British have now become



helpless because they are no longer the mighty power they used to be. We would want them to be a first-class power even now. It is true that they have tyrannized over us for 150 years. I also know that we have been fighting against their might for the last 32 years. But I never make an enemy of my opponent. I would still appeal to God and pray that He should be good to them. And whatever God does would be just.

I shall speak no more now about God's infallible power. Let us realize this much that every human being is prone to commit mistakes. Hindus. Muslims and Sikhs all can say that the Muslims have committed a great blunder. But on what ground can we absolve ourselves of the blame? Let us leave it to God to pass judgment.

I would say this much, that it was wrong on their part to demand Pakistan. But they can think of nothing else. They say that they can never live where the Hindus have a majority. They are harming themselves by making this demand and I pray to God to save them in time from any harm coming to them. When my own brother, whether he follows my religion or some other religion, wants to harm me I cannot aid him. Even though he may not be aware that he is harming me. If I do it I am sure to be crushed between the two stones of a quern. Why should I not keep my own millstone apart?

And now I want to reassure you about the British. I want to tell you, not in the light of the Viceroy's speech (In his broadcast of June 3, 1947, the Viceroy had stated: "I am of course just as much opposed to the partition of Provinces as I am to the partition of India herself and for the same basic reasons. For just as I feel there is an Indian consciousness which should transcend communal differences, so I feel there is a Punjabi and a Bengali consciousness which has evoked a loyalty to their provinces. And so I felt it was essential that the people of India themselves should decide this question of partition.") but in the light of my own talks with him, the Viceroy has had no hand in this decision. The decision has been taken jointly by all the leaders in consultation. The leaders say that for seven years they insisted on the unity of India. The Cabinet Mission also gave a reasonable award. But the League went back on its assurance and now this course has had to be adopted. They (the Muslims) have got to come back to India. Even if Pakistan is formed, there will have to be mutual exchange of populations and movements to and fro. Let us hope that cooperation endures.

But now that this decision has been taken, should I say that we should all rebel against the Congress? Or, should I ask the Viceroy to intervene? The Viceroy says that he never wanted partition. Jawaharlal says on behalf of the Congress that he too does not approve of it. But they have all been obliged to accept it, not for fear of violence,



but because of the circumstances. For the Hindus, the Sikhs, all say that they would live in their own homelands, not in the Muslims'. The Hindus are willing to be under Sikh rule because they say the Sikhs never compel them at the point of the sword to bow before the Granth Sahib.

Master Tara Singh came to see me today. I told him that he should not remain a lone soldier, but become equal to one and a quarter lakh. The Sikhs should learn to die without killing and then the history of the Punjab would be completely changed. With it the history of India would change too. The Sikhs are few in number, but they are brave. That is why the British are afraid of them. If the Sikhs became truly brave, the rule of the Khalsa would spread throughout the world.

I told you these things to relieve you of your pain. You should not feel sorry at heart that India is to be divided into two. The demand has been granted because you asked for it. The Congress never asked for it. I was not even present here. But the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realized that the Khalsa as also the Hindus desired it. You have lost nothing, nor have the Sikhs, nor the Muslims. The Viceroy has already stated in his speech and he has also assured me that when we approach him united this decision would be revoked. Only our united decision would be accepted. The Viceroy says that his task is merely to see that the British carry on their task honestly till power is transferred and then quit in peace. (In his speech the Viceroy had said: "Whichever way the decision of the Indian people may go, I feel sure any British official who may be asked to remain for a while will do everything in his power to help implement that decision.") The British people do not wish that chaos should reign after they quit this country.

I had already said that they should not worry about anarchy. I am, after all, a gambler. But who would listen to me? You do not listen to me. The Muslims have given me up. Nor can I fully convince the Congress of my point of view. Actually I am a slave of the Congress, because I belong to India. I tried my best to bring the Congress round to accept the proposal of May 16. But now we must accept what is an accomplished fact. The wonderful thing about it is that we can undo it any time we want.

In the end, I would only say that you had better forget the Viceroy. It pains me that instead of having direct talks we should negotiate through the Viceroy as mediator. It does us no credit that the League should convey its point to the Viceroy who in turn conveys it to the Congress and the Congress again conveys its own view to the Viceroy. But what can be done when the Muslim League does not agree to



anything at all? The Congress agrees to something and the Sikhs have joined the Congress. And the Viceroy then had to request Jinnah Saheb day and night to climb down a little. Thus he found this solution. Even while doing all this the Viceroy says that he is wondering what the League would say and what the Congress would say. But he goes on doing his work in the name of God. Let us therefore have trust in his honesty so long as we have no experience to the contrary.

But I would like to request Jinnah Saheb, implore him, to have direct talks with us at least now. Whatever has happened is all right, but now let us sit together and decide about the future. Let him forget all about the Viceroy now, and let him invite us to come to any understanding he wishes to have, so that it is in the interest of all of us.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 120–4

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## 99. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 5, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 5, 1947

Announcing the death of the Buddhist scholar Shri Kosambi, Gandhiji said:

Perhaps you have not heard his name, and so cannot feel grieved. Even otherwise we should not grieve over anyone's death. But it is human nature to grieve over the death of one's dear or revered ones. We are so made that we glorify anyone who beats his own drum and performs political acrobatics, yet we fail to appreciate the silent worker.. Kosambiji was one such silent worker. He was born in a village. He was a Hindu by birth, but he had come to believe that no other religion, not even the Vedic religion, gave as much importance to non-violence, piety, etc., as Buddhism did. So he embraced Buddhism and gave himself up to the study of Buddhist scriptures. He acquired such proficiency in the subject that he had no equal in India in scholarship. He taught Pali at the Gujarat Vidyapith and the Kashi Vidyapith and freely gave of his profound learning.

He sent me Rs. 1,000 which somebody had given him. He wrote to me that I should send someone to Ceylon for the study of Pali. But I asked him whether anyone would acquire insight into Buddhism by studying in Ceylon. I have told the Buddhists the world over that if they want to understand Buddhism they can do so only in India, its birthplace, that they must seek it where it first emerged as an offshoot of Vedic religion. They would grasp the deep significance of Buddhism only when they had also studied the works of Shankaracharya, that unrivalled scholar who was described as a Buddhist in disguise.

But in scholarship I cannot compare myself with Mr. Kosambiji. I am merely a barrister who became one by attending dinners in England! I have a very meagre knowledge of Sanskrit. If I have become a Mahatma today it is not because I read for the bar in England, but because I have devoted myself to service through truth and non-violence. If I command any respect today it is due to the little success I have achieved in my pursuit of truth and non-violence.

When Kosambiji realized that he was no longer physically fit to carry on any work, he decided to give up his life through fasting. At Tandonji's instance I made





Kosambiji, very much against his wishes, give up his fast. But his digestion had been severely affected and he was not able to eat anything at all. So, in Sevagram, he again gave up food and keeping himself only on water gave up the breath after forty days. During his illness he refused all nursing and all drugs. He even abandoned the desire to go to Goa where he was born. He commanded his son and others not to come to him. He left instructions that no memorial should be set up after his death. He also expressed the desire that he should be cremated or buried according to whichever was cheaper. Thus, with the name of the Buddha on his lips he passed into that final sleep which is to be the estate, one day or another, of all who are born. Death is the friend of everyone. It will visit us as destined. One may be able to predict the time of birth, but no one has yet been able to predict the time of death. We saw the same thing in the case of Chakrayya.

I beg you to forgive me for taking so much of your time over this.

I received a telegram yesterday saying that I had been talking so loftily for four or five days about not yielding even an inch of land for Pakistan under coercion, that they could take anything by appealing to our hearts. Now that Pakistan has come to be, why am I not undertaking a fast against it?

I am asked why I indulged in such talk then and why I have cooled off now. Why do I not rebel against the Congress? Why am I slavishly toeing their line? How can I remain a servant of the Congress? Why do I not undertake a fast and give up my life?

They are entitled to say these things. But I have no right to be angry with the correspondent. Getting angry means losing one's balance. There is an English saying: 'Anger is short madness.' The Gita also says: 'Wrath breeds stupefaction, stupefaction leads to loss of memory.' (II. 63)

Then how can I who have studied the Gita give way to anger? How can I go on a fast because somebody wants me to do so? I believe I have to undergo one more fast in my life. Ever since my fast in the Aga Khan Palace (From February 10, 1943 to March 3, 1943) I have had a strong feeling that that was not my last fast, that I shall have to undertake one more fast. But I will not do it at anyone's bidding. I will do it when God commands.

I have said that I have become a witness of Jinnah Sahib. He wants peace in the country. I too desire peace. But if, in spite of that, riots continue to rage everywhere



throwing the country into turmoil and God tells me, that is, my own heart tells me, that now I must depart from the world, I shall do so. Jinnah Saheb persuades me to sign the appeal that there should be no violence in politics. Lord Mountbatten also cast his spell on me and had me sign the appeal instead of Kripalani or Nehru. I signed the appeal on Jawaharlal's advice. Hence, we are three partners to this deal: the two of us because we have put our signatures to it, and Lord Mountbatten—not in his capacity as Viceroy, but as Mountbatten—for he is more than a mere witness.

In other words, there has to be peace in the whole country. If there is not, Jinnah Saheb will be guided by his God, Mountbatten by his and I by mine.

But through you I wish to convey to both of them that the moment they ask me to, I shall accompany them on foot or in a vehicle, whichever way they prefer. I cannot go by air. What shall I be able to see down below from an aeroplane? Besides, I have never travelled by plane. Of course I have seen aeroplanes from below and they look like fish.

Gurgaon is still burning. I have not received any information about it today, but the Jats and the Meos are in confrontation there. Fortunately they do not wish to indulge in the mad frenzy of killing women and children and old people. They are fighting like soldiers. But why should they fight at all? That they fight is a matter of shame to me, to Jinnah Saheb and also to Lord Mountbatten. It is similarly a matter of shame for Sardar Baldev Singh and Jawaharlal. Fortunately, nothing much happened on June 2 or on June 4.

But one thing has definitely come to pass. Hindustan and Pakistan have come into being and their separate Constituent Assemblies have been formed. Should I now die to nullify them? I am not going to die that way.

I have a very big job to attend to. It is said that now India is going to be industrialized. But industrialization of my conception has to be carried out in the villages with the charkha plying in every home, and cloth being produced in every village.

I would not approve of their idea of having a thousand mills in the place of one Birla Mill. I mention Birla's name because he is my friend. But I have all the mill-owners in mind. I would not be disturbed if there was an earthquake or the Birla Mill caught



fire, I would shed no sympathetic tears before the Birla brothers. Of course, if someone deliberately sets out to destroy his mills, I would take that person to task.

It seems that now the Congress has decided to set up a large number of mills all over India and spread a network of mechanized industries. And it wants to have a large army in the country. But I have nothing to do with that. Did I have anything to do with the violence in Bihar? And what is there now left in India that can gladden my heart? But I am still here, because the Congress has now grown into a great institution and I cannot go on a fast in protest against it. But I feel as if I was thrown into a fire-pit and my heart is burning. God alone knows why I continue to live in spite of this. Whatever I am, I am after all a servant of the Congress. If the Congress is seized with madness, should I also go mad? Should I die in order to prove that I alone was right? I want to appeal to the reason of you all, of the Congress, of the Muslims, of my friend Jinnah Saheb and win their hearts.

I would like to ask Jinnah Saheb, now that his slogan of Pakistan Zindabad has been realized, why he still goes to Lord Mountbatten. Why does he not go to the Congress? Why does he not invite Badshah Khan and Dr. Khan Saheb? Why does he not show them what a pretty rose Pakistan is?

But I have been receiving complaints about Pakistan. I have a letter today which says that a British firm will be going to Lahore to manufacture arms. It is also being said that the Muslim League has decided to remain in the Commonwealth, and that it will confine itself to the Dominion Status.

The Congress has committed no crime in accepting Dominion Status. It has accepted it provisionally, with a view to putting an end to the British rule immediately. It will opt for complete independence as soon as the Constitution is ready. Will the Muslim League still keep to the Dominion Status? Both our countries should have uniform Constitutions. Both have declared complete independence as their objective. Then it also becomes Jinnah's duty to have nothing less than complete independence. That duty cannot be performed by indulging in mutual fights.

All the Hindus got tired of persuading him, and they conceded Pakistan in the hope that at last they would have peace.

One may ask why I allowed such a thing to happen. But should I then insist that the Congress should do everything only after consulting me? I am not so mad. And, if



I rebel against the Congress, it will mean that I am rebelling against the whole country, because the Congress belongs to the whole country. I shall do such a thing only when I find the Congress has gone over to the capitalists.

But so far, I think, the Congress is working for the poor. It may be following a path different from mine and have its mind fixed on armaments, an army and factories but I have to convince them by arguments, not by resorting to a fast.

Even fasting can be devilish. May God also protect me from such devilish fasting. May He keep me from devilish actions, devilish speech and devilish thoughts. Better far that He takes me away before I succumb to any such thing. If I undertake a fast it will only be a pure and godly fast.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 124-30

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## 100. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 6, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 6, 1947

I shall not waste time in reading her long note. (A lady had again objected to the verses from the Quran being recited at prayer.) I was under the impression that people had understood me by now. But I find that we are not so fortunate. Irreligion is being practised in the name of religion. But we shall have to put up with irreligion. If the lady tries to interrupt, let no one harass her. Now she has gone a step further and writes to me that I should not even deliver my speech. She may say what she likes. The prayer will not stop nor will I desist from delivering my speech. If everyone starts behaving in this manner the administration of the country cannot function. You will please remain peaceful.

I see that you are all oppressed by the heat. But you have got to listen and I have got to speak. But I can speak to you only when you maintain quiet. This does not mean that you should not fan yourselves with a piece of paper or a handkerchief. Even though it is hot, I am getting some air. This girl is fanning me, how can I then stop you? (There was laughter as the person wielding the fan was a man.) If all of you are fanning yourselves, I would not say that it is the job of a woman. You can bring your own fans. A woman can also act like a man. If she does not become disheartened, the woman is the man's 'better half'.

In the *bhajan*, the *gopi* says that hearing the flute she wants to go to the forest. But the *bhajan* is not meant only for women. We are all like *gopis* before God. God by Himself is neither male nor female. For Him there is no distinction of status, no distinction of birth. He can be described only as 'not this, not this,'. God resides in the forest that is the heart and His flute is the voice within. We do not have to go to desolate forests. We have to hear the divine music that goes on in our own hearts. When each one of us starts hearing that sweet music, all would be well with India.

We heard this *bhajan* at an opportune moment. This lady tells me that I should retire to the forest for it is I who have spoiled Jinnah. But who am I to spoil him? If at all, I can only hope to transform him. I can do it not by force but by love. One can only destroy by force, by the atom bomb. The atom bomb has only wrought destruction. It has not drawn anyone to itself. If there is any real magnet in the world which can draw



man to man, it is only love. I am a witness to it. The lady says I should not read the Koran, should not speak at all, only retire to the forest. But even if I go to the forest you will drag me back. Men are created to live together. If I had learnt the art of living in a forest and drawing people there, I would not have had to make speeches or to say anything. I would have lived in solitude and silence and you would have done what I wanted. But God has not yet qualified me for that.

You may want to know what I talked (For Lord Mountbatten's note of his interview with Gandhiji, vide Appendix IV.) with the Viceroy during my long session with him today and what I have brought from him. What could he give? He is helpless. He has nothing to take and nothing to give. He tells me that he is praying to God that every man in India, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, should realize that he has not come here to rob the country or cause internal strife. He has come here only to leave, if possible after seeing peace established, if not, he will leave in any case. He says that the British would not remain in the country after August 15. He will stay on as the Governor-General only if we want him to do so. The Viceroy says that at present he has nothing more than Dominion Status to give. It would have been different if we had driven them out. But this, he says, is the best way if they are to leave as friends.

The Viceroy also told me that the British were leaving as friends because India did not try to drive them out by force. People sabotaged the railways, telegraph service, etc., in 1942. But there were only a few. The masses did not indulge in such activities. He told me that we behaved decently with them. We asked them only to leave, because we were deeply pained that they had sown poison in the country. But, he said, the Congress did not give them poison. The Congress only resorted to non-co-operation and the British realized that they could not hold on except with the help of Martial Law, and so they had decided to leave

Had our non-co-operation been perfect, the British would have left long ago and in a much better manner. The Congress had called upon the students, Government servants and soldiers to come out and join the movement. But they were weak; they could not leave their positions. But still we did not threaten to kill them or poison them. The British recognized this strength in us and so they are going. But the Viceroy says that the people still do not trust him. A journalist has written that the British had come here to rule and are now going away after dividing the country into two so that both



the parts of the country should fight and one or the other should seek the help of the British, and thus provide them the excuse for staying on.

This would mean betrayal and I hope the British will not betray us this time. Even if they do, we should ourselves be brave. Why should the brave be afraid of betrayal? When the Viceroy talks to me with such honesty, why should I doubt his intentions? The Viceroy asked me if I at least trusted him. I told him that I would not have gone to him if I did not trust him. I told him I was truthful and honest.

I talked to the Viceroy in this vein and I also conveyed to him my pain at the division of the country into India and Pakistan. He then told me that it was not the doing of the British, that they had given what the Congress and the League had unitedly asked for. He said that the British could not leave at once because even dividing the effects of a small house took time and here it was the question of dividing a whole country. But I asked the Viceroy to relax. It would be better that we attend to the task of division ourselves.

For the past two or three days I have been pleading with them that, now that they had got what they sought, even though it was a little less than expected, they should show what it is. Is it a rose in name only or does it also have the fragrance? Why not let us at least smell it? Tell us if there is a place for the Sikhs and the Hindus in Pakistan. Or are they to be slaves? And do they intend to split up the N. W. F. P. by having a referendum there? Do they want to split up Balochistan too?

Would they not show even now by their actions that though so long the Muslims had considered the Hindus their enemies they consider them so no longer? That they would not divide the Pathans, the Baluchis and also the Hindus? Will they not show that India will remain one even if we must divide the assets like brothers and that we will carry on our affairs without the British?

I shall not mind it if they abuse me for talking in this manner. Even yesterday abuse was hurled at me when someone exclaimed why I did not die. But let these people at least explain what is in their mind. Why do they not come to me even now? Why do they not come to you? Why do they not invite the Congressmen or the nonCongressmen to meet them? There was a time when they had forged an agreement between the Congress and the League. Why do they not forge a stronger and lasting agreement now?



Let us all try together to be friends and not enemies. The Viceroy by himself cannot achieve this. Nor can the Congress alone do it. We can become friends only by making united efforts.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 130-4

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## 101. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 7, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am telling you in all humility that it is improper to obstruct the prayer. I cannot stop praying. It will go on. But I find that every day there is some complaint or other. It pains me very much.

I want to continue with the same subject. I want to talk about what is in the air, because great pressure is brought to bear on me. I am being told that while I kept on opposing [the idea of Pakistan] till the Viceroy's declaration and saying that we would not agree to anything under coercion, now I have become silent. I am being rightly told so. I must confess that I am not happy about this decision. But many things happen in the world that are not to our liking; and yet we have to put up with them. We have to put up with this thing in the same manner.

A newspaper has said that even now the All-India Congress Committee can reject the proposal. I also think that the All-India Congress Committee is fully entitled not to accept the proposal. But we should not suddenly oppose the Congress to which we have been loyal all this time and which has earned reputation in the world and has also done so much work.

A large number of 'Sanatanists' believe in the monster of untouchability and think they are following their religion by clinging to this monster. But God alone will judge who is a true Sanatanist amongst us. Similarly, if the Congress also puts a religious garb on irreligious practices, we shall have to wind up the organization. Who can kill the Congress? We shall all lay down our lives before it. We will do it not by committing suicide. But we shall continue to fight it and will not bow down to it till we bring it on to the correct path or die ourselves. But we shall do this when we find that the Congress is deliberately erring. In my view, it is not committing a deliberate blunder at present. Nor has it committed deliberate blunders earlier. Had it functioned so far by accepting irreligion as religion, it would not have risen to the position it has today.



It is not correct to say that the Congress Working Committee should have consulted the A.I.C.C. before making this decision. The Working Committee cannot function if it has to wait for consultation at every step. Subsequently the A.I.C.C. can challenge the Working Committee and vote it out to form a new one.

When I was working regularly for the Congress and enjoyed the right to enforce the constitution of the Congress, I had said during one of the discussions that we could not collect 300 or 1000 members of the A. I. C. C. every now and again. It would be impossible for the Working Committee to function in this manner. Of course, later on, the A.I.C.C. can certainly call for an explanation from the Working Committee. It can also remove the Committee by passing a vote of no confidence so as to make sure that it will not repeat its mistakes, and form a new Committee.

Supposing the Working Committee issued a hundi of several lakhs in the name of the A.I.C.C. which the latter did not approve. The A.I.C.C. would still have to honour the hundi, but it could certainly dissolve the Working Committee and elect a new one so that the mistake was not repeated. In fact in such a situation the A.I.C.C. ought to take such a step.

The same rule applies in the case of its decision regarding the Hindustan-Pakistan affair. The division is now a fait accompli. But there is still ample scope for adjustment. We can at will make or unmake Hindustan and Pakistan or whatever else we call it. True, the Congress does not represent the League. But as I have looked at the Congress I feel that the Congress represents the entire Indian nation. On that account the Congress can never say that because the Muslims have done great harm to us it will also harm them in return.

The Congress would not remain what it is if it did that. Even when I went to the Round Table Conference (1 In 1931) I had said that I would do them a good turn even if they harmed us. The Congress wants to establish democratic rule. It will not act against the interests of the Princes either. But the Princes will be able to retain their position only when they become the trustees of their subjects like the Raja of Oundh (Appasaheb Pant). A small principality like Oundh will be long remembered only because it bowed to the sovereignty of the people. As against this, the State of Kashmir, although it is worth millions, will be wiped out if it does not listen to the voice of its people. Hitherto these rulers may have behaved arrogantly with the support of the British authorities; but now they must realize that their authority issues from the people. I made a special



mention of Kashmir because at the moment our eyes are fixed on it. But this applies to all the native States.

I talked at such length in order that the Congress may continue to belong to the people and the people may continue in the Congress fold, i.e., they may follow the Congress discipline. If we start having internal strife, the Congress is going to perish. If you do not approve of the decision of the Working Committee you can frankly say so at the next A.I.C.C. meeting. I have no intention to attend the session. I will attend if I am invited. But who is going to listen to my solitary voice? After all you are the people. You can convey it to the Congress in a civil manner whether or not you approve of what it has done.

Now it becomes the duty of the Congress to give up what has been granted as Pakistan and make its best efforts in the portion that remains with it. Let the people in Pakistan go ahead of the Congress in their efforts to bring progress to their land. If this happens the two can live in amity and happiness.

In the end Gandhiji repeated his appeal to Jinnah Saheb and called upon him to invite the Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and all others to come to a settlement and spare the Viceroy the trouble and the Congress leaders the needless running around. He appealed to Jinnah to build a Pakistan where the Gita could be recited side by side with the Koran, and the temple and the gurudwara would be given the same respect as the mosque, so that those who had been opposing Pakistan till now would be sorry for their mistake and would only sing praises of Pakistan.

[From Hindi], Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 134-7

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## 102. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 8, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 8, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Our peace during the prayer should not be disturbed even if bombs are showered from the sky and there is an upheaval. As the gopi hears the notes of the flute in the wilderness, the devotee of God hears the voice in the recesses of his own heart. It has been described as ‘the voice of silence’ in English. In other words, we can hear that voice only when we are quiet.

I have already informed you that Prof. Kosambiji who was an erudite scholar and was considered a leading authority in Pali recently died at the Sevagram Ashram. Balvantsinha, Manager of the Ashram, writes that he had not witnessed such a death so far. It was exactly as Kabir described in the following couplet:

The servant Kabir says: Although we wear this sheet with ever so much care, it has to be given up even as it is.

If we can all befriend Death in this manner, it would be to the good of India.

I am told that I should act as an arbitrator in the dispute between the Meos and the Jats. But how can I act as an arbitrator? In the first place I do know any of them. And then, only a person who has the authority to have his judgment accepted can act as an arbitrator. I possess no arms nor would I seek the help of a court of law. But I think they should now restrain themselves. Whether what has happened is good or bad, now the Congress and the League have also come to a settlement. They should not go on fighting till either side accepts defeat. The Meos are a brave community and the Jats and Ahirs too would not give a chance to an-one to say that they had been defeated. Fortunately, they are not killing the aged, infants and women. Both sides have amassed enough arms. They are fighting bravely, but anyway it leads to destruction. A poor man is as much pained when his hut is burnt down as a king when his palace is burnt down. Fighting is going on so close to us and yet we are able to do nothing about it. Darkness has descended over the region. Even so those of you who know them should carry my voice to them if they can and try to stop the fighting. (Vide also “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 29-5-1947 and “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 5-6-1947)



I am accused of spoiling the situation in Bengal. It is my claim that nothing is spoiled at my hands. Whether it is in Bengal, Bihar or Noakhali, nothing has ever been spoiled at my hands. I can only improve things and I have done so. Now, like Punjab, Bengal too is going to be divided. In one part of Bengal the Muslims are in a majority and in the other the Hindus. A large number of Hindus desire partition, for, how long can one put up with turbulence? They say once there is partition they can at least live in peace in their homeland. The Muslim League in Bengal has rejected this proposal. But who takes the Bengal Muslim League seriously? Division of Bengal is certain under the new proposal.

Now I am being blamed for not letting Bengal be divided. It is true that I do not want the division. But then I also totally disapprove of the whole country being divided into Hindustan and Pakistan. Even if I was the only Hindu remaining, I would still have the courage to go and live in the midst of the Muslim majority. What is the worst they could do? Kill me; could they do anything worse? But they would not kill me. They would protect one solitary individual. God would protect me. God always protects one who has no one to protect him. That is why the poet says, "God is the strength of the weak." I do not at all like the division of Bengal. But I will say that the Hindus should let themselves be subdued and give up their desire in order to save their life and property. If they feel that they will be able to live in peace in their part of the province, let no one imagine that I shall come in the way.

Sarat Babu came to me the other day. He does not want Bengal to be partitioned. He says that the whole Province has one culture, and the same food habits. Then why should it be divided in the name of religion? Sarat Babu has his view, I have mine. The people however have the right to act as they desire. My individual opinion cannot thwart the opinion of many.

I always cooperate in good things. If a bad man recites Ramanama, shall I not join him? I shall certainly join him in reciting Ramanama. And if a man considered good indulges in wicked acts, shall I join hands with him? If I do so, I shall not be Gandhi for Gandhi can never worship Satan. Whoever acts out of good intention, out of love, will have my support.

I have come to know that money is being squandered to stall the partition of Bengal. Nothing enduring can be achieved with the help of money. Votes purchased with money have no force. I can never be party to such an act. I can never support an



act of goondaism, even if committed by my own kith and kin. (Vide “TELEGRAM TO SARAT CHANDRA BOSE”; After June 8, 1947)

Hence, I would like to tell Sarat Babu that even though he and I would like to stop the partition of Bengal we should forget about it for the time being. It cannot be achieved by impure means. God cannot be realized by impure means and no means for obtaining anything dishonourable can ever be pure.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan–I, pp. 137-40

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## 103. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 9, 1947

NEW DELHI, June 9, 1947

I have received some letters saying that Allopanishad, about which I had talked to you some days ago, is not to be found in any collection of religious writings. I had mentioned this work from memory so I consulted a friend (Mathuradas Trikumji; see the following item.) and he has written to say that the collection I have in mind does mention Allopanishad, saying it has seven mantras. These Upanishads date back to the time of the Atharva Veda. He has said much else which would be of greater interest to students. Hence I shall not quote that part of the letter.

Then I have a letter from Jayachandra Vidyalankar. Jayachandraji says:

Maharana Kumbha, grandfather of Rana Sanga, was the first to offer organized resistance to the Muslims aggressors. He conquered the territories occupied by the Muslim in Gujarat and Malwa and erected the victory pillar at Chittor. On the pillar side by side with the many representations of Hindu gods and goddesses and next to those of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh the name of Allahs is also inscribed. It is well known how the Hindu leaders like Maharana Ranjit Singh and Chhatrapati Shivaji respected Islam. Why do these champions of Hinduism who resent the recitation from the Koran at your prayers not object to Allah's name inscribed on this victory pillar?

After pointing out that the cause of Hindu-muslim animosity lies in faulty writing of history, Vidyalankarji requests me to see to it that the teaching of history is done in the right spirit, without which all attempts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity must fail.

Lately I have been receiving a large number of letters attacking me. A friend points out how ineffective my words were when I said that vivisection of the country would be the vivisection of my own body and calls upon me strongly to oppose the partition of the country. But I do not think I am in any way to blame in this matter. When I Said that the country should not be divided I was confident that I had the support of the masses. But when the popular view is contrary to mine, should I force my own view on the people? I have repeatedly said that we should never compromise with falsehood and wickedness. And today I can say with confidence that if all the nonMuslim were with me, I would not let India be divided, but I must admit that today the general opinion is not with me, and so I must step aside and stay back. The lesson



which we have been trying to learn for the past 30 years and which we now tend to forget is that only through truth and non-violence can we triumph over untruth and violence. Impatience can be overcome only with patience and excitement with calm. Today we cringe before our own shadow. There is nothing in common between me and those who want me to oppose Pakistan except that we are both opposed to the division of the country. There is a fundamental difference between their opposition and mine. How can love and enmity go together?

Another friend writes that this Viceroy is even more dangerous than the other Viceroys; that whereas the others crushed us at the point of the sword this one trapped the Congress with his smooth talk. I can never agree with this opinion. The correspondent has unwittingly and unknowingly praised the Viceroy and has debunked the intelligence and efficiency of the Congress Ministers. Why can he not understand the simple thing that the general opinion, that is, the opinion of those who are fit to hold any opinion, is supporting the Congress leaders? The leaders are not fools. They too find the partition repugnant, but as representatives of the country they cannot go against public opinion. They derive their power from the people. The situation would have been different if the correspondent had the power. And under no circumstances would it be proper to criticize the Viceroy when the leaders are elected representatives of the people or when our own people betray the country. The saying “as the king so the subjects” is not so apt as its reverse: “As the subjects so the king.”

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 140-2

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## 104. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 10, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Whatever I have said in connection with the decision of Bengal, I have not levelled allegations against any party. I have only repeated what I have heard. Who would not be happy if Bengal was spared partition and could remain one undivided whole? But I cannot join hands with anyone who talks of preserving unity through falsehood, fraud and bribery. Nothing need be said if no Bengali—either Hindu or Muslim—has done it. Why should anyone wear a cap if it does not fit?

But people do entertain suspicion that something wrong is being perpetrated in Bengal. Those who told me this also gave me their names and addresses. But I do not think it proper to disclose those here. If they are telling me falsehoods, it is bad and they should be punished. But who am I to punish anybody? I do not have the power to punish anyone.

But I have one great thing with me and that is public opinion. Public opinion has tremendous power. In our country the significance of this expression has not yet been fully realized. In the English language, however, the expression has a forceful connotation. Even the king is helpless in the face of what the English call ‘public opinion’. Even the redoubtable Mr. Churchill, scion of a great family, a powerful orator and erudite scholar—certainly not an ignoramus like me—could not save his office in spite of all his achievements. It only means that public opinion in England is highly awake, no one can do anything in opposition to it.

In India public opinion is not as vigilant as in England. Had it been so, a worthless fellow like me would not have presumed to become a mahatma. And even after I became a Mahatma everything that I did would not have been put up with. As it is, in India anyone who is called a mahatma ceases to be answerable to the public, whatever—right or wrong—he might do.

Tolstoy had been a great warrior, but when he realized that war was not a good thing he gave up his life in trying to put an end to war. He has said that the greatest power on earth is public opinion and it is generated by truth and non-violence.



That is what I am trying to do. But nothing is going to come of my efforts unless public opinion in India is informed with courage and truthfulness.

But that is not the case today. The impression I have is that we do not want the Dominion Status that is to be granted to us on August 15. The reason is the public opinion that has been forming over the years in favour of complete independence. This talk of Dominion Status pricks the country. The feeling is justified and yet not quite right. It is not right because we are not aware of the potentialities of Dominion Status. First, with the coming of Dominion Status the British will quit India in two months. Secondly, we can shake off the Dominion Status whenever we want. Of course if we persist in our madness others are hardly to blame. Anyway, to return to the subject of public opinion, if it stays vigilant all will be well. If through public opinion, without any bribery, without any corrupt methods being adopted, Bengal decides to remain one, then it is well and good. But we have been cowards and slaves so long that we are unable to resist the temptation to do ignoble acts.

But if one has not acted wickedly and still people level charges against one, why should one feel unhappy? For instance, there are many high-placed officers who do not become corrupt, who remain clean; and yet allegations of corruption are made against them. This does not perturb them. If someone calls me a wicked and corrupt man, do I have to weep? Do I become wicked merely because someone calls me so? I do admit that false allegations are sometimes made against people out of malice and cowardice. We should not talk ill of anyone.

We should see the good points of people. If we want to be free, let us not find fault with others, let us look at their better side and try to encourage them.

I now assume that the division of India is a fact and the Congress has been forced to accept it. But if the partition cannot make us happy, why should it make us unhappy? Only we should not let our hearts be sundered. We must save our hearts from being fragmented. Otherwise Jinnah Saheb's claim that we are two nations will stand vindicated. I have never believed in it. When we are descended from the same ancestors, can our nationality change simply from our changing our religion? When Sind, the Punjab and maybe the Frontier Province too go to Pakistan will they no longer belong to us? I for one do not regard even Britain as an alien country, why should I then regard Pakistan as another nation?



It may be said that I belong to India and in India to the Bombay Presidency, there again to Gujarat, in Gujarat, particularly to Kathiawar, where again to a small town of Porbandar. But because I belong to Porbandar I also belong to the whole of India, that is, I am also a Punjabi and if I go to the Punjab I shall live there regarding it as my home and if I am killed I shall accept death.

I am happy that Jinnah Sahib has said that Pakistan will not belong to an emperor, but that it will belong to the people and the minorities too will get a square deal there. I would only like to add that he should put into practice what he says. He should also impress this upon his followers and tell them to forget all talk of war.

We too will not think of suppressing the minorities in our part of the land. Even the handful of Parsis in India shall be our co-sharers. It would be bad if the Hindus and Muslims joined hands and threatened to annihilate the Parsis saying they were drink-addicts. The Parsis are my friends and I tell them that if they do not give up drinking they will kill themselves. But we shall not kill them. In the same manner Hindus and Sikhs should be protected in Punjab. The Muslims should treat them kindly and in a brotherly way and reassure them. If the Muslims start tyrannizing over them, the Hindus and Sikhs should tell them, without fear of death, that they will not accept Islam under duress nor partake of [beef] (The source has 'meat'). The Hindus should not think that they have become a new community which cannot accommodate Muslims. We are in the majority in this part of India. We must enlighten the majority and work with courage. Courage does not reside in the sword. We will become truthful, we will become servants of God and, if need be, we will lay down our lives. When we do this India and Pakistan will not be two separate entities and the artificial partition would become meaningless. If we fight among ourselves the charge of our being two nations will be proved. Let us all therefore pray to God that although India and Pakistan have become separate nations our hearts may not be divided.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 142-6

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## 105. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 11, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Although I have spoken to you about the impending division of Bengal, nevertheless I wish to speak to you about it again a third time. I have just received a letter. (Vide "LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY" June 12, 1947) It is full of anger. As I have told you, anger is a kind of madness. The man who is a prey to anger loses all discrimination. The letter I received shows such anger.

The writer says that I have caused great harm to Bengalis. In what way have I caused harm to Bengalis? I have said that I do not want Bengal to be vivisected. It is true that I do not want that. If a just scheme were offered to us I would say that a Bengali is above all a Bengali, be he Hindu or Muslim or Christian. If he wants to uphold his mother tongue, uphold his country, who can interfere? I wish to tell you that even the Congress cannot interfere, nor can the League. It is very clear that if Bengal could remain united it would be a very good thing. But how is that to be? That is the question. If we wish to achieve something good but choose a method which is crooked we shall not reach our goal. If you adopt a wrong path and want to go east you will end up arriving in the west. We must therefore not choose the wrong path. We should take the right path. That is what I have been saying. But people get angry. I want to tell you that I stick to what I have been saying. I stand by what is right. If someone does not have right by his side, whether he is my brother or my son. I do not care. I therefore tell the Bengalis that if Bengal is to be divided it will be through their own decision and if Bengal is to remain united it will also be through them. So far nothing has happened. This much for Bengal.

But I have other matters brought to my attention, too. Today some friends from Campbellpur came to see me. They said that they were so far living happily there. They did not run away. But what were they to do? They are scared about what their plight would be in Pakistan and Campbellpur certainly would be included in Pakistan. I told them that whatever the situation might be in Pakistan they were after all living in India. If the map of India is divided in two, how can it affect them? I said, "You are brave people. You don't fear anyone except God. Anyone who fears God needs fear no one



else in the world. I therefore cannot advise you to leave Campbellpur.” They wanted to know how they could defend themselves if they remained there. I said I had told the Hindus in Noakhali that they were not to move out from where they were. They wanted weapons. But what could they be doing with the weapons? The Government had the weapons and if the Government could not protect them, they being in a minority, then the Government was incompetent. Such a Government should go and I told them to force such a Government to go. If a few Muslims are left behind here are they to be slaughtered and would the Government merely watch? Then the Government no longer remains a Government. It becomes a tyranny. And why should we live under tyranny? We have been fighting the British for so many years. Must we now fall from the frying pan into the fire? Is it for this that we have undergone so much suffering, made so much noise and resorted to satyagraha and non-co-operation?

That will not be right. I said the same thing to the Muslims of Bihar. They said that I could talk in that way because I was a Mahatma, but they were traders and had businesses and families and children to look after. I must show them a way. I said I was helpless. I could not change now in my old age.

What were they to say? They were good people and I was busy. I told them to go saying I could only advise them to be brave. I do not indulge in tall talk. Man is born to be brave. Man is not born to become cowardly or to become scared. Man is a part of God. He has in him the divine spark. I have not heard that a cow or a bullock or a horse partakes of the divine spark. It is true that as all creatures are creatures of God we are more or less alike. But the difference between man and other creatures is that we do not say of the latter, as we can about men, that they have in them the divine spark. Then if we have the divine spark, is it so that we may become frightened of each other or is it so that we may love each other? So I tried to explain things to them. But how were they to understand?

Mr. Jinnah is doing something very big. Nobody had ever dreamt that in this day and age Pakistan would become a possibility. But today Pakistan is a reality. True, it has not yet come into being. But surely by the 15th of August it will be formed. When I think over the matter I tell myself that I should not grieve over it. The Congress says there was no alternative to division. Jinnah says that he will not rest till India is divided. So let there be division. But shall I throw up my hands and accept this division? I say that nobody can cut me into pieces. Therefore nobody can cut India into pieces. This



is mere talk. I tell you that if you become truthful, then whether it is Pakistan or India or whatever other name you may choose, the task will be the same. Who can tear asunder that which God has created one? But I can ask Mr. Jinnah what he intends to do with regard to those people. It is already agreed what parts are to be included in Pakistan. Champballpur is also included. It cannot be shifted. What are the people there to do? Should they flee? Does he want them to continue to live there? He says that all will get justice; that in Pakistan the same standard will apply to all and no one will be discriminated against merely on the grounds that he is a Hindu or a Christian. He says that all will get the same justice.

Today my tongue, my words, have lost their power. But he still has that power. He is the ruler of Pakistan and nobody can deny it. So I ask the ruler of Pakistan, what he intends doing. He should make his intentions public. Let me now go a little further. Badshah Khan is a friend. Badshah Khan can go somewhere else. He can stay with Maulana Azad. He has a beautiful bungalow. He can eat what he wants. He can put up with Jawaharlal. He has a huge mansion. It is not like my poor hut. And what would I offer him to eat? I cannot even provide meat. He agrees to take whatever I eat, cereals, a little fruit, and that is all. But he is happy with it and thus he is my friend. He is a fakir. Dr. Khan Saheb is his brother. Dr. Khan Saheb can do nothing without Badshah Khan's help. Badshah Khan is a fakir. That is why he is "Badshah" or king. He has become a king not through the sword but through love, through service. When I go there I never hear him called by any other name. It is here that he is called the Frontier Gandhi. There they do not even know Gandhi, to say nothing of Frontier Gandhi.

So Badshah Khan and others decided that there ought to be a referendum. Tempers have not yet cooled, for Pathans are hotblooded. What will be gained by a referendum? They will not all of them say that they want Pakistan or that they want Hindustan. Then there will be division among the Pathans. I would like to ask the leader of Pakistan if he wants a division among the Pathans. And will he compel one of the parts? Would it not be better for him instead to explain what Pakistan is?

Pakistan has been granted. The Congress has agreed, willingly or unwillingly. Now Punjab is to be divided, Bengal is to be divided. I tell you that it is in the hands of the leader of Pakistan to stop the division of Punjab and Bengal. Why does he not say 'I now have Pakistan. Why do you fear? We have fought. Let us forget who has been or has not been at fault. I have just signed that declaration with Gandhi that we shall



not resort to the sword to gain political ends. We shall try to gain those ends by argument. Let us then argue. I will not resort to a referendum.’ If Jinnah says that he will welcome all the Pathans, those who consider him their enemy and those whom he considers his enemies—the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Khan Brothers, the Hindus, the Sikhs, the Parsis and Christians—he will welcome all, then I will say that you lose nothing by remaining in Pakistan. Why should he not say this much? Why should he not say what shape Pakistan is going to take? If he says this everyone will be happy.

Pakistan is not something imaginary. India is not something imaginary. I should ask the Congress also to explain. No poison must be spread. If poison continues to be spread, what will be the result? Then the Pakistan that has been formed will be a bad thing. The English will have gone, leaving the Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, to abuse them. Pakistan was not inevitable. But when they saw that Hindus and Muslims could not make up their minds to work together in the Constituent Assembly, what could they do? Then they talked with both the parties and both agreed on Hindustan and Pakistan being separate entities. I am not concerned with what name you give it. But it should be done properly. If it is not done properly the poison will remain. I am sorry that Mountbatten has come today. He has not come with any wicked intention. But I have a fear that through him harm will come. Unless of course he stops doing what he must do, unless he pleads with me, pleads with the Congress, pleads with Mr. Jinnah, pleads with you and tries to satisfy everyone. But in this world nobody can please everybody. He who tries to please everybody always fails. This is the law of God. It is the experience of the whole world. So he cannot expect to please all. I would say that if the Congress is erring he should take it to task. He should say, ‘I have come here. I am an officer of the Navy and I like to talk frankly.’ He should say that what we do is not right, what the Congress does is not right. But why should we bother him? After all, his dharma is different from ours. But why should brother fight against brother? Why now? When there was time we fought. We shed blood. What we were fighting for, we got.

I notice that Ibn Saud has sent a telegram to the Qaid-e-Azam. He says in it that he is not happy over what has happened. But he hopes that there will be peace in the world. The Qaid-e-Azam has said in reply that he also wants peace. But where is peace to come from? There is no peace in India today and if Hindus and Muslims continue to fight as enemies, how can there be peace? I shall say that all the telegrams addressed to me, all the anger directed at me, are futile. I say simply, where there is truth there



is God. Where there is nonviolence, there is God. Where these are not, there is nothing.

I shall only say that Mr. Jinnah carries a great responsibility. He has to reassure the world. At any rate, he has to reassure those who are in Pakistan and those whom he wants to be in Pakistan. He has to draw them to him. If he cannot do so it is bad for India and it is bad for Pakistan. It is bad for the Hindus, and for the Muslims. I cannot wish ill on anyone. My sole prayer is that we may do only what is right.

[From Hindi]; Courtesy: All-India Radio

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## 106. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 12, 1947

NEW DELHI,  
June 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You see Khwaja Saheb (Khwaja Abdul Majid, President, All-India Nationalist Muslim Majlis) sitting to my right. I told you earlier how I once went to his house with Swami Satyadev. At that time Swami Satyadev would not even drink water offered by a Muslim. But Khwaja Saheb was not offended and warmly welcomed him. He was then a trustee of the Aligarh University. Later he resigned the trusteeship to join the non-co-operation movement. I seem to remember that at the time I went to his house a meeting of the League was in progress there. Was there any satyagrahi in that assembly?—I asked. The Maulanas Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali were in jail and everyone was feeling discouraged. Khwaja Saheb told me that I could have two satyagrahis and a half. One was Shuaib Qureshi, who was a well-known and courageous young man. Then there was another gentleman, present there, who was a staunch satyagrahi. He had once been assaulted by a mob and injured in two places on his arm. But though he was strong he remained calm and did not offer physical resistance. Lastly, Khwaja Saheb said, he himself was half a satyagrahi. From then on he has been like a brother to me.

He did not want the country to be divided. Nevertheless it has happened and he has come to me to lament it. I told him that we would not weep and I made him laugh.

Sapru Saheb too has felt hurt by what has happened. Well, the League wanted it, but the Congress did not like it. How long can a thing over which the two are not agreed last? Geographically we may have been divided. But so long as hearts too have not been divided, we must not weep. For all will be well so long as our hearts remain whole. The country may well be divided today into Pakistan and Hindustan. In the end we have to become one. Not that they will come and join us through vexation. Our behaviour will be such that even if they want to they will not be able to keep themselves away from us.

It irks Jawaharlal that the rest of the country should be called Hindustan. When one part is now Pakistan, how can the other part be Hindustan, he asks. He is right. For it will mean that it belongs to the Hindus. What then would the Christians, the Jews



and the Muslims left here do? Must they leave? Must Pantji ask Khawaja Saheb, who belongs to U.P. and is a friend of his, to leave U.P.? If this happens, Mr. Jinnah will have been proved right in his assertion that the hearts were already divided.

But this is not what history says. I told you about the letter I had from the well known historian Shri Jai Chandra Vidyalkar. He says that even when Hindus and Muslims fought against each other they never killed in the name of religion. In our childhood also we never felt that we had separate identities. In days gone by, accompanied by Hindus, Jainuluddin (Sultan of Kashmir; contemporary of Rana Kumbha of Chittor, the great-grandfather of Rana Pratap) set out on a pilgrimage to Kashi, he repaired all the derelict temples he passed on the way. The name of Allah is inscribed on the Victory Tower of Chittor.

Why should our hearts now become so soiled that we cannot sit together or see each other with a kindly eye?

Assuming that a few Muslims have become wicked, shall we then also become wicked? This is not what Jawaharlal wants. He says that so long as Muslims were part of the country the name Hindustan was fine for the understanding was that anyone born in Hindustan belonged to Hindustan, whatever his religion. Now Hindustan will imply that the country belongs to Hindus. And who among the Hindus? Only the caste Hindus. But as I have said, the caste Hindus-Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas-are a very small part of the population. The vast majority consists of untouchables and Adivasis. Will they be ruled by the few caste Hindus? True, today it is they who rule the roost. But if the untouchables and the Adivasis are allowed to fall under the domination of the caste Hindus, Mr. Jinnah will have been proved right in saying that a handful of caste Hindus want to keep all the rest under their heel. Could we be such fools? Could we accept the two-nation theory of Mr. Jinnah? It would mean that if my son becomes a Muslim he becomes a national of another country. If we segregate three-quarters of our fellow country-men and keep them away from the governance of the country, our Hindustan will be just as Mr. Jinnah has pictured it.

Then there will be a Parsistan, a Sikhistan, separate bits for the untouchables, the Adivasis and so forth and Hindustan will no longer remain Hindustan. It will undergo Balkanization.

If this is what the English desire there will be no place left in the world for them. So we must not weep over what has happened. Jawaharlal has suggested the Union of



Indian Republic as the name for the country. That is, all will live together here. If a part wants to secede we shall not force it to remain, but those that remain shall live as brothers. We shall treat them so that they will not want to break away, they will not feel that they are separate. All will be loyal to the Union and serve it.

Today someone asked me why we should still continue with Hindustani. Such a question should not be raised. If we adopt the attitude that since Urdu will be the language of Pakistan we should have Hindi as our language then the charge of separatism against us also will be proved. Hindustani means an easy language to speak, read and write. It used to be one language at one time but lately we have Urdu loaded with Persian expressions which the people cannot understand and Hindi crammed with Sanskrit words which also people cannot understand. If we used that language we would have to eject from our midst people like Sapru. Although a Hindu, his mother tongue is Urdu. If I start talking to him in Sanskritized Hindi he will not be able to make head or tail of it. We should therefore continue the work of Hindustani-of the Hindustani Sabha—and prove our love for those whose language is Urdu.

I see God's will in what has happened. He wants to test us both to see what Pakistan will do and how generous India can be. We must pass the test. I am hoping that no Hindu will be so mad as to show inadequate respect for things the Muslim consider sacred or fail to accord the same status to the Aligarh University as he does to Malaviyaji's Hindu University. If we destroy their sacred places we shall ourselves be destroyed.

Similarly we should protect the fire temples of Parsis and the synagogues of Jews as we protect Hindu temples. I must also say that untouchables will be treated here on par with the people of the highest caste. True Hinduism embraces all religions. We must see that we have a hundred percent success in this. We cannot act on the principle of tit for tat. That is an obsolete principle. The times have changed. Now if someone abuses us we have to answer him by love. We have to answer lies with truth and meanness with generosity. Always and in every situation our eyes, ears and hands should remain pure. Only then can we save ourselves; only then can the world survive. I have not the least doubt of it. We must not run away with the idea that now that we have given the Muslims what they wanted we can do what we like.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 150-4

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## 107. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 13, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 13, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

When I was walking around in Noakhali I saw that people were very frightened. And frightened people cannot think of God. Then we had to pass through villages and find our way along narrow tracks round the fields—something which few men and women in Noakhali ever did. But the experience I gained from this walking tour I could not have gained otherwise. We had to pass through the fields owned by both Hindus and Muslims. So we uttered both names of God as we walked.

When God is here, there and everywhere God must be one. If then we call Him by different names and are intolerant of other people's names for God it would be nothing but madness. That is why I had posed the question whether those calling God Rahim would have to leave Hindustan—of course now we must give up calling the country Hindustan—and whether in the part described as Pakistan Rama as the name of God would be forbidden. Would someone who called God Krishna be turned out of Pakistan? Whatever be the case there this cannot be permitted here. We shall worship God both as Krishna and Karim and show the world that we refuse to go mad.

A friend has sent me a harsh letter asking me if I must still persist in my madness. "In a few days you will be leaving this world," he says, "Will you never learn? If Purushottamdas Tandon (1 1882-1961, Congress leader; president of the Congress in 1923; actively associated with Servants of the People Society, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Sabha) says that everyone should take up the sword, become a soldier and defend himself, why do you feel hurt? You are a votary of the Gita. You should be beyond dualism. You should not feel grief or joy over every little thing. You talk like the foolish sadhu who again and again tried to save a scorpion from drowning while it went on stinging him. If you cannot give up your refrain of ahimsa you can at least allow others to take the path of their choosing. Why do you become a hindrance?"

If I have the steadfast intellect of the Gita I am going to live a hundred and twenty-five years and not a day less. If all of us cultivate steadfastness of intellect there is no reason why even one person should not live to 125 years. Of course if God so



wills it He may remove me today, but I am not going to die in a hurry. I have to live and work. Purushottamdas Tandon is an old co-worker. We have worked together for years. Like me he is devoted to God. When I heard him saying the things he did I was grieved. Were we going to lose what we had learned from thirty years of experience and what we had been so assiduously cultivating? Self-defence is invoked for taking up the sword. But I have never known a man who has not passed from defence to attack. It is inherent in the idea of defence. Now, I feel hurt. If I had perfect steadfastness of intellect I would never have felt hurt. Even as it is I am trying not to feel hurt. But each day I advance a little further. Otherwise I should be a hypocrite for reciting the 'sthitaprajna' verses of the Gita every day. Of course mere recital of the verses cannot make one a 'sthitaprajna' in a day.

If I utter Ramanama and it does not spontaneously come out of the heart in a single day, should I give up? I had a Punjabi friend, Rambhaji Datt Chowdhary, who is now no more. Sometimes he composed poems. When he came out of jail he brought along a poem he had composed, and since he himself could not sing he asked his wife Sarla to sing it. In her melodious voice Sarla sang: "Never admit defeat even if you should lose your life." And I told myself that I would never accept defeat. If I regularly recite the 'sthitaprajna' verse every day I must one day achieve steadfastness of intellect. Then nothing that Tandonji or anyone else can say will make me laugh or cry. I shall then leave the laughing and crying to God and give up grieving.

The example of the sadhu and the scorpion is a good one. When some person without faith asked him why he was so set on saving the scorpion, whose very nature it was to sting, he answered: "If it is in the nature of the scorpion to sting it is in the nature of man to put up with the sting. If the scorpion cannot give up its nature, how can I give up mine? Do I have to become a scorpion that stings and kill it?"

In the end the learned friend has counselled me that if I cannot give up being stubborn and must persist in ahimsa I should at least not stand in the way of others. Shall I then become a hypocrite? Shall I deceive the world? The world then will only say that there is a so-called Mahatma in India who mouths sweet phrases about ahimsa while his co-workers indulge in killing.

Something regrettable has happened. I have been a friend of the Princes, and their servants too. I have been a servant also of the rich. I have been dragging the Rajas and the rich people to the Bhangi Colony to secure their help. Where was the



occasion otherwise for them to visit the Bhangi quarter? But I am a Bhangi and they come there.

I have seen Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's statement in the Press. He is a learned man. He has been a disciple of Annie Besant. On my Harijan tour (In 1934) I went to Travancore on his invitation and I stayed there as his guest. I had gone there not to quarrel but to work together with him. I find his statement jarring. If he has been misreported he must forgive me but if the report is true he should give thought to what I have to say. He says that on August 15 when India gained freedom Travancore will be declared independent. And the independence he has in mind is of such a nature that already the Travancore Congress has been forbidden to hold meetings. According to a report Sir. C. P. has declared that all those who are opposed to the idea of independence should quit Travancore. This order comes from a man who himself belongs not to Travancore but to Madras. How can he say such a thing?

While there was British Raj, Travancore was required to pay homage to the British. Now that India will be a free democracy, how can it do what it likes? The State now is ours, that is, it is part of democratic India. As I have often said, in a democratic India a raja and a scavenger will have the same status. As human beings they will be equal. They may well be different in their intellectual endowments. If the Maharaja of Travancore is gifted with a greater intellectual calibre he should use it in the service of the people. If he uses his intellectual gifts to suppress the people it is a worthless thing. If he suppresses or annihilates the people of Travancore, does he propose to rule over the bare land?

I am told Hyderabad is going to follow suit. They have not yet stated their position very clearly. They say for the time being they will watch without joining either Dominion. But of whom will the Nizam become independent? Ninety percent of the population of Hyderabad consists of Hindus and they include among them some well-known figures. If the independence contemplated by either Hyderabad or Travancore is not such as can make the people feel that they are free, then these States cannot survive. The times have changed and they should realize the fact.

Is this what the Englishmen, who have come here to do good, will in the end bring about? I cannot understand English. People say I am mad because I trust everybody—yes, while I am called mad because I do not give up my insistence on ahimsa I am also called mad because I trust the British. Why do I listen to



Mountbatten? they ask. If he is an honest man, can't he-a competent commander-see that to allow some six hundred Princes, who were not able to make the slightest move without permission before, to do as they like, is to make a mockery of freedom? It is a blessing that quite a number of Princes have already expressed themselves in favour of joining India.

The British say that they are going, that they will not doublecross us. Let us then pray that God may grant wisdom to the British and their representatives. May they be brave and truthful so that after they leave no one can call them names and say that they caused harm to India.

So far as I am concerned they may leave right now without waiting two months. We could then all come together and settle things between us. I even go so far as to say that even if we have to indulge in mutual slaughter, we should be left to ourselves. Only the English should go.

To the two States I shall say they may stay but they must stay only to serve the people. Even the Congress will not survive if it does not serve the people.

Let the Princes not question the right of the Congress to say anything in the matter. The Congress has rendered much service to them. I remember when I was at school something had gone wrong with the succession in Mysore and the Congress had helped to secure the throne for the Prince. Something similar once happened in Kashmir and the Congress helped. Then Baroda had once been in disgrace and the Congress made not a little effort to rehabilitate the Prince. The Congress always considered the Princes as its own countrymen. What harm could they do? In time, it was thought, they would cooperate. If the Princes now stand up and say, "Well, we are the rulers", it would not be proper. They ought to come into the Constituent Assembly, rather they should send popular representatives there.

If they do not do so then it seems that strife is going to be India's lot. We are hardly out of the Hindu-Muslim quarrel and we are faced with this new conflict with the Princes. Then there will be the I. C. S. I hope the Civil Service will conduct itself decently and no occasion for a quarrel will arise. But if there must be quarrels there are innumerable little groups who will advance their claims to this bit of the country or that. But what will become of India then? There will be nothing left for anybody. The country will be destroyed.



My fate has forever been to be involved in conflict. I want that conflict to cease now. But I cannot see the country lose its freedom while petty factions fight.

In the end I shall say that we must go on uttering the names: Rama—Rahim, Krishna—Karim. We may not abuse the Princes, but we must tell them that they should be the servants of their people; they can be masters no more.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 154-60

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## 108. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

June 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am very fond of this prayer of the Elephant King. The story of Gajendramoksha is part of our best literature. When the elephant, even with his immense strength, is helpless and sees that his own might cannot save him from being dragged down by the crocodile, then he surrenders himself to God.

We are in a similar plight. It appears to us at the moment that we are vanquished but we are not really vanquished. He who sees God by his side can never be vanquished.

God has so made man that when man is about to be drowned, when he sees that he has lost all, only then does he think of God. When he is happy he does not think of God.

Yesterday I spoke (Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 13-6-1947) of what Sir C. P. Ramaswamy, the Diwan of Travancore has said. This is the age of telegraph and radio. What I said reached him and he has sent me a very long wire. (Vide “Telegram from C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer”) He has explained many things but he has not lifted the ban on meetings and processions by the Travancore Congress Committee. He has not said a word about it. This is not good. It bodes ill. He says further that Travancore has always been a free country. This is right in a way. In ancient days our country was divided into innumerable kingdoms but India was always considered one country. Our saints and seers established places of pilgrimage in all parts of the country and did many things that promoted its social, economic and religious unity. But politically the country was never united. During the reigns of Chandragupta and Ashoka, India had to a large extent become unified but even so a small bit in the South remained outside the empire. It was only when the English came that for the first time the country became one from Dibrugarh to Karachi and KanyaKumari to Kashmir. The English did it not for our good but for their own. It is wrong to say that Travancore was free under the British regime. The Princes were never free. They were vassals of the British, they were subservient to them. Now when British rule is on the way out and power is coming



into the hands of the people, for any Prince to say that he was always independent and shall remain independent is wholly wrong and not in the least becoming. True Sir C. P. has been a friend of mine. But what of it? Even if it were my son, why should I hesitate to say what is true? If India is free Sir C. P. declares that Travancore is independent, it means that he intends to enter into a conflict with free India.

I can only tell him that he should descend from the pedestal of power and live as a servant of the people of Travancore. If after once dispossessing you of the kingdom the British for a consideration returned you to power and gave you the right to oppress your subjects, what is there to be so proud about? It would be a matter of pride if you considered your subjects as your masters. Of course India is not down. But if it is faced with problems it is not a gentlemanly thing to kick someone who is down. If India has become divided into two, you are not concerned with it. You must be decent and understand, you must not promote useless strife.

Some friends have come from Rawalpindi with news of happenings there. Sucheta Kripalani also gave me a distressing report of the situation there. One thing made me very sad. When the Pakistan issue was still undecided the conditions there were tolerable but now the Muslims are on the rampage. They say that now that they have Pakistan, they will make slaves of everyone else. I mention this at the prayer meeting here so that what I say may reach the ears of the Muslims. It will certainly reach the ears of Mr. Jinnah. If what I say is wrong, let my Muslim brethren take me to task and say that it is not right. Let them invite me to Peshawar to see how happy Hindus, Sikhs, women and children are. But I have got the names. If some ordinary men had said such things, one need not have worried because there are always a few irresponsible people everywhere. But if all the Muslims think and express themselves in these terms then it is very bad.

Mr. Jinnah says that under the Muslim majority the minorities will live in peace. But what is in fact happening? If after Pakistan has come into being the conflict is further sharpened then it will only mean that we have been made fools of. It will mean that they will be masters and anyone following a different religion will have to stay there as a slave or a servant and admit that he is inferior to them.

I am eager to hear from them that all are well treated in Pakistan and that temples also are well looked after. When I see that I shall bow my head to them. But if that does not happen then I shall know that Mr. Jinnah was uttering a falsehood and



I shall begin to suspect Lord Mountbatten who although a commander of such a high rank was in such a hurry. He could have allowed the carnage to go on, if it had to go on, and said that he would not bow before the sword.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 160-3

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## 109. SPEECH AT A.I.C.C. MEETING, June 14, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I wish I had made some preparations for this meeting. Unfortunately I could not. You will no doubt agree that no one could be as much hurt by the division of the country as I am. And I don't think that anyone can be as unhappy today as I am. But what has happened has happened. You know of my efforts in the building up of the Congress. Why was the Congress Working Committee formed? When a government has to be run, even if it is a government of the people, a cabinet of ministers has to be appointed. Our Working Committee performs a similar function. It acts in your name. You have the power to keep it going or to dismiss it. The Working Committee has on your behalf accepted partition. Now we have to consider what our duty is. If you want to throw out the resolution (1 The resolution, passed by the A. I. C. C. on June 15, welcomed the decision of the British Government to transfer power and accepted the British Government's proposals of June 3, which were "likely to lead to the secession of some parts of the country from India".) you can do so. But you cannot make any changes in it. If the Congress Working Committee has done this, it has done so deliberately and for certain weighty reasons. And this decision has been taken jointly by the Congress, the Muslim League and the British Government. The Working Committee does not approve of the scheme in its entirety. But even so it has accepted it. The Cabinet Mission plan had been devised by the British Government, but not this new plan. Both the Congress and the League have a share in its formulation. If you reject it, the world will call you irresponsible. You must therefore go along with those who have acted on your behalf. If you want to reject it, you must remember that what the country needs most today is peace. If you are sure that your rejecting the scheme will not lead to further breach of the peace and further disorders you can do so. Whatever you decide to do, you must do after a great deal of deliberation.

So many things are happening today which bring to mind the English saying about swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat. The decision that has been arrived at has been reached with your complicity and yet you complain of the Working Committee, the Working Committee which has men of such great calibre on it. Those



people had always said that the Congress would not accept Pakistan and I was opposed to Pakistan even more. However we may leave aside my position. The decision has not been mine to take and the Working Committee has accepted it because there was no other way. They now see it clearly that the country is already divided into two camps.

But our constitution permits it and your duty demands it that if you feel that the Working Committee is in the wrong you should remove it, you should revolt and assume all power. You have a perfect right to do so, if you feel that you have the strength. But I do not find that strength in us today. If you had it I would also be with you and if I felt strong enough myself I would, alone, take up the flag of revolt. But today I do not see the conditions for doing so.

We have great problems to tackle and mere criticism cannot help in the solution of great problems. It is easy to criticize but doing some work is not so easy. The Congress has to its credit some important achievement but the Congress so far has not borne the responsibility of Government. It has not even had a look at it. It was kept busy by work which was even more important. Everything cannot be done at the same time. When now the responsibility of Government has devolved on us we have gladly accepted it and we have detailed some of our best workers for the job. There they have to grapple with some very intricate problems. They have to attend to the affairs of millions of our countrymen.

I criticize them, of course, but afterwards what? Shall I assume the burdens that they are carrying? Shall I become a Nehru or a Sardar or a Rajendra Prasad? Even if you should put me in their place I do not know what I should be able to do. But I have not come here to plead for them. Who will listen to my pleading? But the President (J. B. Kripalani) said that I should at least show my face here. Hence I have come to show my face and to speak a few words.

It is most important that you understand the times. The demand of the times is that we should bridle our tongues and do only what will be for India's good.

You will have seen from the newspapers what I have been doing these days. But you may also hear it from me. If something has been spoiled through me then it is my duty to use all my power for putting it right. It is open to me whether to spoil it further or to mend it. I shall cite here the example of Rama. His father went mad and his mother became foolish and Rama was exiled. The people of Ayodhya were grieved but



it all led to something glorious coming out at the end. I do not consider the Ramayana as history but the lesson that is to be drawn from it is of daily use. It would be wrong to believe that Ravana had ten heads. But there was a Ravana that was adharma. It was this Ravana that Rama killed during his exile and saved dharma.

This is what we have to do today. We have to draw something good out of this bad thing. I am not the one to be upset by defeat. From my childhood up I have spent my life fighting and my struggle has been to extract good from evil. If there is gold in mud, even if there is a lot of the mud and very little gold it should not be thrown away. We should draw out gold and diamonds even from mud.

This decision puts both our religions on trial. The world is watching us. In the three-quarters of the country that has fallen to our share Hinduism is going to be tested. If you show the generosity of true Hinduism, you will pass in the eyes of the world. If not, you will have proved Mr. Jinnah's thesis that Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations, that Hindus will forever be Hindus and Muslims forever Muslims, that the two will never unite, and that the Gods of the two are different. If, therefore, the Hindus present at this meeting claim that India is their country and in it Hindus will have a superior status, then it will mean that the Congress has not made a mistake and that the Working Committee has only done what you secretly wanted.

But if you want to save dharma you must be true Hindus. There are only a hundred thousand Parsis in India. Our ancestors gave them shelter and set an example in world history. Must we now kill them? And what shall we do with the Jews? We must treat them so that they will enjoy perfect freedom here. And what about the untouchables? It is said that Islam has risen to abolish untouchability. If you say that untouchables are nothing, the Adivasis are nothing, then you are not going to survive yourselves. But if you do away with the distinction of savarna and avarna, if you treat the Shudras, the untouchables and the Adivasis as equals then something good will have come out of a bad thing. There should be no distinction of high and low in a democratic polity. But if we oppress them and oppress those following other faiths then it will mean that we do not want India to survive, that we are out to destroy it. It does not matter if the land is divided. But if we divide the hearts then what the Congress Working Committee has done has been well done.

It is not a small thing that some States should secede from India. It is a very serious thing. Today and yesterday at the prayer I said a great deal about the States. I



shall briefly repeat here what I have been saying. I myself come from a native State. Time was when I myself used to be severe with the States' people telling them not to force their burden on the Congress for we were fighting against a third power and the States' people also were giving us help in our fight. I had wanted them to consolidate that strength. But now with the British gone, we cannot let the Princes do as they please. Those of them who now want to be independent should ask themselves what good the British ever did them. They were content to be vassals of a foreign government, the British Government, for so many years, but now that the millions of India are going to have the reins of power in their hands the Rulers refuse to be subservient to the people's government. I must tell the Diwans of all the States that if they do not advise the rulers to join the Constituent Assembly, they would be showing disloyalty to the Rulers. We do not want to be enemies of the Princes. If they want to be independent they may be independent. We shall not imprison them. If they want to stay in the country, they must understand that their subjects are with us. If they do not want to stay in the country they may go and settle down in Paris or elsewhere. But if they want to remain in India they must remain as servants of the people. They must understand the implications of democratic government. They must concede that all men are created equal. They must not don the mantle of superiority. Only then can they survive forever. They must recognize the paramountcy of the people as they recognized the paramountcy of the British Government. Then they can freely carry on in their own States. Only they cannot carry on as they did during the days of the British regime, plundering the people. They must dedicate themselves to the service of the people and become their true friends.

[From Hindi]; Bihar Pachhi Dilhi, pp. 142-6

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## 110. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 15, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 15, 1947

I am sorry that today my silence has to begin earlier than usual, because tomorrow afternoon there is going to be a meeting of the Working Committee. I therefore give you my message in writing. I have had letters from various countries asking me one question which I wish to answer today through this message. The question in brief is: 'Why is it that in your country political parties take recourse to violence to gain political ends? Day by day violence continues to increase in your country. Can you explain why? For thirty years you fought the British non-violently. Why does it end up thus? Would you still want to give the world the message of non-violence?'

In answering the question I have to confess my bankruptcy. However, ahimsa can never suffer bankruptcy. As I have explained, the ahimsa which we have practised during the last thirty years has been the ahimsa of the weak. Whether this view of mine is valid or not you will judge for yourselves. What has to be admitted is that in the changed conditions of today the ahimsa of the weak has no place. The truth is that India has not so far had an opportunity to practise the ahimsa of the brave. Nothing is gained by my repeating that no power in the world can stand before the ahimsa of the brave. For the truth of this can only be proved by repeatedly and extensively manifesting it in life. So far as I can I have endeavoured to manifest it in my life. But maybe I am not fully qualified, maybe I am a beggar. Why then should I ask you to follow me when I am not able to show results? The question is pertinent and my answer is simple. I ask no one to follow me. Each should go by the voice within. If you cannot hear the voice within you may do as you like. In any case you must on no account blindly follow anybody.

Another important question is that, if I am fully convinced that India is following the path of error, why do I associate with those who are in error? Why do I not go my own way in the faith that if I am on the right path my old coworkers will all return to me? I like the question. I shall not argue against it. I will merely say that my faith and my creed are as they were. They have not weakened. It is possible that my method





was wrong. When one is in a difficulty old experiences and old patterns help but one should not become merely Mechanical.

I further request all those who wish to advise me that they should have patience with me and above all they should join me in the faith that to ameliorate the pains of this suffering world there is no way save that of ahimsa, however arduous it may be. Millions like me may not be able to practise this in life. For this they themselves will be to blame, not ahimsa. I may here mention another matter to you. Although I am observing silence, some friends from Travancore came to see me. They assured me that there was not the least bit of exaggeration in what I had been saying concerning that State. They also told me that where meetings were organized they were lathi-charged and yesterday some thirty-five persons were taken into custody. The voice of the people there is being throttled. Whatever may be the case I have not the least doubt that in a free India it is an absurd thing for a State to proclaim independence. This may even be interpreted to mean that they have declared war against the hundreds of millions of people of free India. It is a very unwise thing especially when the Maharaja does not enjoy the support of his people. It was perhaps possible when the British were at his back. But now the conditions are drastically changed.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 163–5

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## 111. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 16, 194

NEW DELHI,

June 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

This morning when I was observing silence, Shri Purushottamdas Tandon paid me a visit. I have told you how I was pained by Tandonji's statement that every man and woman should carry arms. A correspondent had asked me how I, a votary of the Gita, could feel hurt. The letter also said that Tandonji believed in the principle of tit for tat. I asked Tandonji about it. Tandonji explained that although he did not believe in the principle of tit for tat, he certainly believed that everyone should carry arms for self-defence. This he said was also the teaching of the Gita.

I told Tandonji that he should at least write to the friend and explain that he did not believe in the principle of tit for tat so that he should not labour under a misapprehension. I do not believe that the Gita advocates violence for self-defence. I understand the Gita differently. If the Gita or some other Sanskrit work advocates this I am not prepared to accept it as Shashtra. An utterance does not become scriptural merely because it is couched in Sanskrit. Tandonji reminded me that I had advised the killing of the monkeys which ravaged fields or otherwise caused harm. I do not like to kill any living thing, not even an ant. But the question of fields is a different question and people differ.

Tandonji said we might not adopt the principle of tit for tat or a tooth for a tooth and a slap for a slap. But if we did not take up arms and show our strength how were we to defend ourselves?

My answer is that self-defence is necessary; but how does one defend oneself? If someone comes to me and says, 'Will you or will you not utter Ramanama? If you do not, look at this sword.' Then I shall say that although I am uttering Ramanama every moment I will not do so at the point of the sword. Thus I shall risk my life in self defence. Now if I recite the 'Kalma' I do not lose my religion. What does it matter if I say in Arabic that Allah is one and that Mohammed is His only Prophet! There is no sin in saying this and if by merely saying this they accept me as a Muslim, I shall consider it a matter of pride. But if someone comes to me and wants to make me recite the



‘Kalma’ at the point of the sword I will never do so. I will defend myself with my life. I want to stay alive to prove this paradox. I do not wish to stay alive in any other way.

I have said that geographically our land may very well be divided but that our hearts should not be divided. But who will listen to me? The day was when everyone listened to Gandhi because Gandhi showed the way to fight the British. And how many Britishers were there? Only seventy-five thousand. But they had such resources, such might, that, as Annie Besant said, they answered brickbats with bullets and our violence was wholly ineffective. Ahimsa promised to be more efficient, so Gandhi was looked up to, but today they say that Gandhi cannot show the path and therefore arms should be taken up for self-defence. One can then only say that all these past thirty years that we spent in non-violent struggle had been wasted. We should have thrown out the British through violence.

But I do not think that the thirty years were wasted. It was good that under the severest oppression we remained non-violent. They used their arms against us. But we were not cowed down and the message of the Congress spread throughout the length and breadth of India. Only it did not penetrate the seven lakh villages of India because our ahimsa was the ahimsa of the impotent. No one at the time showed us how to make an atom bomb. Had we known how to make it we would have considered annihilating the English with it. But having been no alternative my advice was accepted. But today people say that nobody now cares for me. But all of you who come here to the prayer meeting every day, why do you do so? How do I force you? You come bound by the string of love and quietly listen to me. If I can thus make myself heard by even the Hindus alone, you will see that India holds her head high in the world. I say nothing of the Muslims. They think I am their enemy but the Hindus and the Sikhs do not consider me their enemy. If the Hindus will heed my advice regarding the non-violence of the brave I shall tell them to throw their arms into the sea; I shall show them how the brave can rely on non-violence.

The Congress Working Committee consists of only a handful of men. I have seen that some of them are narrow- minded, as I could gather from one or two speeches. But I have information from all over India. They say, ‘Where will the Muslims now go? What the Muslims can do we can do, for we are in a majority. After the British leave we shall rule over them. We consider ourselves rightful rulers because we went to jail and submitted to beatings and whippings.’ It does not become us to talk in this way.



This is violence. If you do not wish to listen to any talk of non-violence, if you are predisposed towards violence it is a matter of shame. If you go by the principle of tit for tat, you can take it that both the faiths will be destroyed. Islam will be finished, as Hinduism will.

If we practise the non-violence of the strong, the Pakistan that they have secured will only remain a plaything. We shall lose nothing through non-violence.

I do not consider Pakistan and India as two different countries. If I have to go to Punjab, I am not going to ask for a passport. And I shall go to Sind also without a passport and I shall go walking. Nobody can stop me. They might say I am their enemy but if I went I would go not to become a member of some Assembly but to serve and it would not be for the first time in my life. I went to Noakhali and let no one imagine that, because it is now to be included in Pakistan, I would not go there again. A part of me lies there. I shall tell the Hindus there that if they are true Hindus they should not fear anyone even if they are surrounded by murderers.

I shall consider myself brave if I am killed and if I still pray to God for my assassin and I shall utter the name of God not with my lips alone but seeing Him in my heart. I shall not go to temples and mosques looking for God.

Today Badshah Khan, who has been so brave, is not able to show bravery. For years he has been instructing the Pathans in ahimsa. But today he says he cannot declare allegiance to India. If he did that there would be a carnage ten times as bad as in Bihar. What is he to do? Ahimsa is not a commodity which can be bought in the market. If we could display true ahimsa, the Frontier Province alone could save the whole of India.

The Muslims cannot drive a bargain with us. They cannot have all that they were given under the British regime. They cannot be given separate electorates if they ask for them. Separate electorates were a poisonous weed planted by the British but we shall be just to them. Their children will have as much opportunity for education as other children. In fact if they happen to be poor, they will have even more facilities. If we show such justice the people of India will have proved their courage (What follows is from The Hindu.).

The A.I.C.C. passed its resolution only yesterday. But Gandhiji received two newspaper cuttings, one from a Nagpur paper purporting to report a speech by the



Premier of the Central Province and the other criticism of the speech. The speech makes the Premier say as follows: It was Mr. Jinnah's claim that the Muslims had a separate culture and that in Pakistan only Islamic law would prevail. It would be difficult for non-Muslims to live in Pakistan in such conditions. Pandit Shukla pointed out that while there were 1,85,00,000 Hindus in the Muslim areas of British India, There were 30 million Muslims in the Hindu areas of British India, and these have lived in these parts for generations. What would be the condition of these, Pandit Shukla asked. They would be treated as aliens. They would have no citizenship rights. The grants that were being given today for their education would be withdrawn and they would have to depend on their own resources.

The report went on to say: Pointing to Minister (For Health) Hasan who was sitting next to him, Pandit Shukla jocularly observed that Dr. Hasan would not only have to quit the Cabinet, but that he would not be allowed to live in Wardha. He would have to seek shelter in Pakistan. Even though religious and cultural freedom might be conceded to the Muslims living in Hindustan, they would have no representation in the legislatures or in the services. They would have to maintain their own institutions and they would be entitled to no Government grants.

If the report was fairly accurate, Mahatma Gandhi observed, the speech was unfortunate, although it might have been made in a lighter vein. Surely the Union Provinces were not going to be caught in the trap prepared for them. They had to show by their action that the Muslim members in the Provincial Cabinets were just as welcome as they were before and that no matter what was done in the so-called Pakistan provinces, the Union Provinces would be strictly just and fair in their treatment of their Muslim brethren. Pakistan should make no difference in their regard for the Muslims as well as the other minorities. This had no reference to the apples of discord which the foreign power had thrown in their midst such as separate electorates.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 166-70; and The Hindu, 17-6-1947

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## 112. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 17, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 17, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have no hand in choosing the bhajans that are sung these days. But often the bhajan that is sung fits the occasion. Today's bhajan says that in the company of the good one forgets the notions of self and others and no one is an enemy or a stranger. This indeed is the need of the hour. But everyone coming to me says, 'However much you may shout, the separation is going to endure. Each party must consolidate itself. I do not like this kind of talk, though I am not much worried either. I shall continue to say that what has happened has happened; only it should not be sealed and made permanent.

As you know, when the prayer ended yesterday, a friend asked a question. I asked him to put it in writing. He has done so. He says that if the decision about Pakistan is not undone he and his wife will both end their lives by fasting and they will do the fasting here at this spot. (Gandhiji could not offer them hospitality as he himself was a guest there. So the couple fasted in front of the Bhangi Colony. They however yielded to Gandhiji's advice the next day, i.e., June 18, and broke their fast saying henceforth they would devote themselves to constructive work; vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 19-6-1947) But if someone must fast it is I. There is a philosophy about everything, that is, there are certain laws and certain methods for doing everything. Even a small thing like the charkha has a philosophy. We did not know it before but now a theory has been evolved, and we have come to realize the power of the charkha. I go so far as to say that the whole world will gain its freedom through the charkha. The world will not be freed through the atom bomb. There are two kinds of Shastras in the world—one satvik and the other rajasik, one conforming to dharma, the other not conforming to dharma. The shastra of the atom bomb does not conform to dharma. It does not show faith in God. It usurps the place of God.

Fasting, similarly, has its shastra. Fasting not governed by a philosophy does not conform to dharma. If someone says he will fast so long as God does not appear before him, he may well die but God will not appear before him.



Fasting for a public cause also has its shastra and I am the only one adequately versed in it. I cannot consider the fast proposed as conforming to dharma. My heart is not going to be touched by it. The world too will have no sympathy for it. I should therefore advise the couple to give up this idea and return to their home. This does not mean that they should sit still. We must not let the thought enter our minds that we have become separated. Let us not recognize Pakistan in our hearts; let us not consider anyone an enemy or an outsider.

All this will come about by keeping the company of the good, by reading noble works and by giving up wicked thoughts. Only then will our hearts become cleansed of evil thoughts. Cleansing the heart is not an easy thing. Only by uttering Ramanama can this be accomplished.

But our minds today are filled with hankering after comforts. We will not think of Rama but rather of a cigar. Our thoughts turn in the wrong directions. People continue to proclaim that they will teach the Muslims a lesson. We thus lend support to the argument for the perpetuation of Pakistan.

It is Mr. Jinnah who created Pakistan. We had not thought it possible even in our dreams that he would manage to get it. But he is a brave man. With the help of the British he has succeeded in getting Pakistan. If we now shut our eyes to it and go about saying that we shall teach the Muslims a lesson it is not going to undo the fact of Pakistan.

I am not asking you to kow-tow to the Muslims. One does not kow-tow one's younger brother. One does one's duty by one's younger brother and earns his trust.

You will have seen from the newspapers that I had been to see the Viceroy today. (1 For the Viceroy's report of the meeting, vide "Lord Mountbatten's Note on Interview with Gandhiji and M. A. Jinnah", 17-6-1947) The Viceroy asked me, "Did you see the newspapers today?" I said, I rarely saw newspapers. Then he said, "We have accomplished something good today." He had received separate reports from the Hindus and the Mussalmans on the question of partition and was able to make them agree to produce a joint report.

What I say is that when two brothers have decided to separate it cannot be done by losing their temper. If there is a chair in the house it cannot be broken into two. If there has to be division in the ratio of three and one the statistics will have to be



worked out very carefully. The good thing we have started with the formation of a committee should be carried further. One's goodness is not proved merely by one's displaying a smile. If what we have is not merely sweet words but a sincere desire to work together, then I will say that the creation of Pakistan has been to the good. Then it will not be necessary to trouble the Viceroy. We shall merely tell the experts to sit together and compile an inventory that will satisfy both the parties. Where calculation helps we should resort to calculation. Where calculation does not help we should draw lots. But we must not fight.

Lastly, I have today received a lengthy wire from Sir C. P. Ramaswamy, the Diwan of Travancore, in which he has tried to explain to me that he has the support of the Christians and others in Travancore. I dislike such wires. By sugar coating something bitter it cannot be made sweet. The very basis of the thing is wrong. "Come now, we are independent." Independent of whom? Of the people? What is to be gained by becoming independent of India? Why do they indulge in this kind of circumlocution? They should boldly say that they are with India. Only then will it be said that they are loyal to their people; else they are disloyal to them.

[From Hindi] Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 170-3

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## 113. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 18, 1947

NEW DELHI, June 18, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I spoke to you yesterday about a friend and his wife who were fasting on the road outside Valmiki Mandir. Today they have sent me a very respectful letter. But the letter does not show wisdom. They are young, I am old. If I say that I possess a little wisdom they should accept my word. They say they can see the wisdom of what I say but that their conscience will not let them give up their fast.

You must have heard of the *Gita Rahasya* written by Tilak. It is so rich in thought that it needs to be studied again and again. I read it in Yeravda jail. True, I do not find myself in agreement with everything he says but the fact remains that Tilak was a great scholar and had a vast knowledge of Sanskrit literature. It has been a long time since I read this work and so I cannot remember his exact words. But I shall tell you the substance of what he says. I think what he says is right.

He says at one place that “conscience” is an appropriate word for the inner voice, but that when one says that one acts according to the promptings of one’s conscience it does not really mean that one acts according to the promptings of one’s inner voice. According to the Vedic thought all creatures are endowed with conscience. But in many people conscience is dormant, which is to say the inner voice is torpid. How can it then be described as “conscience”? According to our Shastras the inner voice awakens only when one follows *yama niyamas* and practises various other disciplines. I have digested this teaching of Tilak well so that I am able to tell whether what is taken for the inner voice is really the inner voice or not. If a voice told a thief, ‘kill that girl, cut off her limbs and take away her jewellery’, I would not say it was the still small voice within. It would be sheer wickedness. We are all today sunk in stupor. It frequently occurs to us to kill innocent children. But the prompting does not come from the inner voice.

I am an expert on fasting. Some Jain friends had resorted to fasting merely because they were not able to get something which they wanted. I persuaded them to terminate the fast. I also told you how even a great scholar like Dharmanand Kosambi had given up fasting on my advice. Kaka Kalelkar, who is here, tells me that just before his death Dr. Kosambi had told him that I had been right in advising him to



give up his fast. So, as an expert on fasting, I advise the couple to terminate their fast if they can do so. Three days should be enough.

You will have seen from the newspapers that I met Mr. Jinnah yesterday. I could not tell you about this meeting before because such a meeting had not been mooted. When I was at the Viceroy's House, the Viceroy told me that Mr. Jinnah was present there and that I should see him. Well, I could not have refused. I am the kind of person who would not hesitate to visit Mr. Jinnah at his house. We met and we agreed that it would be good if we also met Badshah Khan. Then we went to see the Viceroy in the evening. But Badshah Khan, like the humble man he is, had taken a bus to Deoband and it took him not three but five hours to get back and this meant that we could not see the Viceroy again in the evening.

The Viceroy has left Delhi today but he would have been happy if we could have met. We therefore went to Lord Ismay at 4.30 in the afternoon. Badshah Khan has now gone to see Mr. Jinnah at his residence and he is still with him.

Do not please build any great hopes on this. But we can certainly hope that the wound that we have received in the shape of Pakistan can be prevented from becoming deeper. We can but strive. The result is in the hands of God. Let us pray that the effort may lead to a happy result.

What would be a happy result in this instance? This, the Pathans in the Frontier Province may all be united. Pathans are sword-happy people. One can hardly find a Pathan who cannot wield a sword or a gun. From generation to generation vendetta rules their lives but Badshah Khan saw that they could defend themselves better by dying than by killing. He wanted the Pathans to develop this lofty courage and render service. But before this dream could be realized this question of referendum came up. Some will now say that they want to be with Pakistan. Some others will say that they will remain with the Congress. And the Congress of course has come to be regarded by some as an organization of the Hindus. This will create a schism among the Pathans and may lead to a strife which it may be difficult to curb. They will indulge in mutual slaughter. Badshah Khan wants that by some means it may be made possible for the Pathans to remain free without having to submit to a referendum. They should make their own laws and remain united. It would not then matter whether they chose Pakistan or India. They say they have no money. They are poor people. They do not



want to be an independent nation. But they would decide which country to join after they have got over the present quarrels.

Then it also irks Dr. Khan Saheb that some Hindus found it necessary to take refuge in Hardwar. Therefore Badshah Khan wants these Hindus to return to N. W. F. P. There are still numerous Hindus in the N. W. F. P. who are too poor to be able to leave. They can feel secure only after this question of the referendum is settled. It is for this that Badshah Khan has gone to see the Qaid-e-Azam. What he brings from there remains to be seen.

Khwaja Abdul Majid has been to see me. He wants to be assured that, now that Pakistan has been conceded, the Nationalist Muslims will not be ignored. Khwaja Saheb, being a good Muslim, also considers himself a good Hindu just as I, being a good Hindu consider myself a good Muslim. He says that separate electorates should be done away with for we all want to present the Union of India to the world as a united nation. We may follow different religions but in the eyes of the law we shall all be citizens of India and anyone who is loyal to India should have the same rights as everyone else. I assure Khwaja Saheb that he would certainly have all those rights. At least there are two of us, who regard each other as a man of religion and goodwill. We shall see to it that no one is deprived of his rights on the ground of religion. At the same time we have to see that no special concessions are made on religious grounds. This is what Mr. Jinnah did. First he advanced eleven demands, then fourteen, then twenty-one and in the end he advanced the demand for Pakistan. Nobody now shall be permitted to do this. India is a vast country and it has a place for everyone who will be loyal to it.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 173-7

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## 114. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 19, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 19, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday at the end of the prayer meeting a friend asked me a question. I told him to put it in writing, which he did. But the slip of paper containing the question remained in someone's pocket and when the garment was washed, the slip suffered in the process and when it reached my hands nothing could be made of it. It is a matter of shame but the questioner is not present at the meeting so I do not know to whom I should express my apology.

What I told you yesterday about the couple fasting here for the last 3 or 4 days first made them somewhat angry. How could I describe myself as an expert on fasting? Why was I so proud? But when I met them at 9 o'clock last evening I explained to them that if a man five-foot tall claimed to be five-foot tall he could not be called proud. They had said it in the heat of the moment. And they realized that rather than fast they should not in their hearts recognize the division of India. They broke their fast with milk and fruit. I congratulated them. They asked me, "Tell us, how can we cooperate with injustice?" I said, "Give up the gains accruing from injustice." We should not use coercion against anyone. We should not benefit from injustice. This is the path of non violence. This is non-cooperation.

I had said yesterday that Badshah Khan was seeing Mr. Jinnah and that we should pray for the success of the meeting. It may be asked what fruit our prayer has yielded. I cannot tell you more than what Mr. Jinnah has stated in the newspapers. He says that the talks were cordial. That is good. But what has been the issue? He says the issue will be known when Badshah Khan sends word from the N. W. F. P. This means that there is no issue. But we cannot expect to see today the fruit of yesterday's prayer. He who expects this does not know God. Let me tell you something about the significance of prayer.

We cannot demand the results of prayer nor may we give up praying. We may give up food and drink for a time and occasionally we should do so. But we may never give up praying. We must go on praying till our last moment. As food nourishes the



body, so Ramanama nourishes the soul. There are times set for the recitation of Gayatri in the morning and evening worship and for namaz. But there is no time set for uttering Ramanama. He who utters Ramanama with every breath is blessed. Such a man can live to 125 years. If I die before completing 125 years then you may consider that I have not attained the state that I have described.

I shall go to Hardwar the day after tomorrow. Jawaharlal will be accompanying me. He is supreme in the United Provinces. Today he is supreme in the whole of India. We are faced with a complex situation. There are thousands of refugees there. What shall we do about them? I am against providing free food to people. One must do something for the food one gets. God has ruled that only he who works shall eat. I must tell the refugees that they must work. Of course they should try and get back home as soon as they can. But in view of the happenings in the N. W. F. P. I cannot ask them to rush into the jaws of death. I must ask the Muslim League that they should bring to book all those in Pakistan who have committed crimes. I do not advocate abuse for abuse and violence for violence. But it is the duty of the Government to protect the people it governs even if they are followers of a different faith. True, they have asked everyone to come back. But how can people go back if they know that they will be mistreated there. Therefore the government there should declare that it will punish the criminals and see that people are protected. If they do this I will see to it that the refugees do not stay on in Hardwar even for a day.

In the N.W.F.P. today it has been made clear to the people that they are to cast their ballot for either India or Pakistan. India is being represented as Hindu raj and people are reminded of Bihar. In this atmosphere hardly any Muslim would want to give up Pakistan for India. Under the circumstances Badshah Khan wants that for the time being N. W. F. P. should be a free province, i. e., without joining either Pakistan or India, the Pathans should be allowed to formulate their own laws and frame their own constitution.

The Congress should tell the Pathans to make their own constitution and assure them that the Congress will not interfere in it in any way. We shall have such control as the centre exercises in other provinces, but in internal matters they can carry on their affairs according to the Shariat.

The League should similarly declare that the provinces to be included in Pakistan will have freedom in internal matters and the centre will be responsible only for certain



given subjects. That is to say, we shall be having two centres with the provinces enjoying the maximum autonomy. If this is conceded there will no longer be any need for a referendum. I will also then advise the Pathans that since they are nearer to Pakistan geographically they should join Pakistan. Today I cannot tell them this because I do not know how things in Pakistan are going to shape.

If in this confused situation a referendum is still considered necessary it may be held but the choice should not be between Pakistan and India but between Pakistan and Pathanistan. This, simply, is what I wish to tell them. (What follows is from *The Hindu*.)

He was, however, able to tell them that the movement for a Free Frontier State called Pathanistan had come to stay, for it was a solid movement. If it was an anti-Indian movement, it was a bad and mischievous thing. If it was meant to conserve, as he thought it was, pathan life and culture, it deserved every encouragement. Geographically, it was only a bit of India. Numerically too, the Pathans were very few, compared to the millions of Indians. But their war-like qualities and their position on the map of India gave them a unique importance.

Also, the Frontier was a Congress province. It was so when the Congress was in the wilderness, and it was now the same too when Congress was in power. It was also represented in the Constituent Assembly. But now, it was face to face with a delicate position. There was a referendum immediately to be held. Both the Congress and the League were committed to it. It was not open to any one party to vary the terms. The issue was to be Pakistan or Hindustan. That had a sinister meaning in the context of what had happened in front of them. Were they to be with the Hindus or with the Muslims?

The Congress was not a Hindu organization. It never was and, he hoped, never would be. But how could the Pathan mind grasp the difference in the midst of confusion becoming worse confounded from day to day? He would advise the Congress to make its position clear and would ask the Muslim League to do likewise. Let both honour the Pathan sentiment and let the Pathans have their own constitution for internal affairs and administration. It would promote Pathan solidarity, avoid internal conflict, retain Pushtu culture and the Pushtu language. If they would do that, they would be better able unitedly to federate with Pakistan or the Union of India, and that would be his advice whether there was a referendum or not. Any premature referendum would be a leap in the dark.

[From Hindi]; *Prarthana Pravachan*—I, pp. 178-82; and *The Hindu*, 29-6-1947

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## 115. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 21, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 21, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I shall set out for Hardwar tomorrow morning. And I shall be back by the evening. I expect it will be night by the time I return. I shall therefore not be present here for the prayer. If you desire you can nevertheless assemble and pray. I have to go there to reassure the refugees. I do not think I shall be able to do much. But it is a duty I have to do.

Today someone has sent a letter to this little girl Manu warning her that if she recites verses from the Koran at the prayer she will be killed. To threaten someone like this is not in keeping with our traditions and Manu is only a little girl. If she recites verses from the Koran she does so under my instructions. I myself do not have a good voice. If it is a joke, it is not a good joke.

As for the verses from the Quran, I have explained my position to you. There is nothing objectionable in the verses. I have explained to you the meaning. The Muslim friend who is my constant companion says that he who recites this prayer is not harassed by Satan. Tulsidas says the same thing in his Ramayana about the virtue of Ramanama and we have the same feeling about the Gayatri Mantra. Why then such threats? What good do they do? If any good comes from such threats it will be only for the threatened girl for such things make her more fearless.

I want to tell you that today we have forgotten swadeshi. I have been telling you from the beginning that if we ape foreign manners it is futile to talk of self-rule. Such threats show Western influence. What harms us, what keeps us starved, is not the swadeshi. Formerly when someone did something in the style of foreigners I used to take him to task. But then at that time I held sway and the gun did not rule the country. Today my word has no power. I am an old man. I cannot run from place to place. If even today my voice could reach people, I would say the same thing that I have been saying for the last thirty two years. I am now 78 but I spent my youth in exile in South Africa and what I have taught for thirty-two years after my return from South Africa



has amounted to this: that in imitating Western ways we will destroy whatever we have achieved. Swadeshi is that which appeals to the soul.

I talked about completing swadeshi and I insisted that khadi was its centre. We did not then have the national flag. We later devised the tricolour which represents all the people of India. Today the tricolour has all but ceased to flutter. If we enshrine it in our hearts we can rise very high.

Today although we wear khadi or a khadi cap there is only emptiness inside. I had then said that not only foreign cloth but even the mill-cloth produced in India was taboo for us. Camphor which we do not produce here and which is a very useful thing is not foreign when imported from Japan. But if we import from Japan something which we can produce here it is poison to us. Our people in their millions used to make cloth. They met their own requirements and also exported shiploads of it abroad. What crime have they committed that now they should send out their cotton and the cloth made from it should then be brought to India and sold here cheaper than the cotton? What lies behind this is something that can make one's hair stand on end.

There was a time we made piles of foreign cloth and burnt it and nobody said that national wealth was being destroyed. Mrs. Naidu burnt a sari that had come from Paris and the late Motilal Nehru applied the match-stick to all his foreign clothing. He had wardrobes filled with foreign clothing. When he went to jail he sent me a letter-I am unable to trace it now-in which he said that it was only now that he was really living and that all the prosperity of Anand Bhavan had never given him the joy he felt there. In the jail he had no cigars, no drinks and no meat. He was not even given enough to eat. But he still felt happy. True, all this did not last long. Man after all wants to soar high but he cannot always sustain himself in the flight. Again and again we rise only to fall. But the rising becomes a cherished memory. At least it is so in my case. But where are those times now?

It is not the times that have changed. A well-meaning petty trader has sent me a postcard bemoaning the change. He says we have all become selfish, not only the traders, the rulers too are selfish. Our ministers are selfish. And the British even while they are going indulge in petty tricks and incite quarrels in order to gain something. If they want to go, why don't they give up their greed? Why don't they make their going decent? But why talk about the British? The Congressmen themselves are selfish. Who shall put out the flames when the ocean catches fire? If salt loses its savour with what





shall it be salted? The Congress made so many sacrifices and fought for so long. Where is that glory now? They now want to be Presidents and Secretaries. All this in my opinion represents foreigners.

I hear that there are curbs on the sale of Indian mill-cloth, but that there are no curbs on the sale of imported cloth. What is all this? I do not understand this swaraj. What we gain with one hand, we seem to lose with the other. It is a matter of sorrow.

A correspondent asks me to reassure West Punjab. I have done so, but expressions of mere sympathy are not going to do much good. After all Punjab is a place where Lala Lajpat Rai was born. It is the home of brave men. It is the country of the Sikhs. I do not admire the bravery of the Sikhs wielding the sword. In my view true bravery is that which an unarmed man shows. But the people in Punjab today talk of acquiring arms. When I asked them if they wanted money, they said, “No, we want weapons.” This mentality is again foreign. What can I tell them to assuage their suffering? I can only tell them that Punjab should produce not sheep and goats but lions. I know Punjab. I know its women too. They are strong in body. They should also be strong of heart. The atmosphere there is not conducive to making men lion-hearted. Women of the Punjab today crave for gaudy foreign clothing. They want saris which will be transparent. The men too are not far behind. Even if they do not wear such clothes they want to attire their women in them. When the sisters from Punjab come to me and I ask them why they display so much jewellery and dress themselves in such clothes they answer that their husbands or fathers or brothers insist on wearing them. Why do men make dolls of their women?

If we give up all this we shall not feel frightened. Whom are we afraid of? The Muslims? If they become devils let us become men. Then they will also become men. When I, a poor bania, am not frightened, why should you be? The worst they can do is to kill me. Let them kill me. Will they drink my blood? Let them do so. That will save some food and I shall consider that I have been of service. But who am I to render service? It would be more appropriate to say that it is God who has used me for service. Hence I tell you, “Do not be frightened.”

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 182-7

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## 116. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 22, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

As you know I had been to Hardwar to see the refugees from Punjab and N. W. F. P. There are some 32,000 refugees there from Dera Ismail Khan and other places. I had no time to enter into any discussions with the refugees but I talked (Vide "Advice to Refugees", 21-6-1947) to them fully. I also visited their camps. I heard many things said about the refugees. There are two kinds of people among them: there are those who are really poor and in a bad way and there are others who are well-to-do. Some of them are given to gambling, drinking and to questionable methods of making money. I must say that it does not behove them to behave thus at this time of crisis.

People have gone there driven by their misery. They have got separated from their relatives. But what can be gained from crying over it? I told them to try and forget their sorrow. By forgetting sorrow one gets rid of sorrow. They have to create joy from sorrow. A great calamity has come to pass in the shape of the division of India, but why should I cry over it?

I want to tell you and through you I want to tell them that they should forget their sorrow. These 32,000 men and women should form themselves into a co-operative organization. They should take up work. They should not gamble and drink and smoke hemp. They should keep themselves engaged in some work or other. The Government cannot feed so many of them even if it wants to. Today everywhere the black market is rampant. Even if people are truthful they cannot get full rations for themselves. But crying and complaining will not help. People should learn to cooperate.

In that historic march in South Africa we covered twenty miles each day. We were a large crowd. All I had to give to each was an ounce of sugar and a little bread. This did not constitute enough rations for a person. It was always evening by the time we had done our twenty miles. I would notice cooking going on. I discovered that people were picking edible leaves from grass, adding salt and then cooking it. Water there always was. It made me very happy. One could always travel in such a company.



The soil of Hardwar is even more fertile and various other industries can also be taken up there. If they do this they will not feel the fatigue. Those who have to depend on others should conduct themselves so that they are not felt to be a burden.

Let them profit by the reported holiness of Hardwar though he was sorry to have to confess that the holy places had become dens of thieves and mendicancy had received the stamp of virtue. He had very sad memories of the Kumbha Mela of 1915 when he had the privilege of serving as a servant with his companions from South Africa in the Servants India camp. It was open to the refugees, if they would, to make the place holy by their behaviour. (This and the paragraph below in small type are from The Hindu.)

I met a few sisters there who were engaged in sewing and spinning. I also met a few men who were doing something or other. It is good. They should not become beggars. They should be brave and fearless.

As I could not go everywhere by myself, Dr. Sushila Nayyar went around the camps. She found the conditions there extremely insanitary. This should not be so. And it is a thing the Government will not do for us. We must ourselves keep our surroundings clean. The camps should be spread out. It is said there is danger from wild animals. But why should wild animals be feared? As man fears animals of the forest so the latter fear man. The 32,000 refugees should really not be frightened of wild animals.

They should be ashamed of fear of man or wild animals. Wild animals fled the haunts of men. Such was the universal experience. Let them recollect that Shraddhanandji founded his Gurukul on the other side of the Ganges which was infested by wild animals. Then they should remember that the police were there to afford such protection as they needed. Courage, hope, personal bravery, purity and industrious co-operation would make their life pleasant. They would then not be a burden on those among whom they lived but they would be, as they should be, like sugar to milk.

A distressing thing has come to my ears. It is from Kabul. It seems the Hindus living in Kabul are living there on suffer-ance. They have to wear turbans of a particular colour. It made me very sad to think that people can put up with such indignities for the sake of money. We must live there only if we can safeguard our rights, otherwise we should leave the place. This sort of thing cannot be tolerated. Then Kabul is our home territory. It is the country of the Pathans. The only difference is that on this side there is British rule while on that side there is no British rule. My fight in South Africa was over issues very much similar. It is intolerable that our people should not live as free citizens in Kabul. I am sure the report is exaggerated. I shall find out.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 187-90; and The Hindu, 23-6-1947



## 117. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 23, 1947

NEW DELHI,  
June 23, 1947

The proposed partition of India and of the provinces is going to be a test for us. Today's newspapers say that the Bill for the partition of India will be introduced in Parliament with much ceremony and India which has so far been one nation will now become two nations. It is a sad occasion and calls for no celebrations. We cherish the hope that although we are separating we are separating as brothers belonging to the same family and that we shall remain friends nevertheless. If what the newspapers say is true Britain intends to divide us into two nations and that with fanfare. Will this be their parting shot? I hope not.

But if the larger part of the country, that is the Indian Union, does its duty, they will be checkmated by their own move. We cannot now escape division however much we may dislike it. But a higher dharma demands that we should pursue a straight path and still consider ourselves one nation refusing to treat the Muslim minority as outsiders. India is as much their country as it is ours.

It means, clearly, that we have to bring about revolutionary changes in Hinduism. We are marred with the blot of untouchability. It certainly is our weakness. One reads that Muslim League leaders have been holding out the bait of separate electorates for the untouchables in Pakistan. Is this an invitation to them to join Pakistan and Islam? I do not wish to comment on the recent reports of forcible conversions. I have myself heard things from untouchable brethren. I am full of fears about what is going to happen.

There is only one way of getting rid of this fear and it is that the spectre of untouchability should be exorcised. Let there be no untouchables in India. Let all Hindus be one. Let there be no high and low. Let us show special consideration for those poor sections, such as untouchables and the adivasis, whom we have so far ignored. Let us educate them, see to their proper living. All should be listed alike in the voters' roll. The present condition should be changed. It should become vastly better. Will Hinduism rise to such heights or will it cling to false values, copy others in their evil ways and thus commit suicide? That is the question before us.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 190-1



## 118. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 24, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 24, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

This bhajan dwells on the piteous plight of Rama in the story. Here is Rama, about to be crowned but ordered to go to the forest as an exile! Can there be anything more pitiable? Something similar is now happening before our eyes. There is on the one hand rejoicing everywhere in the world at the British Government's decision to grant Dominion Status to India. On the other hand we are engaged in a fratricidal strife in the name of defending religion. I receive many letters every day attacking me. Some say I have destroyed the Hindus, some others that I have been appeasing the Muslims. They make no impression on me. I seek to appeal to no one except God, for we are all His creatures, His servants. And why should I allow myself to be annoyed by these letters? How have I offended? I only say that no one can protect his religion by doing sinful things or by committing atrocities on others. This applies to Hindus and Muslims alike. That Pakistan is a bad thing, I agree. What is there to rejoice over it? Our country has been divided. What is there in it to celebrate? For the last sixty years, since I was a schoolboy, I have believed that all Indians, be they Hindus, Muslims, Parsis or Christians, are brothers. Now that our land has been divided, does it mean that we should divide our hearts? How can the people of a country become two peoples? India can have only one person. When I say this they abuse me. Shall I listen to them and become a murderer? By doing so I shall only be harming myself. One is one's own foe as well as one's own friend. Hindus alone can destroy the Hindus and no one else.

Today flames are raging everywhere. Hinduism will be saved only if we can save ourselves from these flames. My physical powers are waning. I am no longer strong enough to put up with this heat. It is a permanent law that truth ever triumphs and falsehood perishes. What I say is not addressed to the feeble of heart but to those who are brave and unselfish, those who know how to die defending their mother, their daughter and their religion. The man who can die happily is more courageous than the man who kills. I want the whole of India to rise to this standard of valour.

I shudder to see what is going on everywhere around me. With whom must I argue? We are looking up to the British. How long must we? After the fifteenth of



August the British will have left. Whom shall we look up to then? It has been suggested that Punjab should be placed under martial law. I have seen Punjab once placed under martial law. I know what martial law means. It cannot change men's hearts. I shall still say that if Muslims want to save Islam, Hindus Hinduism and the Sikhs their Gurudwaras, they must together resolve that they will not fight. If there is a dispute over division it should be settled not through resort to force but through arbitration.

Sir C.P. says that Gandhi and the Congress are all too willing to grant independence to N.W.F.P. but not to Travancore. How can a learned man like Sir. C.P. say such a silly thing? If Travancore becomes independent then Hyderabad, Kashmir, Indore and other States will also declare themselves independent and India will be Balkanized. Then Badshah Khan does not want to secede from India. He says that he will not join Pakistan. Must he then be a slave of the Hindus? It is said that the Congress has been bribing him. If the Congress had resorted to bribery to gain support of people it could not have survived. Badshah Khan tells us to frame our constitution first. In the meanwhile he will have come to some decision. But what Sir. C.P. says something quite different. In N.W.F.P. it is the voice of the people. But in Travancore it is a Maharaja and his Prime Minister speaking on behalf of the Hindus. Sir C.P. cannot throw dust into people's eyes by advancing the example of N.W.F.P. I would suggest to Sir C.P. That Travancore should come into the Constituent Assembly.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 190-4

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## 119. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 25, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 25, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The refugees from N.W. F. P. and the Punjab I met in Hardwar told me that Hindus residing in Kabul are obliged to wear turbans of a particular colour to make them easily distinguishable. In this connection the Afghan Consul (Ghulam Mohammed) has today issued a long statement contradicting the report. He says that there is no such thing in Kabul. He says that the Hindus even have temples in Kabul and they have the right to build temples there. If that is so, we can feel proud.

The carnage in Lahore, Amritsar and Gurgaon is a matter of shame for all the three communities- Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. This carnage should be stopped by whatever means and people should be brought together. I saw in the newspapers today that yesterday in Lahore there was a conference of the representatives of the three communities at Nawab Mamdot's house which lasted till midnight and at which it was agreed that the rioting should be stopped. This is good news. After all, is Pakistan to be raised over the ashes of Lahore and Amritsar? And these are no small townships. They have taken generations to build. Amritsar moreover has the Golden Temple of the Sikhs. It is a matter of grief that man can thus forget his humanity and become Satan. These leaders will meet again tomorrow, (A security committee consisting of Iftikhar Hussain Khan of Mamdot, Bhimsen Sachar and Swaran Singh was formed for day-to-day review of the law and order condition in the province.) and if they are successful it will not be necessary for martial law to be imposed in these cities. These leaders therefore deserve our thanks.

I find myself in a dilemma. I feel the urge sometimes to go to Bihar, sometimes to Noakhali. In Noakhali my work was just started and it has given much comfort to the Hindus. I must go to Bihar too. I had intended to be here eight days but I have already been here a month. Where am I to go and what am I to do? I am perplexed. For a devotee of God it is good in a way. A devotee should think only of today and not of tomorrow for tomorrow is in God's hands. There are some who jibe at me for my tall talk about ahimsa and ask why I do not visit Amritsar or Gurgaon. But what shall I gain by going there? I want you to see me as I am. I have never been a prey to



misgivings. But today there is so much confusion in the world and India that it is difficult to see things clearly. The Gita says that one must attend to one's present duty. There is large-scale rioting going on in several places and I cannot make up my mind which one to go to. God gives me no guidance here. I ask friends. When the heart is besieged by doubt the best thing is to wait in patience. Throwing a stone may further spoil things. Nawab Mamdot says that the minorities will be given fair treatment in Pakistan. Why should I distrust him? If Hindus can live in Afghanistan as citizens, why should they not in Pakistan?

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 194-6

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## 120. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 26, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 26, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I was with the Viceroy for an hour and half today. I had no specific business with him. I had not gone there to give the Viceroy something or take something from him. He has his own way of working. He felt that since I have been fighting for the freedom of India and serving the people, he should summon me also as he has been summoning others. He consults every one and then he does what he has to do. What he has in his heart God alone knows.

I get many letters full of abuse. The abuse has no effect on me for I take the abuse as praise. But people hurl abuses at me not because I take it as praise but because in their eyes I am not what I ought to be. There was a time when these same people used to sing my praises. I have selected two questions contained in a letter I have received today which I shall answer here. The first question is: "You have become so used to the British army. What will happen to you after the British army withdraws from here?" I answered this question when I was in South Africa and again after my return here many years ago. I still say the same thing. We have no use for the British army. It does not increase our strength but reduces it. I am of course a votary of non-violence but this applies even to those who do not believe in non-violence. If everyone becomes a soldier and learns to wield the rifle, what need would there be left for the British army? If the withdrawal of the British army shocks us, then how can we be said to be fit for swaraj? If a man's lungs become diseased, he cannot keep himself alive with another person's lungs. Swaraj constitutes the lungs of India. If we want to survive we cannot do so with others' help. We are today like a man who has spent his life in a dark cellar and, being suddenly let out, is for the time being blinded by sunlight. We do not want the British army or any other army either to suppress us or to defend us.

But the riots in Amritsar, Lahore and other places have made us lose faith in ourselves. We have become so wicked that we have begun to fear each other. The idea has begun to take root in our hearts that if the army is not there people will eat each other up. But the fact is that so long as there is a third party ready to suppress us we cannot hope to be strong ourselves. Swaraj is not for cowards.



The second question is: “What a silly old man you are that you cannot see how your ahimsa stinks. Your ahimsa can save neither the Hindus nor the Muslims. If we suffer you to live it is not for your ahimsa but in consideration of the services you have rendered to the country.”

What stinks in my nostrils is not my ahimsa but the blood that is flowing everywhere around me. My ahimsa smells sweet to me. A man who drinks nectar every day does not find it so sweet as when he drinks it after having swallowed a draught of poison. Ahimsa did not always smell as sweet as it does now. For then the atmosphere was permeated with ahimsa. But today when violence is giving out so much stench it is only my ahimsa which acts as an antidote. The letter also asks me why I am repeatedly meeting Mr. Jinnah. He is our enemy and we ought to keep away from him. The Baluchis similarly are our enemies and the Congress ought to have nothing to do with them. How can the Congress do so? Its mission is to serve all. I agree that Mr. Jinnah has done a disservice to the country in denouncing Hindus, especially savarna Hindus as his enemies. If a man acts wickedly one feels sorry but after all he is our brother. Hindus cannot go mad. Although Mr. Jinnah has got Pakistan it does not mean that we should cease to associate with him. There are many disputes which can be settled only if we meet together.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 196-8

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## 121. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 27, 1947

NEW DELHI,  
June 27, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I have received a distressing letter. A friend writes from Delhi that a large number of refugees from Punjab are on their way to Delhi. They have left their homes because they felt that their lives and property were in danger. But where can they flee? If we hear that there is going to be an earthquake in Delhi tomorrow, shall we flee the place? The brave never run away. Death is one's constant companion. No one is immortal. As for property it is something one is always acquiring and losing. The friend also writes that when the refugees who have come to Delhi want to rent houses, the landlords ask for a premium. My advice to those who have houses or land in Delhi is that they should welcome these homeless people to their houses. But even if they cannot do so, at least they should not demand a premium but be content with such modest rent as the refugees can pay them. It is their paramount duty to give shelter to the refugees. I take it that in the case of some of the landlords, rent from their houses is the sole source of income. But even so the rents they charge should be reasonable. The letter suggests that the Interim Government should consider this problem and as far as possible reduce the difficulty faced by the refugees.

I cannot answer all the questions addressed to me through letters and newspapers. But I shall select a few and attend to them. Today I have selected three questions. The first question is that since in the world money has replaced God, what is India to do? My answer is that dependence on money power, physical force or brute force is folly. The mightiest power is God, before whom, as a bhajan says, all powers become ineffective. Today the materialist outlook prevails and we have come to feel that there is no such thing as spiritual power or soul-power for it is invisible and intangible. But I am a believer in the power of the spirit and I place no value on brute force. I still say that brute force is transient while soul-force is eternal for it is truth itself.

The second question is: "After the British leave, Dominion status will continue only till the Constituent Assembly has finalized the constitution. Thereafter will you be friends of the British or their enemy?"



The answer is that we have always hoped that we shall continue our association with England. The bad deeds of a bad man are buried with him, only the good is left behind. India today is passing through the agony of child-birth. If the English emerge well out of it, that is if the Viceroy and his English advisers do what will be good for the country, then how can they remain our enemies? Even Dominion Status we have secured by being their friends. We now become partners in the Commonwealth. Even when we leave the Commonwealth we shall still have friendship for them. In this lies their good and ours. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vice-President of the Interim Government, has already said that no one needs to fear an independent India. India will cultivate friendship with all countries.

The third question is: “Who will be the President of the Indian Republic? Will it be some Englishman, and if it is not to be an Englishman then should we not have Jawaharlal Nehru? For he is a highly educated man, can speak English and French and has large experience of foreign countries.” My answer is that if I have my way the President of the Indian Republic will be a chaste and brave Bhangi girl. If an English girl of 17 could become the British Queen and later even Empress of India, there is no reason why a Bhangi girl of robust love of her people and unimpeachable integrity of character should not become the first President of the Indian Republic.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary that the President should be a highly educated person knowing many languages. We do not want to display our pride to the world by electing a learned Brahmin or a Kshatriya as the President of India. By electing a Harijan girl to that office we shall demonstrate our soul-force. We shall show to the world that in India there is no one high and no one low. Only the girl should be clean in body and mind. She should be chaste as Sita and her eyes should radiate light. Sita had such radiance that Ravana could not touch her. If I can find such a girl she will be our first President. We shall all salute her and set a new example before the world. After all she does not have to concern herself with running the Government of India. She will have a cabinet of ministers and she will act on its advice. She will merely have to sign papers. All the Indians, be they caste Hindus or Muslims or followers of some other faith, should declare with one voice that whoever may be the President they will all salute him. This is real moral power. All the rest is falsehood. If such a girl of my dreams becomes President, I shall be her servant and I shall not expect from the Government even my upkeep. I shall make Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu her ministers and therefore her servants.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 199-202



## 122. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 28, 1947

NEW DELHI, June 28, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

What I am going to tell you today will be something very special. I hope you will listen to me with attention and try to digest what I say. When someone does something good he makes the whole world partake of the good. When someone does something bad, though he cannot make the world share his action he can certainly cause harm. The Constituent Assembly is discussing the rights of the citizen. That is to say they are deliberating on what the fundamental rights should be. As a matter of fact the proper question is not what the rights of a citizen are, but rather what constitutes the duties of a citizen. Fundamental rights can only be those rights the exercise of which is not only in the interest of the citizen but that of the whole world. Today everyone wants to know what his rights are, but if a man learns to discharge his duties right from childhood and studies the sacred books of his faith he automatically exercises his rights too. I learnt my duties on my mother's lap. She was an unlettered village woman. She was unable even to sign her name. Nobody in those days thought of learning to read and write by employing tutors. I am telling you of things seventy years ago. My father was a Diwan, but at that time a Diwan did not have to be particularly well versed in English. He dressed himself in an angarkha and wore village-style shoes. He did not even know what trousers were. My mother taught me to repeat Ramanama. She knew my dharma. Thus if from childhood we learn what our dharma is and try to follow it our rights look after themselves. I could live only on the condition that I drank the milk that my mother gave me. If I had smirked the obligation to drink milk I would have forfeited my right to live. The beauty of it is that the very performance of a duty secures us our right. Rights cannot be divorced from duties. This is how satyagraha was born, for I was always striving to decide what my duty was.

Today we noticed a strange phenomenon. He who is a ruler for a moment gets it into his head that has been created by God solely to rule over people, that he has the right to hang some, to imprison others and to find some others. He wants that all the duties should be discharged by the people. He says he has derived his right to rule from God. Industrial workers and industrial magnates are demanding their respective rights. The zamindar insists on his rights, the peasant on his. But there are no such two



classes here that one of them should exercise only rights and the other discharge only duties. If a ruler shirks his duties while the people do theirs then the people become the ruler. If the ruler does his duty and considers himself the trustee of his people he will survive. But if he becomes authoritarian he cannot survive in this age. Till now we have been sunk in darkness. The rulers have forgotten their duties and so have the ruled. The rajas have only been repeating that they were descended from the sun or the moon. But in truth a sovereign is only the first servant of the people. It is the duty of the servant to surrender all to the master and then live on what is left over. The people similarly should learn to do their duty. They are in millions. If they are so disposed they can kill the ruler. But by doing so they will only harm themselves. If we keep our streets clean and well lit or do something similar we should do it as a duty. Every one of us should become a scavenger. A man who does not first become a scavenger cannot live, nor has he a right to live and we are all scavengers in some sense or other even if we do not admit it. If the people pay taxes it is not so as to fill the coffers of the ruler but because without that the administration cannot function. The same thing applies to mill-workers and mill-owners. Here at hand and around is squalor in the Harijan quarter. When I see it my heart cries out at our worthlessness. I live in such beautiful and clean surroundings while they have to wallow in dirt. Mill-owners should similarly first feed the workers and themselves eat only afterwards. But even if the mill-owners do not do their duty, does it mean that the workers should kill them? They can certainly do so. But then the whole structure would collapse. They gain nothing by frightening the millowners. They would themselves be behaving as masters then. If they want to improve their lot they must not forget that they will earn their rights only by doing their duty. There are millions of workers today. If they forget their duty anarchy and chaos will result.

Every man is born a debtor. The scripture also says that we are born debtors in the world to which we owe a debt and we are dependent on others right from birth. Man becomes man only by recognizing his dependence on others.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 202-5

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## 123. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,

June 29, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Yesterday I talked to you about duty. However I was not able to say all that I had intended to say. Whenever a person goes anywhere certain duties come to devolve on him. The man who neglects his duty and cares only to safeguard his rights does not know that rights that do not spring from duties done cannot be safeguarded. This applies also to the Hindu-Muslim relations. Whether it is the Hindus living in a place or Muslims or both, they will come to acquire rights if they do their duty. Then they do not have to demand rights. A child feeds at his mother's breast because it is his duty to do so. And this alone gives him the right to live. This is a paramount law and no one can change it. If Hindus consider Muslims their brothers and treat them well, Muslims too will return friendship for friendship. Take a village for example. If there are in it five hundred Hindus and five Muslims, then the five hundred Hindus come to have certain obligations towards the five Muslims which ipso facto gives Hindus certain rights. In their arrogance they should not think that they can crush the Muslims and kill them for it cannot be anyone's right to kill. There is no bravery in killing. It is cowardice and a disgrace. The duty of the Hindus is to share with the Muslims in their joys and sorrows even if they wear beards and face towards the West during namaz. They should see whether they are getting enough food and water and whether their other needs are being satisfied. When the five hundred Hindus do their duty, then they earn the right to expect that the five Muslims also would do theirs. If the village catches fire and the Muslims think that they should let it burn and do everything to see that it spreads, then they will not be doing their duty. Fires in villages are a common occurrence. If someone lights a bidi and throws away the burning match-stick and it comes into contact with a little dried grass or wisp of cotton, a fire starts. And since villages mostly have thatched roofs just a little wind can make the fire consume the whole village. But as a matter of course in such an eventuality the five Muslims will also want to extinguish the fire and will set about bringing pails of water for the purpose. By thus doing their duty they automatically acquire rights. Today we do not do our duty. The work goes on because God has so made the world that its progress does not stop. But supposing the five Mussalmans are bent on mischief, supposing you



give them food and water and treat them well and they still abuse you, what then will be the duty of the five hundred Hindus? It certainly is not their duty to cut them down. It would be bestial, not human, to do so. If a brother of mine has gone mad, shall I then start beating him up? I shall not do so. I shall confine him in a room and stop others from treating him roughly. This is the human way. Similarly if the Muslims in question do not want to behave in a friendly manner and keep on saying that they are a separate nation, that though they are only five, they can summon five crores of Muslims from outside, the Hindus should not let themselves be frightened by such a threat. They should tell the Muslims outside that they want to be friends with the five Muslims, but that they don't reciprocate. That if they want to help them it is their affair, but the Hindus would not be frightened or subdued by force. The world will understand that the five hundred Hindus are good people and want to do their duty. The same thing applies to a village where there are five hundred Muslims and only five Hindus. There are many such villages in Pakistan. Some people from the Jhelum area had been to see me. They were concerned about their future in their home country. I told them that if the Muslims there were good people, could exercise self control in doing their duty, then they would have nothing to fear. But if the few Hindus there were wicked, then even if Hindus from all over India went to help them nothing would be gained.

Some Indian Princes are offended. They believe that so long as there are the sun and the moon in the sky, they ought to remain on their thrones. They argue that it was not the people who installed them as the rulers, it was the British or the sun or the moon. This does not show that they are doing their duty. This bespeaks pride and arrogance. So long as they were protected by the British these Princes squandered crores of rupees in England and America. They indulged in wild orgies. Now it cannot continue. Now they can remain rulers only on the sufferance of the people and as their servants. Of course even servants must eat. So long they plundered their people. They should also be allowed to continue in their palaces for they can say that they are used to live in palaces and have never lived in huts. What can the people lose by letting them do so? But if the Princes refuse to recognize the rights of the people, if they say that they will blow their subjects to bits with cannon, then they will not be doing their duty. What then should the people do? In that eventuality it becomes the duty of the people to fight against the ruler and remove him from the throne. That does not mean that they should set fire to the palaces and destroy everything. That would be





wickedness. If the ruler is on the wrong path the duty of the people is not to drag him down. The people should fight against him with courtesy, truth and peace. The people should not merely run after rights. He who runs after rights does not secure them. His plight is that of a dog who sees his reflection in the water and wants to attack it. His right is illusory. When you do your duty the rights will drop into your lap.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 205–8

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## 124. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, June 30, 1947

NEW DELHI,

June 30, 1947

People are today watching the referendum that is about to be held in the Frontier Province because legally the Frontier Province has been and still is a Congress province. Badshah Khan and his coworkers are being asked to choose between Pakistan and India. The word Hindustan is being misunderstood as if Hindustan is Hindu and Pakistan is Muslim. The problem before Badshah Khan is how to get out of this difficulty. The Congress has pledged its word that after consultation with Dr. Khan Sahab there should be a referendum in the Frontier Province under the direct supervision of His Excellency the Viceroy. The referendum will thus be held on the appointed date.

The Khudai Khidmatgars will not participate in the referendum. This will result in a clear victory for the Muslim League and the Khudai Khidmatgars will also not have acted in defiance of their inner voice, granting that they have one. How does this violate any conditions of the referendum? The Khudai Khidmatgars who have so long bravely fought the British are not going to be scared by defeat. Various political parties take part in elections knowing full well that they will be defeated and when a party does not take part in an election the defeat is certain.

Badshah Khan is chided for raising a new demand of Pakhtoonistan. As far as I can remember even before the formation of the Congress Ministry Badshah Khan was taken up with this notion of freedom for the Pathans in their homes. Badshah Khan does not want to set up a separate State. If he is only free to make his own constitution he will gladly join one of the two federations. I can see no ground for objection to this demand of Pakhtoonistan. Of course if the idea is to teach the Pathans a lesson and to humble them anyhow it is a different matter. A serious charge levelled against Badshah Khan is that he is playing into the hands of Afghanistan. I am quite sure that Badshah Khan cannot practise deceit against anyone. He will never allow the Frontier Province to be absorbed into Afghanistan.

As a friend of his I know that he has one weakness. He has a suspicious nature and he has always suspected the intentions of the British. I must ask him that he should get over this weakness, which is not peculiar to him. It does not become a leader of



his stature. I have called this a weakness on his part and so it is, but it is also in a way his strong point, for even if he wants he cannot hide his opinions.

From the Frontier Province I now take you to Rameswaram where it is said Rama had built a bridge or causeway for his horde to cross into Lanka, which he conquered but did not retain and gave to Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. The temple at Rameswaram has now been opened to Harijans. Thus except for the temples in Cochin all the famous temples in the South have been opened to the Harijans. The following is the list of the important temples furnished to me by Rajaji: Madurai, Tinnevely, Chidambaram, Srirangam, Palni, Triplicane, Tirupati, Kanchi and Guruvayur. The list is not exhaustive. The Harijan Speaker (P. Sivashanmugham Pillai; vide “Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru”, 30-6-1947) of the Madras Assembly has been going to these temples along with other Harijan and non-Harijan devotees. It may be that educated Harijans and others do not see the great importance of this reform. Let us not however underestimate its import, for this reform has been brought about without bloodshed. We shall hope that Cochin too, like Travancore, Tamilnadu and British Kerala, will open its temples to Harijans. The temple-entry reform will remain incomplete so long as temples do not become truly sanctified through internal reform.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 209-10

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## 125. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 1, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 1, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You will have understood the *bhajan* that has been sung. It was composed by Tukdoji Maharaj of the Central Provinces. Its language is Hindustani—not the Hindustani crammed with Arabic and Persian words but the Hindustani of Delhi. It has beauty and sweetness. It says that Rama is accessible to one who has suffered loss of home and property, the loss of friends and companions or suffers from bodily disease. If a person in spite of such misfortune does not leave Rama then he finds Rama.

A friend complains that I have been saying at prayer meetings that the division of India has somehow to be undone. But I have never said this. When something has been agreed upon between the Congress and the League and the country has been divided, what can be gained by opposing it? After all the hearts have not been divided. The Congress has accepted Pakistan and we must let it go at that.

A Sikh youth asks me what I, claiming to love the Sikhs, am doing to prove it. Hindus and Muslims have both gained something. But what have the Sikhs gained? I can only say that if Punjab has been divided I can do nothing about it. I have not the power in my hands. To me there is no difference between Sikhism and Hinduism. I have read the Granth Sahib. What it contains is also contained in the Vedic dharma. But today they are treated as a separate community. It is a small community but well known for its valour. I had visits from two friends who have settled in Canada. They say Canada has a large number of Sikhs and they are doing good work there. There are Sikhs also in Africa. One finds Sikhs everywhere one goes. They are farmers, engineers, railway mechanics, and motor-car drivers. Today the Sikhs live in great material comfort.

I had a wire from the Muslim League at Mathura. They say that the Hindus there are ill-treating them. I do not know how much truth there is in this. But if it is true it is not good. We should not display the cruelty of numbers. The arrogance that comes from the strength of numbers can only destroy us.



You must be eager to know the result of my meeting with the Viceroy today. I had been to see the Viceroy with Nehru and the Sardar. I must ask the Press correspondents not to indulge in guess work but wait for an authoritative announcement from the Viceroy's House. They should do nothing at the present juncture that may harm the country.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 211-3

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## 126. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 2, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 2, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A friend wrote to me: “There are things in the world which people like and things which people do not like. To do things which people do not like is the limit of folly. You used to give some guidance to the people. You should do so now and support the people in the path they may choose.”

But I do not like this. What is the good of supporting something that is already popular? One must do something which is not so popular. One loses nothing by being alone. One has a right to do what one likes, whether people are pleased or displeased. If someone wants to make a rope out of grains of sand he will not succeed. (1 According to The Hindustan Times, 3-7-1947, Gandhiji said that he was told by way of illustration that he was trying to twist a rope of sand in trying to popularize Hindustani with the two scripts Nagari and Urdu, especially when Pakistan had become an established fact.) For ropes can be made only from fibre. One should do things which it is reasonable to do.

People say when I was in the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan I used to praise that language sky-high. I used to propagate Hindi in the South where people spoke Tamil. It was all good. But why Hindustani? My answer is that Hindustani has been born from Hindi. I attended the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore.<sup>1</sup> I also went to the Marwari Sammelan out of love for Jamnalalji. I had no desire to go there. It was love that drew me. I made it clear there that my Hindi was of a special kind. It was a language spoken by the Hindus, Muslims and others. It could be written either in Persian or in Devanagari. My Hindi is the Hindi that every illiterate man can speak. I speak such rudimentary Hindi but I do make myself understood. I have read Tulsidas but I have not been educated in Hindi. I have not been educated in Urdu either. I have not the time. Since the Hindi I advocated was not popular with the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, I left (On July 25, 1945; vide “Letter to Purushottamdas Tandon”, 25-7-1945) that body. Hindi today has become Sanskritized and Urdu is of a kind that only Maulana Saheb<sup>3</sup> or Sapru Saheb<sup>4</sup> can speak and understand. I have therefore said that I do not want either Hindi or Urdu. I want the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna. But people call me a fool. Where there are Anjuman Tarakki-e-Urdu working for Urdu and the Hindi



Sahitya Sammelan working for Hindi, I can never succeed. Then there would be no Pakistan. This renders my striving for Hindustani a futile exercise. But my heart rebels. Why should I leave Hindustani? Why should I leave a good thing? When we go to Prayag and take a dip where the Ganga and the Yamuna meet, we become purified. Similarly I wish to become purified in the confluence of Hindi and Urdu.

The Muslims today consider me the greatest enemy of Islam. But I say that if I remain alive, one day they are going to turn to me. Everyone is behind me. Only my fear is that the madness that has inundated India may carry us away. Even if I am the only one left to say so, I shall still say Hindustani is the national language. Both India and Pakistan are my country. Nobody can stop me. Even Mr. Jinnah cannot stop me. I have not become a foreign national so that Mr. Jinnah may imprison me. I am not going to take out a passport for going to Pakistan. You should all have the same courage. Mother India whose flag we have been carrying all this time has made so many sacrifices. Shall we now take it that she has been decapitated? Let no one make the mistake of taking up Hindi at the cost of Urdu. What one person does many people will take up. As for me, I am not going to budge from my position even if I should die.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 213-5

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## 127. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 3, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 3, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You have heard the bhajan. It says that it makes one laugh to think that a fish in water should remain thirsty. We are in the world of God and we do not know God. It is our ill-luck, for God is always with us. As nails are not apart from fingers, God is not apart from us. If a nail gets broken it causes pain; similarly when one breaks from God, it is painful.

India today is in pain. But the pain is in the cities. The seven lakh villages of India do not revolve around the cities. India is a country 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad. The division of India does not change the map of India. It remains as it was.

A friend wrote to me that the Brahmins in India are like a rock in the sea. Their number is infinitesimal. I am in a minority if I am all by myself. The rock is in a minority if it stands aloof from the sea. Then it shrivels up. But when it is in the sea it is a part of the sea. How can then the Brahmins be a minority in the sea that is the Hindu community.

There was a time when only Brahmin boys went to school. Since they have been given to learning from the very beginning, they also learnt wherever there was something new to be learnt. Today of course even those who are not Brahmins get education. Why should then the Brahmins complain about their sons not getting admission? I have been talking to you about rights. There is no such thing as a right. If a Brahmin claims education as a matter of right, I may ask him how he came to acquire the right. I do not believe in birthright. Rights are a result of the duties done. You will agree that a sinner has the right to reap the harvest of his sins. I say that one who does noble deeds has a right to the fruits of those deeds. If someone asks me what the rights of the Brahmin are I shall say it is his right to know the Brahman. A Brahmin has only two duties—to know the science of the Brahman and to teach it to others. A Brahmin who fulfils these duties earns the right to live as a Brahmin. Formerly people used to give grains and other things to a Brahmin to enable him to live. The Brahmins on their part took only as much as they needed and returned the rest. A Brahmin's right thus





is to teach the science of the Brahman. Why should they cry that their sons are not able to go to college? How can everyone go to college? How many boys and girls in the seven lakh villages of India go to college? That is possible under Nai Talim, of which I shall not talk today.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 215-7

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## 128. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 4, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 4, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Some people ask me if what has happened and what is happening and the Dominion Status that we are about to get will lead to Ramarajya. Those who put the question are usually sarcastic and I have to admit that I cannot say that all this will lead to Ramarajya. All the signs I see are against it. The country has been divided and there will be two Dominions and, if they are hostile to each other, how can we expect the establishment of Ramarajya? Of course Dominion Status does not imply subservience to the British. It is as good as independence. But the other Dominions in the British Commonwealth are more or less of the same race. Since India is an Asian country, how can it remain a Dominion? If all the countries of the world were to become such Dominions, that would be a different matter and then Ramarajya could be brought about. But what has come about cannot lead to Ramarajya or the Kingdom of God. The British Government had originally intended to transfer power to Indian hands by June 30, 1948. But now they have decided that the sooner they get out the better it would be. But how can they do that? So they came to the conclusion that if Dominion Status were granted to the divided India there would be no risks because then they would still have links with us.

I do not want India to be a frog in the well, unaware of what happens outside the well. Jawaharlal and other leaders have said that we will not be hostile to any country. We shall have friendship for all including the British. Do they then want a world federation? As I said at the Asian Relations Conference, (For Gandhiji's two speeches at the Conference, vide "Discussion at InterAsian Relations Conference", 1-4-1947 and "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 3-4-1947) a world federation is possible of realization and in that case it would not be necessary for countries to maintain armed forces. Some countries today describe themselves as democratic but of course one does not become a democrat by simply saying so. What is the need for an army where there is rule by the people? Where the army rules the people cannot rule.

There can be no world federation of countries ruled by armies. The military dictatorships of Germany and Japan had tried to inveigle various countries into



friendship with them. But the deception did not last long. Today I look around and find Ramarajya nowhere.

People ask me if the rule of the sword and the bullet that prevails today is not the result of my teaching of truth and nonviolence for thirty two years. But does this then mean that for thirtytwo years I have prevailed through lies and hypocrisy? Does it mean that the millions of people who imbibed the lesson of ahimsa from me have after thirty-two years suddenly become liars and murderers? I have admitted that our ahimsa was the ahimsa of the weak. But in reality weakness and ahimsa cannot go together. It should therefore be described not as ahimsa but as passive resistance. But the ahimsa I advocated was not the ahimsa of the weak while passive resistance is only for the weak. Then passive resistance is a preparation for active and armed resistance. As a result the violence the people had been harbouring in their hearts has now suddenly erupted.

Our passive resistance has not been a complete failure. We have all but won our freedom. The violence we see today is the violence of cowards. There is also such a thing as the violence of the brave. If four or five men enter into a fight and die by the sword, there is violence in it but it is the violence of the brave. But when ten thousand armed men attack a village of unarmed people and slaughter them along with their wives and children it is the violence of cowards. America unleashed its atom bomb over Japan. That was the violence of the cowards. The non-violence of the brave is a thing worth seeing. I want to see that non-violence before I die. For this we should have inner strength. It is a unique weapon. If people had realized its beauty all the life and property that have been lost would never have been lost.

If people had learnt the lesson of ahimsa which I had been trying to impart to them over the last 32 years, there would have been no need at present for rationing of food and cloth. If we are thoughtful in consuming food and cloth, there can be no scarcity of either in India. If people learnt to live truthfully and help each other there would be no need for us to look towards the Civil Service. The late Mr. Montagu had described the Civil Service as a wooden structure. Civil servants do not consider themselves servants of the people nor are they employed for the service of the people. They are here somehow to keep the foreign rule going. Ensnared in their offices they issue orders through peons. If we could learn to stand on our feet and give up dependence on the Civil Services there would be no need in India either for rationing



or for the Civil Service today. Some kind of civil service no doubt will be needed for running the administration. If civil servants could change with the times and run the administration to serve the people, then a truly democratic regime could be brought about.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 217–20

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## 129. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 5, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 5, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Lady Mountbatten has been to see me today. She had no particular business with me. I even told her on the telephone not to take the trouble to come and see me. But she said that since I had gone and seen them so many times she felt bound to return the visit. I pointed out that I only went to see the Viceroy on business. But she was firm and she came. She has simple ways. She came and squatted down as we are squatting here, and inquired after everything. She asked how we find it here and listened with interest. I told her that I lived here among the sweepers. I also told her that I lived in a temple which was clean as it ought to be. If she wanted to see the living conditions of the sweepers she should visit their quarters which were nearby. She visited the sweepers' quarters and inspected the condition there with much interest. I did not go with her because crowds might have collected. Then she went to Harijan Nivas where Harijan boys are given training. She was very happy to see it.

I have today received a letter which I had not intended to deal with here. (It was from the editor of Ajit, an Akali daily of Lahore.) But now I feel that I should not keep it over till tomorrow. What has happened among the Sikhs on the issue of division of the Punjab is distressing. Formerly, there was no distinction between the Hindus and Sikhs. All the poison was spread by Macauliff who wrote the History of the Sikhs. Since Macauliff was a well-known historian, everyone swallowed what he said. The Granth Sahib of the Sikhs is actually based on the Hindu scriptures. Sikhs are a brave community. But their number is small. If Punjab is divided Sikhs must be divided too. The letter says that the Sikhs who have now come over to East Punjab will be alright. But what will happen to the Sikhs in West Punjab, he asks. Will the Congress help if they find themselves in trouble? I can only say that those who are brave do not need anyone's help. They should only look to God for help. And why must you assume that the Sikhs in West Punjab will find themselves in trouble? If something happens to them, do you imagine that the vast masses of people in India will look on indifferently and do nothing? The Sikhs therefore should not worry.



The Bill that has been introduced in the British Parliament will very soon be enacted into law. India will then be divided into two Dominions, that is to say, the British Commonwealth will have two new members. The Bill has 20 clauses which I have read. I cannot say that it has any ambiguity or that the English have used a language which can bear different interpretations.

No Englishman wants to deceive us. But the Bill certainly contains the poison. That poison we have drunk and so has the Congress. The British carried on their rule in India for 150 years and the British Government accepted the fact that politically India was one nation. They also tried to develop it as a nation and to some extent they succeeded also. Before them the Moguls had made a similar effort but they were less successful.

Having first unified the country, it is not a very becoming thing for them to divide it. I do not say that was their intention. The Cabinet Mission too had treated India as one single country and had produced arguments in support of this assumption. Today those arguments have become irrelevant. Thus the Bill in creating two Dominions gives us poison. It is true that both the Congress and the Muslim League gave their assent to the Bill. But accepting a bad thing does not make it good.

What the Quid-e-Azam used to say has come to pass. I think one can say that he has won a complete victory. In my view the Bill puts to test all the three parties including the British. It makes us a Dominion but that is only a temporary phase. The Governor-General will have to put his signature to the Constitution that the Constituent Assembly has framed. He cannot change even a comma of that document. The same thing will happen in Pakistan. If after the constitution comes into being the two Dominions proclaim their independence from the British Commonwealth, nobody can stop them. It seems to me that that is what they will do. Of course all these things belong to the future and nothing definite can be said at present. What is clear at the moment is that India is now broken up into two self-governing Dominions.

The British have also given rise to a situation which will be yet another test of their bonafides. All the various Princely States in India ought to have been brought within the Indian Union. The present dangerous situation should not have been allowed to remain.



The supporters of Pakistan have now got what they wanted. It may not be very much in terms of land area but they have been brought on a footing of equality. Till recently when the fight for Pakistan was on I was unable to understand what Pakistan meant. Even today I cannot understand it. The outline of Pakistan will emerge after its Constituent Assembly gives shape to its Constitution. But the real test of Pakistan will be the way it treats the nationalist Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan. Then Muslims themselves have various sects; there are Shias and Sunnis and various others. It is to be seen how these various sects are treated. Will they be friends with the Hindus or will they declare war against them? Will they perhaps take it into their heads that they are masters and all the rest are slaves? They will have to furnish answers to these questions in their Constituent Assembly.

India too has to show whether the Muslims in India will be treated as friends or as enemies. To me all religions are one. They are branches of the same tree. All religions worship the same God. Formerly there used to be wars over religion in Europe too. But now there is a new climate in the making. People have got so fed up with such strife that they are even giving up God. If this is the way the world is moving, how long can India be kept behind?

To those who consider India one nation the question of majority or minority does not arise at all. This Bill in a way is a test for all the parties. If we pass the test, we can accept it as a godsend. If not it will act as a noose for us.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 220–4

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## 130. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 6, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 6, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I believe that the N.W.F.P. referendum will begin tomorrow. I have advised Badshah Khan and his ministers not to cast their votes either way. I have offered similar advice to the League. It is of course left to them to accept or reject it. I shall advise the Khudai Khidmatgars to cease this mutual strife.

With the division of the country our army also is to be divided. Does it follow that the two sections of the army should engage in mutual warfare? The Congress has a long history of anti-militarism. Ever since the Congress was formed, ever since the time of Dadabhai Naoroji, the G.O.M. of India, Hume, Ferozeshah Mehta and Tilak, we had been complaining that while the expenditure on education was insignificant, huge sums were being spent on the army. The army in fact had been created so as to keep the 40 crores of India under subjection. Then there were the French in some parts of the country and the Portuguese in another part. Clive was worried about the danger posed by the French and the Portuguese settlements and he created an army to keep himself safe from the danger. There was also a further fear. Afghanistan was a conglomeration of tribes and Russia might launch an invasion across Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding the army we were able to hold our own against the British. But our ahimsa was not the ahimsa of the strong but of the weak. I showed the way of passive resistance and we did not prepare ourselves for armed resistance. But the army still remains. Why? It is a matter of shame. The way things are today it looks as if both the countries would be increasing their armed forces. If one country increases the army the other will do the same. The Pakistanis will say that they must increase their armed forces to defend themselves against India. India will repeat the argument. The result will be war. The question is, shall we spend our resources on the education of our children or on gunpowder and guns, and give our youth military education?

Pakistan does not believe in peace. They say the Koran does not say anything about it. But I ask you, what are you going to do? Will you do the same?





If we are given Dominion Status we remain two countries. If we become independent we still remain two countries. But have we become two countries in order to fight? What the British have done gives me no cause for satisfaction or for pride. To me the future appears dismal. When I think about it I shudder. If India and Pakistan go to war and one defeats the other what good does that do? I am in the dark. May God show us light. "From darkness lead us to light."

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 224–6

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## 131. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING. July 7, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 7, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Last evening I told you why it was that the prospect of freedom that is about to be ours did not fill me with joy. Today I wish to tell you how you can turn a bad thing into a good thing. What has happened has happened. Nothing is to be gained by brooding over it or blaming others. In legal terms it will be only a few days before freedom comes into effect. All the parties have arrived at an agreement and they cannot go back upon their word. Only God can undo what man has decided to do.

The easiest way would be for the Congress and the League to come to an understanding without the intervention or the help of the Viceroy. In this the League would have to take the first step. I do not in the least imply by this that the decision about Pakistan should be undone. It should be taken as final, no more open to discussion now. But if ten representatives of either party sit together in a mud hut and resolve that they will not leave the hut till they have arrived at an understanding, then I can say that the decision they arrive at will be a thousand times better than the present Bill which is before the British Parliament and which envisages the setting up of two Dominions. If all the Hindus and Muslims who come to see me or write to me do not deceive me, then it is clear that no one is happy with the division of India. They all accept it against their will.

There is also another method, perhaps as difficult. The army is going to be divided—the army which so far had one single purpose - whatever that purpose might have been. This division of the army certainly fills the heart of every patriot with fear and misgivings. Why are two armies being created? Are they to defend the country against foreign aggression or are they to fight against each other and prove to the world that we are good only for fighting and killing each other?

I have deliberately painted before you this frightful picture so that you may be warned. The way to escape this is, at any rate in my view, attractive. Will the Hindu masses and all those who have taken part in the struggle for freedom pass the test today? Will they rise up and say that they have no need for an army or at least take a



pledge that this army will not be used against their Muslim brethren whether they be living in India or Pakistan. By saying this they will turn their thirty-year-old weakness into strength. Maybe the method I suggest will be considered foolish. However, I must say that God has the power to turn foolishness into wisdom as He has done so many times in history. Those who have set out on the dangerous course of dividing the army should pay heed to what I say.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 227–8



## 132. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 8, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 8, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I am ten minutes late. I apologize to you for it. I had so much to do and so many people came to see me that I could not free myself earlier. Whatever I say these days, I say with great deliberation. I first prepare the notes of what I intend to say and only then speak. Today I kept writing for a long time and then went out to wash myself. The girls came to remind me that it was time but I did not hear them. The result has been this delay.

A friend has today written me a letter in English. He says, “I do not know the national language. My language is Tamil. If I write to you in Tamil, you will have difficulty in understanding it even if you know a little Tamil. I therefore write in English.”

As you know I want everyone to write to me in his own language. The best thing would be for everyone to learn the language of North India which is Hindustani—midway between Hindi and Urdu. The writer has quoted some lines from Bernard Shaw. Bernard Shaw has hit out at the English. He displays very pungent humour. He says that the English are never wrong. They do everything on principle. They fight on principle and plunder on principle. They enslave us only on principle. They killed their king to uphold democracy. Copying Shaw the correspondent makes fun of me and says that in the cause of freedom the British are dividing the country into two. But I know English better than anyone else. They are leaving India because they know that they can derive no economic gain from continuing their rule in India and they have also realized that politically they can no longer keep us in subjection.

During the First World War Martial Law was introduced in one part of the country. During the Second World War Lord Wavell brought the whole of India under Martial Law. But now the English have realized that that kind of thing cannot go on, that keeping India in continuous subjection might be a financial liability. They therefore want to quit. There are still two ways to save the country as I explained to you yesterday. The English still control power. They have a large army here and till that



army has left we cannot really say that the British have left. They can still make their presence felt. The British want to dismember the country. Their going should not be a signal to Hyderabad, Travancore and others to declare themselves independent. Where then would India's freedom? It has to be admitted that some of the recent events have created doubts in the people's minds about the intention of the British. But so long as their bad faith has not been proved I shall not judge them. It is of course true that the British have been shirking the right step that should be taken concerning the Indian States. But if they leave India in a situation where the various parts fall apart and start fighting against one another there can be no greater blot on their prestige.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I pp. 229–31

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### 133. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 9, 1947

(The Hindustan Times, 10-7-1945, reported that Gandhiji began by referring to the bhajan which described love as the highest thing in the world—the best unifying force. Yudhishtira performed the yajna because he wished to become the servant of his people through love—in other words ahimsa. He preferred service to kingship and thereby was a true king.)

NEW DELHI,  
July 9, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

You will ask me why I went to see the Viceroy (For the Viceroy's note on the interview, vide Appendix "Lord Mountbatten's Note on Interview with Gandhiji", 9-7-1947.) today. Freedom is not yet ours. There is only hostility. They stop the trams as they like, they stab and loot. Freedom is like the sun but it does not seem to me that it is coming. The Viceroy calls me his friend. How can I be his friend? I am a friend of the sweepers, of the poor.

The writer of the letter I spoke<sup>3</sup> of yesterday reminds me that in 1940 I had said that I found violence in the air. He asks if I found violence in the air then, what do I find now? He has the right to ask. It cannot be said that things are going well in India. People are stopping trains, indulging in arson and plunder and stabbings. This is anarchy. People embezzle funds and adopt improper methods to make money. Others quietly part with money. There is untruth, violence, hatred and distrust in the air.

Against this background comes the declaration of June (Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 8-7-1947.). Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have agreed to see India dismembered. Then came reports in newspapers of thefts, looting, arson and murders. The correspondent sarcastically asks me if this is my idea of love. He says I have been a votary of truth and asks where that truth is now. Now the only question is, who is higher and who is lower? Where is the tolerance I have been talking about? If it is not there, who is responsible for it? Is it the Viceroy or is it someone else?

My answer is that it is true that there is a stench everywhere. I say I am responsible for it. For thirty years I have been telling the country to follow truth and non-violence. If my advice had been heeded, the result would have been different. You judge the tree by the fruit. If the English go, does it mean that law and order should also go with them? Even people who talked that language of satyagraha had harboured thoughts of violence and intended at the very first opportunity to take to



arms. The swaraj I had dreamed of is still a long way away. I do not wish to be a witness to this internecine strife. I do not wish to shed tears over what has happened in Multan, Rawalpindi, Garhmukteshwar, Bihar and Bengal, for I am a soldier. Nor do I wish to die. Neither the Hindus, nor the Muslim, nor the Sikhs can ensure their survival through the madness that has overtaken them. Money can be earned by the sword but no merit. The only way is for us even now to take to the path of non-violence. Therein alone lies our good and that of the world. Humanity demands that the British should bring about reconciliation between the two parties, between the two armies. I hope that the days that are left will be enough to achieve this. Then there is the question of the States. Fifteenth of August is the last day. There is still time. If reconciliation cannot be effected before that date, then I fear it will be too late. The British are stronger than we. They have immense military strength. Those who imagine that the British are finished as a military power are mistaken.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 231–3

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## 134. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 10, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 10, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I am often asked, now that Pakistan has been conceded, what is the duty of those of us who are in the Indian Union? I have spoken on this question many times but it comes up again and again. One possibility is that India and Pakistan will be enemies. The Muslim League often says that Hindus and especially the caste Hindus are its enemies. Must then the Hindus also consider the Muslims their enemies? At least that is not my way. And in my old age I cannot give up my way. My humanity tells me that the whole world is my friend. Cutting each other's throats will not bring good to anyone. Friendship does not mean appeasement. A friend does not seek to appease another friend. If harsh words have to be said, they must be said. I have been asked, if I am against appeasement, what else have I been doing? When in 1944 I trudged my way in the sun on eighteen successive days to the Qaid-e-Azam's house I was doing my duty. I did not seek to appease the Qaid-e-Azam. Had he accepted what I went to offer him all this blood that has now been shed would never have been shed. And all this poison would not have been spread. Also there would have been no third power in India and even after the formation of Pakistan, India would have been one. My talks with Mr. Jinnah were friendly. Appeasement today has a bad connotation. When Germany and England were hostile to each other, Chamberlain, who was the Prime Minister at the time, had sought to appease Hitler. It is not my view but that of many Englishmen that, had Chamberlain not chosen the path of appeasement, history would have been different. But since I do not consider anyone my adversary why should I go out to appease anyone?

Will the temples and the Gurudwaras in Pakistan be destroyed? My feeling is that they will not be. Will they stop the Hindus from going to the temples? I do not think that this is the meaning of Pakistan. Has not Daulatana Saheb said only today that none but enemies of Islam would say that Hindus and Sikhs could not follow their faith in Pakistan. If the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan really get the same justice as the Muslims then I have not the least doubt that Islamic democracy is a lofty thing. If they consider all mankind as having descended from Adam, how can they stop the followers





of other religions from worshipping God in their own different ways. I think that Daulatana Saheb means what he says. I shall ask the Hindus of Punjab and N. W. F. P. not to flee from their homes in fright. The Golden Temple is in Amritsar but what will happen to Nankana Sahib (Where on February 20, 1921, a number of Sikhs were killed; vide “Letter to C. F. Andrews”, 22-2-1921.) for which the Sikhs have made such sacrifices? It has to remain in Pakistan. There are so many Hindu temples in Hyderabad. I do not say that Hyderabad will become a part of Pakistan. Ninety-five per cent of the population there is Hindu. If all those Hindus are included in Pakistan, what will be the meaning of Pakistan? The great Jama Masjid will be in the Union. Shall we forbid the Muslims to say namaaz there? Then there is the Taj Mahal in Agra. And a Muslim University in Aligarh. Will Muslim students be stopped from studying there? Is there a place that does not have both mosques and temples? I find both wherever I go. Why then do the Hindus from Punjab, Sindh and N. W. F. P. want to flee to India? They should be brave. We have no use for the bravery that consists in burning down houses and killing innocent children. It is not bravery. It is devilry.

But if people do leave their houses in Sindh and other places and come to India, must we drive them out? If we do that, how can we call ourselves Indians? With what face can we shout Jai Hind? For what had Netaji fought? We are all Indians whether living in Delhi or Gujarat. They will be our guests. We shall welcome them saying that India is their country as much as Pakistan. If Nationalist Muslims also have to leave Pakistan we shall welcome them here. As Indians we all have the same status.

There are still thirty-five days for August 15. Let us cease to be beasts and become men. We have all been put to the test and that includes the British. I have just received a telegram from Noakhali saying that now that Pakistan has come into being the Hindus who had suffered there are not likely to get any compensation. Why should they not get compensation? With Pakistan established it is all the more the duty of the Government there to protect the Hindus. The telegram also says that those who have committed murders and who are at present in prison are likely to be freed. I hope this will not be. The Pakistanis must demonstrate that the Hindus living in Pakistan will not be harmed in any way. Then we shall have reason to celebrate 15th of August as Independence Day. But if this does not happen, this independence is not for me nor, I am sure will it be for you. A lot can happen in these thirty-five days.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 234-7



## 135. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 11, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 11, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

A co-worker writes from Noakhali: “When you came to Noakhali you talked so much about doing or dying. Now if you do not come here before the 15th of August, you will repent.”

I admit that if I do not go to Noakhali before August 15, I shall repent. Why am I in Delhi? I ought to be either in Bihar or in Noakhali. I am restless here. I was not so in Noakhali. I walked long distances every day, visited ever new villages and met an immense number of people both Hindus and Muslims. I did some work in Noakhali, also in Bihar. There is a fire raging inside me. That fire will not rage after I go to Noakhali. I ask you to pray that God may quickly send me to Noakhali.

I have not forgotten my pledge to do or die. From Noakhali I went to Bihar, for whereas in Noakhali only a few hundred people had died, in Bihar thousands were killed. So for me Noakhali and Bihar were alike. From there Jawaharlal summoned me here. Kripalani also sent me a wire calling me here, but what have I achieved here? Of course many people retort, “What could I achieve in Noakhali? If there is a settlement concerning the whole of India, there will automatically be a settlement concerning Noakhali.” But I proceed the other way. I had learnt when still a child the formula, “As in the microcosm so in the macrocosm.” My untutored and rustic mother also taught me to begin with myself and not to bother about the world. There is God to look after the world. I must therefore keep the pledge I made in Noakhali.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 237-8

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## 136. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 12, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 12, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Today I have received a letter from a friend which says: “What is happening in the country today is very bad. People who went to jail during the satyagraha movement think they have done something very big which should entitle them to be Prime Minister or Minister or Parliamentary Secretary or Governor of some province. They think they should have a motorcar. I have also been to prison twice and once I was with you in Yeravda. But I have remained a beggar and no one has ever bothered me!”

If someone has been to jail, has he done a favour to India? If this sort of mentality persists, I fear the Congress will perish. Those who are in the Congress should not even dream of such things. Arguing thus a Congressman may say that, since he has been to jail, his son should be married to the best girl in India or that his daughter should be married to the best young man in India. Jawaharlal has not become the VicePresident or the Prime Minister because he has been to jail. If he does not get his salary, he will not starve. Rajendra Babu might have become the Chief Justice of Patna High Court but he voluntarily gave up practice and chose to live the life of a fakir. Rajaji also has not become a minister by virtue of his jail-going. If it is not my contention that they are all angels. They are men like us and all men make mistakes. And how many of us can be absorbed in Government offices? It is an unworthy thought and should be given up. We must never think that we should get some reward for having gone to jail. The reward of doing one’s duty lies in the duty done.

I have been asked: “Whereas in Pakistan Mr. Jinnah has been made Governor-General, here in India it is the Viceroy who has been made Governor-General. Why should this be so? The battle for India’s freedom was fought by the Congress. The Muslim League has had no part in it. Whenever the Congress resorted to civil disobedience or Satyagraha the League refused to co-operate. Even so the Congress cannot get an Indian as Governor-General. This is not just. This will mean that we shall be safe only if we kowtow to the British or we shall die.” I shall say that under the scheme that will come into effect on August 15, it does not matter whether the



Governor-General is an Englishman, a Frenchman or a Dutchman, whether he is a brownskin Indian or a White or a Negro. If I had my way a Harijan girl would be the Governor-General. So if Lord Mountbatten becomes the Governor-General he will still be a servant of India. You will say this is the kind of talk to pacify children. Mountbatten, who is a scion of a Royal family, will not be anybody's servant. But I am not deceiving you. I do not expect any reward from Lord Mountbatten. So long I have been fighting against him. Maybe you will say that the Congress leaders have been deceived by him. Do you mean to say that Jawaharlal, Sardar and Rajaji are so soft brained as to be taken in? True, as I have been saying what I had wanted has not come to pass. But Mountbatten will be Governor-General because we want him. If we did not want him he would not hold that office. But Mr. Jinnah may have chosen to be Governor-General in order to show off. We should not be jealous and we should not be angry. He wants to show to the world what Islam is. Let us see whether he makes of himself a master or a servant. If even a single Sindhi flees, then the responsibility for it will rest on the Governor-General of Pakistan. He will have to be just to all, like Abubaker or Omar, or Ali. I do not say they were all non-violent. But I have in mind their bravery and their chivalry. I understand from the newspapers that originally the idea had been for India and Pakistan to have one Governor-General in common. But Mr. Jinnah later went back on his word. Who was then to prevent him from becoming the Governor-General of Pakistan? In my view he did not do the right thing. When he had once agreed he should have accepted Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General and later if something had gone wrong he could have removed him. Now Islam is to be tested through Mr. Jinnah. He is assuming the Governor-Generalship of Pakistan with the whole world as witness. The world will now wait to see what special virtues Pakistan displays under him. The Congress has always been fighting against the British. Jawaharlal is a simple-hearted man. But the Sardar is a fighter. He used to quarrel with me because I trusted the British. When he himself has been caught up in their wiles, what can you or I hope to do? When he agrees that the Viceroy should be the first Governor-General of India, why should we object? We shall see whether he will serve India as Governor-General or betray her. It will be a new experience. There is wisdom in this and we have nothing to lose. After all, we accepted Dominion Status on the advice of the Viceroy. He is an Admiral and a great warrior. Let us have him and if he does not come up to our expectations we can always fight with him.



When I went to see the Viceroy he confided in me that the young man to whom Princess Elizabeth had been betrothed was like a son to him and he hoped that I would write a few words of blessings to him. So when the Viceroy's daughter (Pamela Mountbatten) came to see me two days ago I gave her a letter of congratulation addressed to the couple. She is such a sweet girl. At the prayer I offered her a chair but she declined the offer and sat down with us on the duree. And today I learnt from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur that the young Princess who has got engaged to be married will be the future queen of England because the king has no son. The Viceroy too has no son. Anyway if the Viceroy had been a bad man I wouldn't have been so free with my blessings. I do not consider him a bad man. If Jawaharlal or Sardar Patel had become Governor-General in his place it would have been a dangerous thing. Besides, the Governor-General wields no effective power. He will have to act on the advice of Jawaharlal and his cabinet. He will only be a figurehead.

But we have got into the way of thinking that Lord Mountbatten has great status and the English are capable only of devilry. Lord Mountbatten therefore will have to prove his honesty and love of justice and I am sure that he has come to India to do only justice.

Many Muslims come to see me these days. They too are nervous about Pakistan. One can understand Christians, Parsis and other non-Muslims feeling uneasy, but why Muslims? They say they are treated as Quislings, that they will receive even worse treatment than the Hindus in Pakistan and after full power has been transferred to Pakistan their association with the Congress will be considered a crime according to the tenets of Shariyat. I do not agree that this is the meaning of Islam. What crime was committed by the Congress having Muslims within its fold? Do Muslims by associating with the Congress become criminals? Do they not say Kalma or perform the namaaz? Has Islam changed so much since the time of the Ali Brothers? How can nationalist Muslims be called Quislings? I do hope that Mr. Jinnah, while he protects the non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan, will also at the same time accord protection to these Muslims.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 239-43

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## 137. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 13, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 13, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

There have already been two occasions when I was late for prayer. It happened again today. I did my best to be here before 7 o'clock but I did not succeed. I went to see the Viceroy. Since I am vegetating here I have to be doing something. So many things are happening here and a person like me has to be saying something or other. I went to the Viceroy at four expecting to be free early. But there were various other people there and the result was I got delayed. However, I am very happy to observe that the prayer started punctually.

There has been a Press conference addressed by Mr. Jinnah. A report of it has reached me. He holds out the assurance that the minorities in Pakistan will not be put to any hardship. They shall be accorded the same treatment as Muslims. The Hindus will be free to visit their temples and the Sikhs their Gurudwaras.

Of course, I cannot take anyone's word at face value. Even today in Pakistan carnage and arson are rampant. This is happening in the Indian Union too. Who is doing this? Is it only the Muslims or are Hindus too responsible for it? I am flooded with letters of all kinds. People ask why they cannot live in peace. I ask Mr. Jinnah when his assurance will be put into practice. Will it be effective only after August 15? Sind will be a part of Pakistan. The Muslim League has the most influence there. Mr. Jinnah has become the GovernorGeneral. Still there is a king in England and so long as he is there we are in some way still connected with him through the GovernorGeneral and the Governor-General still remains responsible to the king. Mr Jinnah also remains the President of the League. This further strengthens his status. He should act with justice. Why should Sindhis be running away from Sind? If even a single Sindhi leaves Sind it will be a matter of shame to Mr. Jinnah as Governor-General. The proof of a man's word is his action.

I do not know what has happened or not happened in U. P. But the Muslims of U. P. are walking in fear. They do not know whether they can continue to live there or



not. But why can't they live there, I ask? I ask U. P. and Bihar as I ask Mr. Jinnah: Can Muslims live in those provinces or not?

We have at last rid ourselves of the British. There was a time when they made us fight against each other. That time is now no more.

The Muslims of U. P. have a grouse over the proportion of Government jobs to be given to them. They say that whereas up to now they held between 60 and 70 p. c. of Government posts, now it is proposed that they should have only 14 p. c. according to their population ratio. I cannot share this complaint. When all is said and done, how many of us can have Government jobs? What good can they do to us? And then we take up jobs in order to serve the public, not merely to further our own interest. If what has been the practice so far is continued it will not be just. If the doctors and lawyers have been fleecing the population till now, does it mean that they should continue to do so? If I am asked by someone whether the percentage of jobs so far allotted to them will continue, I can ask in turn who gave them that percentage and how? The Congress fought against the Government and the Government bribed those who fought the Congress. Now the Government will be ours. Why should the Government be obliged to bribe anyone? It is now imperative for us to abolish untouchability. Would the Government have had the courage to open the temples through legislation? When I see that in Madras one temple after another is opening its doors to Harijans, it makes me happy. This is how dharma can be safeguarded. The same applies to Christians and Parsis. Our Government must be dedicated to raising the status of those who are downtrodden. If it does something for the Harijans, why should the Brahmins complain? Yes, if someone suggests that the Brahmins should be beaten and humiliated, then I shall say 'no, that is bad'.

If I can say anything on behalf of Muslims or the Indian Union, it is only this, that everyone should have justice. If this is ensured then there will be nothing more left to say and the pain of partition will have been forgotten.

People say that the work of partition is finished, that the army has been divided, the navy has been divided. I say we have been weakened. Foreigners will say India has no navy. They will in their own interest align themselves with one or the other Dominion and thus this division of the army will become a cause of civil war. But I hope that Pakistan and India will be friends, that they will be just to their minorities.



Even if we have not learnt the lesson of ahimsa, we should at least from our thirty years of experience learn the lesson that we shall never again become slaves irrespective of whether we achieve this through violence or non-violence. I do not say that it should be only through non-violence. I have been saying this since I was in Bihar. People ask for guns and swords. I say, why do you want these weapons? Proclaim that you will never bow down. I said the same in Noakhali. If we can show that we have learnt this lesson after thirty years of experience, it will not matter whether people are violent or non-violent. If they come and ask me, I shall still say that they must follow only non-violence. If a single individual has to defy the world he can do so only through non-violence. Where there is non-violence, there is God. The sword breaks before it.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 243-6

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## 138. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 14, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 14, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

It is said that these days my speeches are generating feelings of pessimism. Indeed I am advised by some not to speak at all. It reminds me of a story about a painter. He placed a painting on display with a notice that critics might mark the spot where they found the painting faulty. The result was that the painting was soon reduced to a blur of colours. The painter had wanted to show that it was not possible to please everyone and he was satisfied that he had created a good painting. I am in a similar situation. I never speak merely for the sake of speaking. I speak because I feel that I have a message to deliver.

It is true that today there are differences between me and my closest colleagues. I do not approve of certain things that they have done or are doing. But it is not possible for me while I am in Delhi not to express my views on the present situation. What is at the root of these differences? If you go into it you will find that there is only one thing at the root of it. Non-violence is a creed with me while it has never been so with the Congress. The Congress accepted non-violence only as a policy - a policy has the status of a creed only so long as it is pursued. The congress has a perfect right to change its policy the moment it feels that it is no longer necessary to pursue it. But it is different with a creed. It remains forever and it cannot be changed.

In the Congress constitution non-violence is still the policy but in practice Congressmen have changed it. Legal pundits may well comment on it but you and I cannot do so nor should we. Why should Congressmen not change their policy? Besides, the constitution of the Congress says 'peaceful' and not 'non-violence'.

In 1934, at the Bombay Congress, I tried my best to have the term 'peaceful' replaced by the term 'non-violence'. But I was unsuccessful. Therefore anyone can, if he chooses, say that 'peaceful' means 'something little less than non-violent'. In my view there is no difference between the two. But my view is neither here nor there. It is the experts who must decide. You and I must only understand that the practice of Congress today is not in the least non-violent. If non-violence had been the creed of



the Congress, how would it be possible for it to support the army as it is doing today? If the army is so disposed it can crush the people and establish a military regime. Shall I give up the hope altogether that people will ever listen to me? And if they will not listen to me, what harm does it do if I speak out? Why should they seek to stop me?

I have repeatedly made it clear that the struggle that has been waged over the last thirty years was not a non-violent struggle. It was only passive resistance and such resistance is a weapon of the weak. It is not that people who use this weapon do not want to use the weapon of non-violence. It is simply that they do not know how to use it. If we had the courage for the battle of non-violence we would today be presenting to the world an entirely different picture of free India. But today we can show only a dismembered country where brother fights brother and no one can trust another. We are not able to attend to feeding and clothing the people and have nothing to offer those impoverished millions who can see God only in the form of bread and who have no interest in this unending violence.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 246-8

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## 139. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 15, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 15, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The other day I spoke of the temples in Tamil Nadu and Malabar that had been thrown open to Harijan and I especially mentioned the Rameswaram temple. It is a huge temple and there is a lot of superstition concerning it. Some thought that the entry of Harijans would pollute the temple. I have received a letter today complaining that I had not mentioned the Tirupati temple in Andhra Desh which is also a great and ancient temple. The correspondent asks me to rectify the omission and thus give satisfaction to the people of Andhra. I know the glory of this temple but I make no difference between Tamil Nadu and Andhra. Today the atmosphere is such that everyone wants separation.

Some friends from Bengal have been to see me. They say that with the division of Bengal Hindus in East Bengal are haunted by the fear that the Hindus of West Bengal will forget them. If that happens I shall be pained. It will be very bad if Hindus thus forget Hindus and Muslims forget Muslims. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians all are Indians. Religion is a private matter. If I wish to worship God, what power on earth can stop me from doing so? But If Mussalmans, Parsis, Hindus and Christians all consider themselves separate, what is left of India? I admit that it was hardly necessary to divide Bengal. I have lived among Bengali Muslims. I have walked with them in Noakhali. I found only love in their hearts. Why should Hindus have harboured fear of Muslims? The madness that had seized them would not have lasted forever. In my view no harm will come to the Hindus of East Bengal. But many things have happened which we did not want to happen. Bengal has been partitioned. And India and Pakistan are separate countries. But we should proceed forward from what has happened and later put it right. Hindus and Muslims of East and West Bengal have always lived together and speak the same language. If the Hindus of East Bengal treat the Muslims there as friends, would the Muslims still want to kill them? When not a single Hindu considers Muslims his enemies, all will be friends.

They also asked me if the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee will be dissolved since it too has been divided into two. In my view the division of Bengal does



not apply to the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. It should continue in its present form. It is outside Government laws. If it divides itself, then I will say that West Bengal has broken faith. The structure of the Congress today is such that at the very bottom there are village Congress Committees, Mandal Congress Committees, District Congress Committees, then Provincial and at the very top the All-India Congress Committee. Thus there will be Congress Committees in East Bengal as well as in West Bengal. Both will then constitute the B.P.C.C. The Congress belongs to all, to Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others. It is not going to change its character in the days to come. The Bengali friends also wonder whether East Bengal has been so impoverished that it must have even its ministers from West Bengal. But they should welcome this. This will make for cohesion between East and West Bengal. East Bengal no doubt has an overwhelming majority of Muslims. But why should we assume that all Muslims are bad? So many Muslims were slaughtered in Bihar and yet I can say that the millions of Hindus in Bihar are not bad. It is wrong to condemn the whole community for the fault of a few individuals. It only goes to show that we ourselves are not clean, that we are cowards, that we have not the courage of non-violence, for the courage of non-violence is the courage to die, never the courage to kill. There are vast armies in the world but considering the population of the world, they are only a handful. But we have got into the way of never being able to see straight. Whenever there is some incident somewhere we at once ask for the army to be sent. In Noakhali, Bihar, the Punjab and the N.W.F.P., wherever there were riots there was only one demand: that the army be sent for their protection. Why should people who ought to be brave want this?

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 249-51

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## 140. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 16, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 16, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The bhajan that was sung today has been known to me ever since I was a boy just entering high school. It appeared as a prayer in a little book for children called Bal Mitra. It is a good and sweet *bhajan* and it teaches the truth that we should not be too concerned with the body. The body is there today and will be gone tomorrow. It will either be burnt up and become ashes or go to the grave and become mixed with the soil. If it is cast into water it will be eaten up by marine life. In the end it is all the same. What does not sound so good in the bhajan is the words “after me the deluge”. True it has been composed by Kabir, but what of it? I do not like it. In my humble opinion it shows selfishness. Why should the deluge overtake the world after I am dead? In the first place we do not really die. For the self is immortal. As for the world it is ever changing. It is God’s play. But we do not go wholly by what the bhanan says. If we did, where was the need for a Constituent Assembly? Where is the need for all the laws that our leaders are busy enacting? If they had all taken up the attitude of “after me the deluge”, no one would have been doing anything for anyone. This sentiment, therefore, is an expression of extreme selfishness.

Some newspapermen had been to see me. In the course of the talk Dravidastan was mentioned. Dravidastan comprises the Southern part of India beyond the Vindhyas. The languages spoken are Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. I have acquainted myself a little bit with each of these languages and I can say that they are all rooted in Sanskrit. If you hear Telugu spoken you will find that it is full of Sanskrit words. Tamil too has Sanskrit words in abundance. Only they have been given Dravidian dress. Malayalam too resembles Sanskrit. And the same is true of Kannada. I do not treat Dravidastan as something apart from India. The British have made us all one. Everyone living between Kashmir and Kanaya-kumari is an Indian. To make distinctions such as Aryans or non-Aryans or the Aryavrata and Dravidastan is foolish. I am quite certain about this.

That leads to the question of language. We have here two languages, Hindi and Urdu, which were developed in India by Indians. Their grammar is the same. I have



combined these two to form Hindustani. This is spoken by many crores of people. It is the common language of Hindus and Muslims. If you spoke Sanskritized Hindi or Urdu laden with Arabic and Persian expressions such as Prof. Abdul Bari spoke, very few people would understand you. Does it then mean that we are to ignore the four languages of Dravidastan? That is not what I have in mind. All I want is that each province should use its own language for internal purposes, but must learn Hindustani as the national language. All provinces have their own languages. Oriya, Bengali, Assamese, Sindhi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, they are all distinct from Hindustani. Should we rather learn these languages or accept English as our national language? If I were to speak to you in English, very few of you would be able to understand me. We can only have a very meagre smattering of English even if we work hard at it for eight or 10 years. It is enough to drive the country mad. English therefore cannot be our national language. It can be the language of international communication. It can be the language of commerce, though even in this capacity it has not found universal acceptance so far. The national language of India can be no other than Hindustani. While provincial languages must remain, the language spoken by the largest number of people is Hindustani. I have been associated with the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. The kind of language used there is not easy to understand nor is very pure Urdu easily understandable. The language of the masses is Hindustani. We can create as much literature in it as we need. It is the duty of the people of Dravidastan to learn Hindustani alongside their own languages. If they could learn Hindustani in both Devangari and Persian scripts it would be even better. Thus they should be able to have a knowledge of both the languages. But if they want to learn just enough Hindustani to make themselves understood they can learn it in their own respective scripts. In Madras the Hindustani Prachar Sabha is engaged in the work of teaching people Hindustani through their own script. He freely admitted that if it was wrong for the Southerners not to learn Hindustani, it was equally wrong for the Northerners not to learn one or more of the Southern languages which had rich literature. He appealed to members from the South not to ask for an English speech in an Indian audience. They would then soon pick up Hindustani. Let them remember that India could exist as a free country only if it accepted a moral government. Congress as a fighting machine against bondage was held together by its moral force. (This paragraph is from The Hindustan Times.)



It is a misfortune indeed that while we have hardly disposed of one question, with Pakistan formed, we are faced with the demand for Dravidastan. If this tendency persists, where will India be? What can be more paradoxical than that, while as a slave country we remained united, we should begin to break up as soon as freedom is gained?

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan–I, pp. 215-4; and The Hindustan Times, 17-7-1947

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## 141. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 17, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 17, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

We learn from newspapers (According to The Hindustan Times, 18-7-1947, the latest campaign against Indians in South Africa was the boycott of India traders by the European community with threats of violence.) that the Indians in South Africa are being subjected to goondaism. They are being killed. I was in South Africa for twenty years and I know how Indians are treated in that country. There is a large number of Muslims there but they all call themselves Indians. May God give us all the sense at least to call ourselves Indians when we are in a foreign country.

Recently Sarup (Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who headed the Indian delegation to U. N. O. during October-December, 1946.) had been to the United Nations along with Justice Chagla and other to present before the world body the case of the South African Indians. Since then harassment of Indians in South Africa has taken a new form. It is not the law that has been unleashed against them but *goondaism*. If this goes on, how will the handful of Indians be able to live there? Once I marched into the Transvaal with two thousand people. Not a single Boer so much as touched us. Some of them even gave us water to drink. We have plenty of water here. But it is not in such abundance there. People collect water when it rains and keep it stored in tanks. The Boers were friendly and we went wherever we wanted. But I see a different picture today. Now that we have two Governments here, I shall ask Mr. Jinnah and Jawaharalal to send a joint telegram to Smuts (Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950); Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, 1919-24 and 1938-48). Mr. Smuts considers me his friend. As a friend I must entreat him to tell the Whites not to do physical violence to even one single Indian. And if he cannot make himself obeyed, he must resign. Lord Mountbatten too should not helplessly watch. He is an Admiral of the Fleet and is of Royal family. Philip Mountbatten, who is going to marry Princess Elizabeth, is like a son to him. Besides, up to the 15th of August he will be the Viceroy and afterwards the Governor-General. He should therefore make use of these advantages and tell Smuts that India is now a Dominion even as South Africa is, that it is now a member of the vast family that is the British Commonwealth and that the ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa should forthwith stop.





It has been said that Dominion Status is even better than full independence. But till I have tasted this fruit I cannot say whether it is nectar or poison. Maybe it is nectar. But let us first taste it.

My advice to South African Indians is that they should live there as good citizens. Those of them who are wealthy should not neglect their Muslim brethren who are like untouchables there.

I had been asked, now that temples in Tamil Nad and Andhra have been opened to Harijans, what is the situation with regard to temples in the U.P.? There are temples in Hardwar for instance. Can Harijans visit these temples? In Travancore this was achieved long ago. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the State's Diwan, who at the moment is perhaps a little angry with us, had persuaded the Maharaja to abolish untouchability by law. In the U. P., besides Hardwar there is Kashi. Can Harijans visit the temples there? If the Harijans cannot visit those temples, then I shall consider those temples impure. All the religions of the world are today faced with a severe test. Hinduism should in not 99 per cent but 100 per cent marks.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 255-7

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## 142. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 18, 1947

(The first, the third and the last two paragraphs are from The Hindustan Times.)

NEW DELHI,

July 18, 1947

Gandhiji began his speech by drawing attention to the bhajan of the evening and said that he did not know whether it was Mira's. The tune was different from Mirabai's ordinary tune. The sentiment was undoubtedly hers. It said God alone could extricate man from difficulties. Today India was passing through difficulties. Was she to look to man or God to deliver the country? If they believed in the *bhajan*, they were to look to God and none else and they would be perfectly safe.

The *bhajan* just sung is very much to the point, for we are today in great distress. We have no food to eat, no clothes to cover ourselves with. To whom shall we go for help? To Jawaharlal Nehru? Or Sardar Patel? For they have today become the rulers. The Viceroy has given up or is about to give up power. He will now be the Governor-General because we have chosen him to be so. Formerly important officials used to be appointed from London. But now the Indian Independence Bill has been passed and even the consent of the King has been secured for it.

According to the Bill, the Governor-General would be appointed by them, the people of India, and not imposed on India as hitherto. Therefore Lord Mountbatten would be Governor-General of India. By their appointment precisely as a chaprasi would be. This was not said in disparagement. It was a compliment paid to Lord Mountbatten that he had been elected to be Indian Union's servant deriving his appointment from them. It was necessary to say this in order to dispel the suspicion that still lingered in many minds.

All power therefore is now in the hands of our people. But this bhajan says that when we are in distress we do not go to anyone else, we go to God. He alone can help us. If we go about our affairs with God in our hearts, our affairs will prosper, otherwise not. He is the ruler of the world and our good lies in surrendering ourselves to Him.

There is a newspaper called The Dawn, published from Delhi. Every day it is full of abuse. I too have my share of it. I generally laugh it away. But today the editor has published an open letter addressed to me. It is well phrased. He says I have been shouting that Mr. Jinnah is soon going to be put to the test and that I should stop my shouting.



May I ask the editor why the Hindus are running away in fear and despair from Karachi which is going to be the capital of Pakistan? Why are the Hindus frightened? The Sind Hindus are first-class businessmen. Why are they running away to Bombay, Madras and other places? It will not be they who will be the losers but Sind. For they will make money for themselves wherever they go. One finds Sindhis in South America. There is hardly any place in the world where Sindhis are not found. In South Africa they were making big money and they gave it liberally to the poor. They have one vice, viz., drinking. They do not seem to be able to give it up.

The Dawn asks why I address myself only to Mr. Jinnah and the other League leaders. What is happening in the U.P. which is my province? But Sind too is my province. The whole of India including Pakistan is my province. I consider myself a citizen of Pakistan but not because I want to claim any citizenship rights. I seek no office. All I want is just enough to eat, which God gives me. I know nothing about the U.P. Besides, I do not have to blame anyone. The editor of The Dawn is a big man. If he thinks that what I say is not right, why does he bother? There are so many like me who go about saying what they want. But I had a talk with Pantji about the U.P. He told me that so far as he can he tries to protect the Muslims, but that the Government cannot reach everywhere because the Muslim Leaguers are everywhere hurling abuses at the Hindus and provoking them. Occasionally Hindus too lose their temper. Pantiji admitted that what the Hindus did at Garhmukteshwar was not right. According to newspaper reports even the League leaders of the U.P. have praised the Work of the Pant Ministry.

I would like to remind the Dawn editor that even if what he says is right and even if what Pantji says is not the gospel truth, if one Muslims throat is cut in the U.P. there is no reason to cut ten Hindus' throats in Sind or Punjab. I want to live to see the day when this communal madness is forgotten. Whatever be our religion we should be Indians in action. Only then shall we be able to safeguard our freedom.

If the Dawn editor truly wants to serve Islam, I shall tell him that this is not the way of Islam. As for saying things to Mr. Jinnah I have been saying what I like even to Lord Mountbatten and Jawaharlal Nehru. If Jawaharlal's words and actions differ, I shall shun him even though he is a pandit. But I must advise the Dawn editor that he should flush the poison out of his pen. National newspapers contain many things that



are good and many things that are bad. If we can agree and stop publishing news of mutual strife I shall consider that we have achieved something.

Gandhiji said he had a suggestion to make to The Dawn and all the newspapers, whatever their hue, they should avoid all exaggeration. In order to give effect to the suggestion, they should appoint a joint board to which all reports about communal trouble would be submitted and even passed on to the responsible Ministers and, when necessary, given publicity.

His suggestion could find favour only if the editors realized their duty to the public and were anxious that a peremptory stop should be put to all communalism. Division having become a settled fact, it was surely time that the country was allowed to take up the task of feeding and clothing the ill-fed and ill-clad millions. The editors had a weighty part to play in the noble task. To foment trouble was ignoble.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 257-60, and The Hindustan Times, 19-7-1947

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## 143. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 19, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 19, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

There was a meeting of the Working Committee here but there is nothing to report that may be of interest to you. I should like to draw your attention to a disturbing phenomenon and that is that everyone in the Congress wants to climb the ladder by using his connection with the Congress. It is something very dirty. Had Congressmen been only a handful and they had cherished such a desire one could have understood it, but the Congress has many crores of people in it and if they all harbour ambitions of advancement the Congress rule will be killed. There are only two kinds of people who must have jobs: those who have no other recourse left and those who want to serve without any thought of self-interest. Since the Congress now holds the reins of administration in its hands, it now commands huge revenues and the spending of the revenues. If Congressmen should entertain the feeling that a portion of all the money that is spent should go to them and if the tax-payers get it into their heads that they no longer need to pay taxes, it won't do at all. It will mean that we have forgotten our duty and taken to unrighteous ways.

I am being flooded with telegrams. I cannot say I am the only one to receive telegrams. Those who are in the seats of power, I am sure, must be receiving many more telegrams. Some say cow slaughter must be stopped, particularly cows which provide us milk and draught cattle should be saved. Perhaps the friends sending the wires do not know that even when I was in South Africa I was a devotee of the cow. And if we are devoted to the cow we have got to protect her. Unfortunately those who ought to be saviours of the cow have become devourers of the cow. People send me wires expecting me to persuade Jawaharlal and the Sardar to enact laws to protect the cow. But I will not do so. I will ask these devotees of the cow not to waste their money on telegrams. Let them spend that money on the cow. If they cannot themselves do so let them send the money to me. I must say that it is we who are responsible for cow-slaughter. We give the cows so little to eat and make the bullocks carry such heavy loads that they become like skeletons. We use the goad to make the bullocks go faster. What right have such people to demand the cow-slaughter be stopped? After all, most



cows are owned by the Hindus. Why do they sell them to slaughter-houses? No Hindu will think of buying a cow with a low milk yield. Goshala people might well buy one for they have money received from donations. The others go to slaughterhouses. I have never seen anywhere in the world such enfeebled cattle as in India. In the name of dharma we are practising adharma. No law that Jawaharlal Nehru or Sardar can enact will stop cow-slaughter. There were laws even during the war, for milk was in demand. Even then milch cows were slaughtered and this will be the case there too. This will be the case in Pakistan.

I have been asked some questions. Here is one: "One understands that the national flag that has been proposed will have a little Union Jack in a corner. If that is so, we shall tear up such a flag and, if need be, sacrifice our lives."

ANSWER: But what is wrong with having the Union Jack in a corner of our flag? If harm has been done to us by the British it has not been done by their flag and we must also take note of the virtues of the British. They are voluntarily withdrawing from India, leaving power in our hands. A drastic bill which virtually liquidates the Empire did not take even a week to pass in Parliament. Time was when even very unimportant bills took a year and more to be passed. Whether they have been honest in framing the bill only experience will show. We are having Lord Mountbatten as our chief gate-keeper. So long he has been the servant of the British king. Now he is to be our servant. If while we employed him as our servant we also had the Union Jack in a corner of our flag, there would be no betrayal of India in this. This is my opinion. But I understand that the report is not true. It pains me that the Congress leaders could not show this generosity. We would have thereby shown our friendship for the British. If I had the power that I once had I would have taken the people to task for it. After all, why should we give up our humanity?

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 260-3

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## 144. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 20, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 20, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Some people tell me—as they have a right to tell me—that what I say these days is not calculated to enthuse the people. They remind me that the political freedom for which we had been fighting, we have at last secured and by and by economic freedom will also come. All that may be true. Nevertheless I cannot rejoice on August 15. I do not want to deceive you. But at the same time I shall not ask you not to rejoice. After all, I cannot expect everything to be ordered according to my wish. I did not want India to be partitioned but it has been partitioned. What good can come of crying over it? Even if something worse had happened, I would have had to put up with it. India's partition has grieved me more than it could grieve you. I have been a rebel all my life. How can a rebel cry? When I went to Noakhali I found people crying and I wiped their tears. I told them nothing was to be gained by weeping for the dead. But the people in whose hands we have entrusted the reins of power are big people. If they say that we should have celebrations on Independence Day, then you should do so. You should not worry why Gandhi does not join in the celebration. The Congress does not force anyone to celebrate. That I shall not celebrate does not mean that the British will not be leaving. By August 15, a number of British officers will have already left the country. Those who remain will stay under our authority. They will be appointed not from London but by us.

Unfortunately the kind of freedom we have got today also contains the seeds of future conflict between India and Pakistan. How can we therefore light the lamps? I shall consider freedom to have been secured only on the day Hindus and Muslims have cleansed their hearts. Only lately some Muslim League friends from the Punjab have held out the threat that if the Boundary Commission does not decide in their favour they will get what they want by fighting. The Sikhs also are holding out similar threats. But when we accept the principle of arbitration we must go by the award. We should not talk of fighting. I know only one kind of fighting and that is satyagraha. It purifies the soul. If that kind of fighting went on all the time in the world it would be very good



for the world. I shall appeal to my Hindu, Sikh and Muslim brethren that once having accepted the Boundary Commission as the arbitrator they should accept its award.

Burma too will soon be a free country like India. The Burmese leader General U Aung San, has brought Burma to the gates of freedom. What does it matter that he was not a satyagrahi? He was a brave warrior and it is largely thanks to his efforts that Burma is about to get its freedom. It is a great tragedy that an armed gang of assassins killed him and his four comrades. (Aung San with six colleagues was assassinated on July 19 at the instigation of U Saw, a political rival. Vide also “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 21-7-1947.) However far we may be from him, his sudden death is a matter of grief to us. If such things are to continue, then the world has come to a sorry pass. I cannot believe that the assassins were dacoits. I had spent a long time in Burma. I am acquainted with Rangoon, Mandalay and other places. Buddhism is the religion there as it is in the rest of Burma. Why should there be so much blood-shed in a country where Buddhism is the religion? I am sure behind these murders there is factional politics. It is sad that this has happened when Burma is about to gain its freedom. I hope India will take a lesson from this tragedy. Let us pray that in this time of sorrow God may grant comfort to the people of Burma who, like us, have been fighting for their freedom and grant strength to the relatives of the dead to bear the grief. Let us also pray that the hearts of the murderers may change.

The editor of The Dawn has in today’s issue of the paper accepted two of my suggestions.<sup>1</sup> It makes me very happy. He says that he can assure me that in Pakistan Hindus and Muslims will live as brothers. He further says that there should be a committee of journalists which should examine reports of communal riots and should decide what should be published. He suggests that as I am a journalist myself I could become the chairman of such a committee. I must express to him my inability. I do not have the time. Also I am no longer fitted for this kind of work. Besides, I am never at one place for long. How should I then preside over such a body? But if he is serious about it he can meet other editors and do something.

I must finally say once again that only when the minorities both in India and Pakistan say that they are happy can freedom be said to have been really gained and only then will it be time for us to rejoice.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 263-6

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## 145. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 21, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 21, 1947

A friend from Pakistan writes: (Vide “Letter to Krishnadas”, 21-7-1947.) “You in India are talking about celebrating August 15. Have you ever considered how we, the Hindus in Pakistan are going to celebrate it? Our hearts are full of forebodings for that day. Will you say something about this? For us the day will be one for confronting troubles, not at all for celebration. The Muslims here have already begun to frighten us. We do not know what the Muslims in India think. Will they also not be frightened? We are even scared that attempts may be made to convert us on a large scale. You will say that we must ourselves safeguard our faith. This may be possible for an ascetic. It is not so for a householder.”

Mr. Jinnah is now going to be the Governor-General of Pakistan. He has said that non-Muslims will be treated exactly as the Muslims. My advice is that we should trust him and hope that non-Muslims in Pakistan will not be ill-treated. And also the Muslims in India will not be ill-treated. My feeling is that now that there are two States, India can ask for guarantees from Pakistan.

I nevertheless feel that August 15 is not a day for celebration (The rest of the sentence is from The Hindustan Times.) whilst the minorities contemplate the day with a heavy heart. It will be a day for prayer and introspection. Only, if the two countries are to be true to themselves they should start being friends right now. Either all should together celebrate August 15 as brothers or it should not be celebrated at all. The day for rejoicing over freedom will be when we feel sincere friendship for each other. But this is my own individual opinion and nobody seems to share it.

The same friend from Pakistan then asks me: ‘If all the Hindus of Pakistan or a very large number of them come away from Pakistan, will India give them shelter?’

I think that such people should certainly be given shelter. However, if the well-to-do among them want to live in their old style, that will be difficult. In any case, they should certainly be given a place to live and they should be paid for their work. But I shall continue to hope that no non-Muslim will be forced to flee Pakistan out of fear and no Indian Muslim will flee his motherland.



The correspondent further asks: “What will happen to houses and landed property left behind in Pakistan?” I have already said that the Government of Pakistan should pay the market price of the land and houses. The practice in such matters is that the other Government also has a say. In this case it will be the Government of India. But why should I assume that the matter will go so far? It will be the duty of the Government of Pakistan to pay the price of such land and houses to the owners. The correspondent reminds me that I consider myself a practical idealist. But what is going on in the country is in- human. Can nonviolence be practised towards the criminal, and if so, how? My endeavour always has been so to practise my ideal that it should produce results even though I May not always succeed. Whom shall I call a criminal? All those described as criminals by Manu cannot be put to death today. Today attempts are being made to abolish capital Punishment and reformers even go so far as to advocate abolition of all corporal punishment. They say that evil-doers should be considered as sick and hospitals should be set up for them as for those suffering from other diseases. What I mean to say is that everything that goes by the name of scripture should not be accepted as scripture. Only that should be accepted as scripture which takes into consideration the various changes that are continually taking place. Attitudes keep changing from age to age. There are few laws which remain unchanged for ever. And then it is not everyone’s province to punish criminals. This right belongs to the elected body or the government. The government makes laws and then courts are set up to dispense justice according to those laws. If that were not so there would be the risk of all of us becoming criminals. The murders that were committed in Burma were brutal. Now we understand that they were political murders.<sup>1</sup> I am sure that the murderers regarded their victims as criminals. Our terrorists did not accept my advice. They sincerely told me that those whom they murdered were criminals. They never regarded themselves as criminals. That is why I say that he who takes the law into his own hands commits an offence. He commits violence against the people. Only an elected Assembly can dispense with the obligation to be non-violent. What is happening in the world today is brutality.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 266-8

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## 146. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 22, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 22, 1947

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I have received a letter today. It says: 'You have given Lord Mountbatten too much of a build-up. You seem to imply that Lord Mountbatten can do no wrong. But if you will remember at the Second Round Table Conference (in 1931.) you had said that when freedom was achieved the Viceroy's house would be turned into a home for Harijan children or a hospital. Your present attitude is not in conformity with this.'

I do not give anyone any kind of build-up. I want nothing from Lord Mountbatten. And he wants nothing from me. I don't even want titles and he has nothing else to give. It is said that I am always rebuking my own people and never can find anything good to say about them. So far as Lord Mountbatten is concerned he must for the moment continue to live in the Viceroy's house. If I could drag him out of it I would keep him with me. But he has to meet the Princes there and rectify the mistakes of the past. He has to undo the harm those mistakes have done. And he has been made Governor-General precisely because he can work with speed. Giving him this office does not imply any flattery of him. And do you think Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel are the kind of people to flatter anyone? But if the Viceroy has deceit in his heart only he will be the loser. My sixty years' experience tells me that he who seeks to deceive others deceives only himself. But I don't really know whether Lord Mountbatten will remain permanently in the Viceroy's house or whether it will be made into a hospital. Only Jawaharlal and Sardar will know about it.

Another correspondent wants to know if the proposal to retain British officers in the army and the partition of the army has my approval. The correspondent should rather ask me if I approve of the retention of the army itself. Keeping an army, whatever its nature or size, can have no support from me. But times have changed. I had fondly assumed that we were all or almost all non-violent. But my eyes have now been opened. What I had taken to be non-violence, I now see, was only passive resistance. Passive resistance is resorted to by a person who does not have arms. We were simply obliged to be non-violent while we had violence in our hearts. And now with the British withdrawing from India we are spending that violence in fighting



against each other. I am certain that I never had any violence in my heart. But what am I to do about others? They argue that the fact they were non-violent in the fight against the British does not necessarily mean that they should be non-violent now. The fault is mine. My teaching during the last thirty-two years was imperfect. If I am asked I will still say that I am not for maintaining an army. Is India going to be a military State? From Bengal, the Punjab and Bihar there are demands for the army to be sent. If at one place it is Hindus who want the army to protect them, at another it is Muslims. I therefore have no knowledge about how the army is going to be divided and I do not care to waste my time over things which do not interest me.

Four sisters came to congratulate me today because the tricolour with the wheel has been adopted as the national flag of India. I see nothing in it for congratulations. I am told that instead of the charkha there is only a wheel on the flag. But it is all the same to me whether they keep or do not keep the charkha. Even if they cast it away I will still have it in my hand and in my heart.

A friend tells me that the charkha is still there on the flag. Another friend tells me that it is not there, that it has been discarded even while I am still alive. I do not know. What I do know is that even if the charkha was shown on the flag but was not in people's hearts, both the flag and the charkha would be fit only to be burnt. But if the charkha had a place in the hearts of the people, then it would not matter whether it was placed on the flag or not. I only want that the country should have only one flag and everyone should salute it. It made me very happy to hear that in the Constituent Assembly both Chowdhary Khaliq-uz-Zaman and Mohammed Sadullah, saluted the flag and declared that they would be loyal to the National Flag. If they mean it, it is a good sign.

But a telegram received from Sylhet is very disturbing. The referendum there is over but harassment of the people continues. Why have the Muslims there gone crazy? Nationalist Muslims are being killed and the telegram says that someone should be sent there as an observer. Whom can I send? It is only for Kripalani or Jawaharlal to find someone. I feel I ought to go to Noakhali now. Sylhet is close to Noakhali. But how can I go? I am imprisoned here. I am convinced that there is not a word of untruth in the telegram. The sender has signed his name too. It is reported that after the referendum Muslims burnt down a Harijan colony. It is a matter of shame. On one side



we have Khaliq Saheb and Sadullah Saheb saluting the National Flag, on the other side in Pakistan such grisly things go on.

From Karachi comes a letter. It is from a rich man who says that the Pakistan Government has taken over his house. He is in a quandary, for he has nowhere to live. I must say to Mr. Jinnah and the other leaders there that I am shocked. At such a juncture instead of rejoicing we must pray that we may be rescued from this morass and have an opportunity to taste the fruits of freedom, the freedom of which we have so long been dreaming. This is indeed a time for prayer.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan—I, pp. 269–72

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## 147. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, July 23, 1947

NEW DELHI,

July 23, 1947

Before the prayers started someone passed a note to Gandhiji. In it the writer had asked him whether he had seen God face to face. Answering the question after prayers, Gandhiji said that he had not seen God face to face. If he had, he would have no need to be speaking to them. His thought would be potent enough to render speech and action on his part unnecessary. But he had an undying faith in the existence of God. Millions all over the world shared that faith with him. The most learned could not shake the faith of illiterate millions. The bhajan sung during the prayers described the way to see God face to face. The poet asked the aspirant to shed anger and desire and to be indifferent to praise or blame if he expected to reach the blessed state. Gandhiji compared nirvana to Ramarajya or the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The dream of Ramarajya was far from realization. How could it happen when they had all along been nursing violence in their hearts under the garb of non-violence? (This paragraph is from The Hindustan Times, 24-7-1947)

Today I wish to say something about salt. People say there was a time when I had marched to Dandi for salt but today there is no salt to be had or, if there is, an exorbitant price has to be paid for it. I can only bow down my head in shame. People say that although salt tax has been abolished it has not affected the price. Salt is not rationed but there is black-marketing in it. Traders are so mean that they derive huge profits even from salt. But we have become lazy.

There are many places in the countryside where people can make salt for themselves at no cost. This concession of my agreement (2 Vide "Provisional Settlement", 12-3-1913.) with Lord Irwin even at the time available. If we were not lazy we would be getting salt not only cheap but also clean. The salt available in the market is very dirty. The reason is that people do not take pains. The salt that was given to me in jail I used to clean myself. We have become so selfish today that we cannot even let people have salt at a low price. How can we call a regime Ramarajya where even salt is denied to the people? Salt is needed not only for human beings but also for animals. What I fear is that now as a consequence of partition both the countries will need to increase their revenues and they may impose tax on salt. But will they be so lacking in sense as to



deprive people even of salt? If that happens, too great a price will have been paid for freedom.

[From Hindi]; Prarthana Pravachan-I, pp. 273-4

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