

# Journalist Gandhi

(Selected Writings of Gandhi)

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## PREFACE

I started reading Harijan soon after my arrival in Bombay in June 1939. By then it was the most talked-about journal in India. Printed on hand-made paper it was the voice of Mahatma Gandhi and, by extension, the Voice of India. It was not a news paper in the usual sense of the term. It was more a views paper, conveying to an eager world what the Mahatma thought on a wide range of subjects. And was the range wide! It was almost encyclopaedic. Gandhiji had definite views and had no hesitation in expressing them. He wrote on politics, economics, sociology, religion, and whatever came to his mind in response to questions posed to him by his numerous readers. We youngsters thought that some of his views were hilarious, but we discussed them endlessly nonetheless because even if one did not agree with him, he was provocative in an endearing way.

He did not duck difficult questions but faced them head- on. That was his greatness. His intellectual honesty was disarming. One could be angry with him, but it was impossible to stay that way for long. He elicited strong responses but these, too, were published along with his comments.

Reference has been made to his style. He wrote in a manner that anybody could understand. His sentences were short and he quickly came to the point. It is difficult if not impossible to find a polysyllabic word in any of his writings. He was writing for Everyman so that Everyman could understand him easily. He had no literary pretensions but what he wrote was literature.

This is because he wrote with his heart and not with his mind. He wanted the content to be studied, not the style. If the Mahatma had a style it was not a cultivated one but what was natural to the man. It stunned because of its very simplicity. It carried conviction because of its innate honesty. Till 1942 we learnt a great deal about the Mahatma from the writings of his faithful secretary Mahadev Desai. Mahadev Desai was more than a secretary; he was the Mahatma's conscience keeper. No man could have hoped for a great Boswell.

Mahadev Desai recorded almost every word that the Mahatma said to those who sought his interview. He sat in on the interviews and took down what was said and this was later published for posterity.

That Mahadev Desai died while he was incarcerated along with the Mahatma in the Aga Khan Palace was a blow from which the Mahatma never recovered. One can look at the Mahatma's journalistic forays in either of two ways; as the moralist who took to journalism or as the journalist who undertook a moral crusade. That the Mahatma was a crusader par excellence is unquestionable. He crusaded for morality in politics and in public life. He left his reader - especially all Congressmen - in no doubt as to what he expected of them.

He was serious, but could when the occasion demanded it, be teasing, but purposefully so. He was demanding but this was because he made great demands on himself. He could be strict but he made allowances for human frailty. Pompous he was not. He could not be. His sense of the incongruous never deserted him.

After his death, his disciples attempted to keep Harijan alive. Commendable as the effort was, it had its great shortcomings, for Harijan without Gandhiji was like a body without the soul. Men like Mashruwala then whom there were not more faithful Gandhians tried hard to keep the journal going but they must have known from the very beginning that they had set for themselves an impossible task. It became more and more apparent as the weeks rolled by until ennui overtook the editors and the journal had to be given up.

Harijan presented the Mahatma when he was alive in his many moods: friend, philosopher, guide, politician, statesman, saint. He was all that and much more. He was the complete editor. There never was an editor like him before and there never will be another like him in the future. The times, of course, made the man. But the man contributed to his times in many wondrous ways.

We read him now with a mixture of curiosity and awe, marvelling at his uniqueness in journalist Gandhi'. I am happy that such a work by Sunil Sharma is

now available to the general reader if only to show that such a man once lives amidst us and laboured to the last.

(M.V. Kamath)

Former Editor

The Illustrated Weekly Of India

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In fact, Gandhiji had brought in many new elements which introduced a fresh life in the field of journalism. It was his human-approach-which gave his writings a character. His voice was the echo of humanity - not the voice of a pamphleteer. He wanted to bring a real change in the country and the world.

Gandhiji believed, "The sole aim of journalism should be service. The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind and read the mind of the country and to give definite and fearless expression to that mind."

According to him, a journalist may be a patriot, a party member, or a faithful employee, but his loyalty should primarily be to his readers. Public has the right to know the truth. It must be informed objectively as to what is happening. If the paper loses confidence of its readers, it has lost all that is worth in journalism.

The subject matter he chose was down to the ground. He was able to put the villages of India on the wider and lively canvas of Indian writing.

Unfortunately, Gandhiji's contribution to journalism has not received the due recognition it deserves. I have selected celebrated writings of Gandhiji from 'Harijan' - a gospel of truth, which became the most influential journal involved in the movement for Indian independence. Through its pages readers came to know and respond to the central political currents of the country.

Gandhiji was an ardent fighter for the freedom of press also. He often said, "Freedom of the press is a precious privilege that no country can forego. The liberty of the press is a dear privilege, apart from the advisability or otherwise of civil disobedience." Definitely the Press has power but to misuse that power is crime.

Unfortunately, all his ideals remain a distant dream. As a journalist, Gandhiji's dedication, sacrifice and social concerns are found only in a minuscule section of the journalists.

In my two years in journalism, I have not yet met a journalist as visualized by Gandhiji. Most of them appear to be helping the exploiters. The young journalists are often not encouraged to nurture their latent talents by the senior journalists.

Producing this book has been a matter of great personal happiness. The work was tough, but was made easier by generous help of God, gurus and friends. If this work can be of help to a young and upcoming journalist, my efforts will be worth the while.

Sunil Sharma

## INTRODUCTION

### Editor with a difference

Gandhiji has proved that style is the man. To him words flowed like the rippling rivulet. Like a bird he chirped at ease, and merrily too. His English was Biblical. Some compared it with that of masters like Ruskin or Thoreau.

He was meticulous about the use of English words. He chose carefully the correct word at the right place. Above all, his sentences were simple and lucid. The fact that he wrote from his heart made his writings all the more absorbing.

This style was a complete departure from the one that was in vogue in India when he reached the country. Giants like Shri Surendranath Banerjee, Shri Bipin Chandra Pal, Shri Balgangadhar Tilak, Shri Aurobindo Ghose were writing in their Macaulayan style. These writings were heavy in form and content. Sentences were unusually long. For an average reader these were difficult to follow. Compare this Macaulayan amplitude and richness of phrasing and weight of trajectory learning with Gandhiji's wisely utilitarian, clear and direct language.

Gandhiji not only revolutionized the political thinking of the day but English writing of his countrymen as well. It had no screaming headline, no catchy sub-headings or magic typography. But it was universally read.

His thunder acquires a suave majesty, his appeal his persuasiveness, his confession, his poignancy, as much by proper use of the proper word as, by his personality. Sometimes, he is styly humorous or playful. With him, beauty of expression has to be an humble housemaid to truth.

Harijan was first published in 1933. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru got copies of it while under detention. "I was delighted," Shri Nehru wrote to Gandhiji from Dehradun, after reading the first two copies of Harijan, "To see the old rapier touch of overmuch kindness and inexhaustible patience which extinguishes, or as you say, neutralizes the opponent."

Younger generation of writers got influenced by his style. They tried to emulate him. Gone were the days of pompous style or verbosity. Not only the contributors to Young India or Harijan but those to other papers and magazines also started writing in simple English. A new class of journalists was coming to the fore.

More important than the style was the content of his writing. The subject-matter he chose was down to the ground. Gandhiji was able to divert the attention of the rising journalists and authors from cities to villages. He impressed on them the fact that India lived in her villages; that the journalist's or author's job was to write about village and villagers. Thus he was able to put the villages of India on the wider and lively canvas of Indian writing. The Gandhian era of writing, a golden era came into existence.

Presiding over the Gujarat literary conference on November 2, 1936, Gandhi asked, "For whose sake are we going to have our literature? Not certainly for the great gentry of Ahmedabad. They can afford to engage literary men and have great libraries in their homes. But what about the poor man at the well who with unspeakable abuse is goading his bullocks to pull the big leather bucket? Years ago I had asked a friend, who I am sorry is too aged and ill to be here in our midst, if he could give me something, inspired tunes or ditties, which this man at the well could lustily sing and forget for ever the filthy abuse? I have hundreds of such folks for whom I want real life-giving literature. How am I to do so? I live in Segaoon today where in a population of six hundred a little over ten are literate."

"As I am speaking to you just now, I think of Dean Farrar and his book on the life of Christ. I may fight the British rule, but I do not hate the English or their language. In fact, I appreciate their literary treasures. And Dean Farrar's book is one of the rare treasures of the English language. You know how he laboured to produce the book? He read everything about Jesus in English language, and then he went to Palestine, saw every place and spot in the Bible that he could identify, and then wrote the book in faith and prayer for the masses in English, in a language which all of them could understand. It is not in Dr. Johnson's style

but in the easy style of Dickens. Here have we men like Farrar, who will produce great literature for the village folk?

The Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature was great. As regards the writer's choice of language, one result of the Gandhian influence had been a general preference for the mother tongue or the regional language and occasionally a purposeful bilingualism, the same writer, handling with mastery his own mother tongue as well as English. Besides, whatever the language medium chosen, the stress had been more on simplicity and clarity and immediate effectiveness than on ornateness or profundity and artistry; and this has been as marked in English writing as in writing in the regional language. As regards the choice of themes and the portrayal of character, the Gandhian influence has been no less marked. There has been a more or less conscious shift of emphasis from the city to the village. He tried to emphasis a marked contrast between the urban luxury and sophistication on the one hand and rural modes and manners on the other.

Gandhiji, in fact, brought in many new elements which introduced a fresh life in the field of journalism. As a result of his wide interest, his genius for simplification, his eagerness to reach the largest number of people, and the startling nature of his activities, there was a quickening of life in journalism. Many of his followers were moved to write and publish in the Indian languages, and in imitation of his own direct style they wrote simple prose. Regional journalism began to acquire an importance and there was hardly an area of the country which did not have its newspapers.

Gandhiji's English had been praised by knowledgeable persons. He never made a mistake in the use of this foreign language.

Gandhiji undoubtedly introduced a new and a noble element in the field of journalism. It was his human approach - which gave his writings a unique character. He never looked upon the reading public as target for propaganda. He regarded them as living reality whose interests, tastes and foibles he willingly shared and fathomed in order to bring a real change in the country and the world. He belonged to the people by identifying himself with them and

wrote about their feelings and aspirations. His voice was the voice of humanity - not the voice of a pamphleteer. He wanted to change the human character and was never satisfied by changing a few laws or acts, here and there.

To whom should the journalist be loyal? To the proprietor, one's own self or the particular class he belongs to? This has often been debated with different conclusions. But to Gandhiji, readers were most important. A journalist may be a patriot, a party member, or a faithful employee; but his loyalty according to him should primarily be to his readers. Public has the right to know the truth. It must be informed objectively as to what is happening. If the paper loses confidence of its readers, it has lost all that is worth in journalism.

Progress of science and education was continuously raising the intellectual level of the public. Certain papers were inspired to become promoters of ideals. This was particularly true in the Victorian era when the British press, by and large, started educating people on political and moral values. Gandhiji, when he first started journalism in South Africa, grew in this climate. Though industrial civilization later dominated every aspect of human life, Gandhiji was still preaching high standards and trying to introduce a sense of value through his writings.

The educational mission that the press is capable of accomplishing depends, in a large measure, upon the talent of those who write for the papers. If a journalist possesses personality, he can accustom his readers to follow him into almost every field and, in the end, impose upon them a veritable education. The public is fascinated by the radiation of his personality. The reader is automatically attracted by personal magnetism. If a journalist, on the other hand, is strongly individual, he will, from time to time, make his articles almost always unreadable as he asks too much of the reader. To give his readers an elementary course of politics would demand a great deal of tact, and still more talent. He perforce confines himself to writing in his usual style, which is incomprehensible for the public and often prevents it from taking interest in political happenings. In brief, the writer alone is in a position to link up with the very sources of life an important event, be it political, social or economic

and in a few words, bring it into the strictly human domain which is accessible to all.

This was Gandhiji's magic that made his readers read his writings as gospel truth. His personality would attract readers, his writings would elevate them to a higher plane, would help them in a holy communion with God, which in his case was the truth.

There was not only a new thought but a new language in newspaper writing and what he wrote was the best in political thought and finest in journalistic writings. No editor could escape being influenced by Gandhiji's writings.

Gandhiji sometimes reviewed books. That was also done from the point of view of service to the community. If he would come across a book which would prove useful to the people, he would write about it with his comments. He reviewed, at length, Mr. F.L. Brayne's books on rural upliftment activities in Gurgaon district of Haryana. He reflected on the good points and the bad points of the book vis-a-vis a better solution, as he thought of the rural problems.

He would ignore reference of books if those were not useful. Even in South African days when he had to compromise on small matters for the ultimate good of his paper, he was strict about reviews, in Indian Opinion. In his letter to Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi, dated September 30, 1905, he wrote, "I have seen today the book written by Sheikh Mehtab. Do not take any notice of it in the Opinion." Sheikh, it may be mentioned, was his school mate.

At times he could be highly critical of harmful books. The best example is his review of Miss Mayo's Mother India. Under the title 'Drain Inspector's Report', he wrote in Young India dated September 15, 1927, "Miss Mayo has herself favoured me with a copy of her book. The book is cleverly and powerfully written. But the impression it leaves on my mind is that it is the report of a drain inspector sent out with the one purpose of opening and examining the drains of the country to be reported upon or to give graphic description of the stomach exuded by the opened drains." He wrote at length with supporting extracts from the book and concluded, "That a book like Miss Mayo's can

command a large circulation furnishes a sad commentary on western literature and culture."

Gandhi was a prolific writer. On his way to South Africa from England in 1909, he utilized his time to write the manuscript of the book-Hind Swaraj. It is in the form of 20 brief dialogues between 'Reader' and 'Editor'. It covers subjects like India and England, Civilization, Swaraj, Machinery, Hindu-Muslim unity, Non-violence, Satyagraha, etc. What Gandhiji thought and said and did during 40 years of his active life i.e. from 1908-48, was epitomized in the book. The manuscript was found intact even after many years. Shri Prabhudas Gandhi said, "Turning over the pages of the manuscript, one realises Gandhiji's genius as a writer. In the 275 hand written pages, only three lines have been scratched out. A few words here and there have changed. When Gandhiji got tired of writing with his right hand, he wrote with his left." He finished the whole manuscript in ten days time.

He was later asked as to whether he would like to make any change in the book. He made only one change. The word 'prostitute' used in connection with parliament was taken out. This was done to satisfy the sentiment of an English lady who was annoyed over the use of the word.

What was Gandhiji's attitude towards the vernacular press? Did he like conducting English papers at the cost of vernacular ones? Was he happy in communicating his ideas with readers through the medium of a foreign language? These and many other questions will naturally crop up while discussing Gandhiji as a journalist. He had his definite views on the subject.

Kaka Saheb Kalelkar mentioned an incident which occurred immediately after Gandhiji came back from South Africa. A Parsi journalist interviewed him and as was the custom of those days, started asking questions in English. Gandhiji, politely but firmly replied, "Friend, you are an Indian and I too, an Indian. Your mother tongue is Gujarati, and so is mine. Why, then, do you ask your questions in English? Do you imagine that I have forgotten my native tongue because I lived in South Africa or do you consider it more dignified to talk in English because I am a barrister."

Newspapers widely carried this story. In those days when effective English conversation and European dress were criteria for a successful politician, at least here was a man who was not ashamed to speak his language if he could.

Personally Gandhiji did not like to write much in English though he loved the language and developed a style of his own. He knew that English could not be the national language of India. But so long as the national language, Hindustani, was not developed, he had to choose a medium through which his message could be reached to the four corners of the country. Indian publicists in those days had to be, of necessity, bilingual. Raja Rammohan Roy wrote in Bengali as well as in English. 'Lokamanya' Tilak edited Kesari in Marathi and 'Maratha' in English. Sri Aurobindo Ghose edited Bandemataram and Karmayogin in English and Dharma in Bengali.

Discussing objectives of Young India, the first journal he edited in India, Gandhiji declared, "...I recognise that for a few years to come, until we have accepted 'Hindustani' as the common medium among the cultured classes and until 'Hindustani' becomes compulsory in our schools as a second language, educated India, specially in the Madras presidency, must be addressed in English."

There was a suggestion from a correspondent that the English edition should be stopped to help the growth of Indian language editions, "Should not he give a lead and propagate his ideas through the local language? Otherwise how would 'Hindustani' thrive?" Gandhiji was also, for sometime, thinking on that line. Once he resolved to write for the Harijan in nothing but Gujarati and Hindi, and his articles were to be translated into English.

Gandhiji explained the position thus, "I cannot stop the English edition for the reason that Englishmen, as well as the Indian scholars of the English language consider me to be a good writer in the English language. My relations with the West are also increasing every day.... I do not wish to forget that language, nor do I wish all the Indians to give up or forget it."

Gandhiji's Gujarati style was as commendable as his English style. He set a new style in Gujarati literature about which Shri K.M. Munshi discussed at length, in

the book Gujarata and its literature. Gujarati language is greatly indebted to Gandhiji. It had its heyday while he was editing and writing for Navajivan and, later on, in the Gujarati edition of Harijan. Even earlier he used to contribute Gujarati articles in the Gujarati section of Indian opinion.

His Autobiography - Atmakatha - Satyagraha in South Africa, Arogya vise Samanyajnana were all written originally in Gujarati. So long there were two distinct trends of Gujarati literature. One was the Gujarati style and the other Saurashtra style. Both were pedantic, with liberal use of Sanskrit or Persian. Moreover, there were unnecessary literary flourishes. Under Gandhiji's influence the Gujarati and Saurashtrian trends were not only combined but were made into a powerful people's language. It was simple and direct. There was no verbosity in it, nor were sanskrit or Persian words unnecessarily mixed.

Mr. J.H. Holmes wrote:

"Gandhi's literary achievement is more remarkable in view of the fact that he was never, in any sense of the phrase, a literary man. Unlike his great contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, and his accomplished successor, Pandit Nehru, the Mahatma had no special grace of style. Seldom, if ever, in his writings, did he rise to heights of eloquence and beauty. Memorable passages i.e.-memorable for their own sake are rarely found. Gandhiji's interests were never aesthetic, but rather pragmatic. He had no desire or ambition, no time, to be an artist. His one thought was of his own people, and his struggle to make them free. So he wrote with disciplined simplicity, seeking only to make himself clearly understood. The result was the one most important quality of literary act-namely, clarity. I doubt, if, in all his works, Gandhiji ever wrote a sentence which failed to express with utter precision the thought he had in mind to convey. Gandhiji mastered his medium. He wrought a style which was perfect for his purpose of communication. To read his writings is to think of content and not of style which means a triumph in the adaption of means to ends."

Gandhiji's letters, small or big, official or personal, were pure gems. These were appropriately worded and spoken from heart.

Not only did Gandhiji introduce style in Gujarati, he tried to do something for the children and coming generation as well. Gandhiji tried to write primers for the children. It was a new style that he introduced-in the form of a dialogue-in telling things to the children. The dialogue was between the mother and the child. Gandhiji hoped that the mother in India will, in future, be her child's teacher.

Apart from Gandhiji's writing in original Gujarati, he took a great lead in translating other useful materials into Gujarati language. In fact, he created a team of translation experts in the Navajivan Press. They translated many pieces and books and published them through the columns of the Navajivan.

Gandhiji was interested in the flourish of all Indian languages. Towards the end of his life he tried to learn Bengali. His own handwritings in Bengali can still be found. Even the day before he was killed he wrote a passage in Bengali and showed it to his teacher-Mrs. Abha Gandhiji.

Early in his South African life Gandhiji started to learn Tamil so that he could easily communicate with the Tamil people residing in South Africa. In a letter to Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi dated April 17, 1905, Gandhiji wrote, "I am studying Tamil very diligently and, if all is well, I may be able to fairly understand the Tamil articles within two months at the outside. I am rather anxious to get the Tamil books."

But Gandhiji made it his life's mission to make Hindustani the Lingua Franca of the people. As a nationalist he wanted a common language for the country and, though aware of the richness of the Gujarati literature, did not hesitate to support and foster the claim of Hindustani for this honour. He made all efforts to make the language acceptable all over India and for that he did not spare time, men or money.

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### **The first Gandhiji Journal**

The columns of a newspaper had long served Gandhiji well in his continuing efforts to communicate with those who would hear and respond. His first paper

was Indian Opinion, founded in South Africa in 1903. Gandhiji was responsible for its policy, finances and editing, even though he was not its official editor. The journal was intended to advance the moral, political and social condition of Indians in South Africa. Gandhiji has explained that without Indian opinion the movement for civil rights which he prosecuted for almost two decades in South Africa would have been impossible.

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### **Young India and Navjivan**

Within a few years of his return to India, after more than twenty years of active leadership in S. Africa, Gandhiji once again turned to a journal as both necessary for the promotion of his ideas and programmes and congenial to the style of his growing political leadership. Young India had first been established as an organ of the Home Rule League of Bombay. Soon after the inauguration of the Rowlatt Satyagraha campaign in 1919, Gandhiji took over its editorship. He stripped the journal of all advertising and brought to its pages his message to the Congress party, setting before the country his programme of swadeshi aimed at making every village sufficiently productive to meet its own needs.

In both the weeklies- Young India and Navjivan, his trademark was a straight forward, disciplined style. In simple yet forceful language, he propagated and elaborated his percepts of truth, nonviolence and satyagraha. He advocated inter-caste marriage and Hindu-Muslim unity, urging a many-pronged attack upon all forms of social disability. His achievement was all the greater in that he gained remarkable popularity for his papers while focusing entirely without sensation upon ways to bringing about social change. He had learned to write with telling effect. Rival Gujarati papers declined in popularity, and the circulation of Navjivan more than doubled within a year of his assuming its editorship.

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### **Harijan**

There is no journal with which Harijan can adequately be compared. It was not a newspaper in the usual sense, for Harijan made more news than it reported.

Its inception in 1933, the impact of its suspension in 1940, the drama of its complete suppression in 1942, and its resumption of publication in 1946 were events of historical moments. There were highlights in the challenging decades leading to Indian independence.

Harijan was not a party organ, yet it became the most influential journal involved in the movement for Indian independence. Through its pages readers came to know and respond to the central political currents of the country. Resolutions, policies and decisions of political action taken by the Indian National Congress party were reported and commented upon in Harijan. But beyond that, the journal provided the medium of moral instruction through which Congressmen learned what Gandhiji expected of them. "Let me think aloud", wrote Gandhiji in his editorial. "I hope that Congressmen will make it a point to read Harijan as if it was a weekly bulletin containing instructions for them."

The word Harijan literally means God's people. It was the name coined by Gandhiji to designate the so-called untouchables of India. The journal Harijan reflects the many social and individual concerns which were a part of Gandhiji's complex and continuing analysis of the human predicament. Harijan is indeed a highly political journal, and that is so because Gandhiji directly related the concerns expressed throughout its pages to the political fact that the India which gave rise to the founding of Harijan was a subject nation; freedom, as Gandhiji perceived and publicly pursued it, begins with the individual. And both individual freedom and national freedom are threads woven into the entire fabric of life.

The Correspondence columns of Harijan were unrivalled archives of opinion. Debates conducted through these columns were rich in content and revealed the deepest human concerns. Their universality was suggested not only by the distinguished contributors attracted to the journal from India and abroad (Harijan drew more international contributors than any other Indian publication), but also by their scope and the character of approach and style which was uniquely Gandhian.

Above all, Harijan was Gandhiji's paper. He founded and used it as his most effective means of access to an ever-increasing following. During the eight years it survived him, Harijan provided a faithful echo of his foremost concerns. There can be few public documents which exhibit a great man with such unself-conscious vividness. Gandhiji's own writings, addressed to the day-to-day business of a nation struggling to be free, together with the enchanting diary of his career kept from issue to issue by Mahadev Desai, bring Gandhiji to us with incomparable clarity.

The special value of reading Gandhiji through the pages of Harijan is that of placing what he thought and wrote in context. The journal occupied a good third of Gandhiji's time. Through its columns he meets his correspondents and joins their argument. Reflected in letters to him are the many facets of the tense epoch preceding independence. Hindu-Muslim tensions, social inequities, disabling poverty, civil disturbances, and war. Harijan provided a meeting ground for the East and the West, for defenders and challengers of orthodoxy, for advocates and detractors of policies designed to effect change.

The reader can follow Gandhiji through these columns as he advises, responds, teaches and, above all, searches. He was a great and formidable teacher for the very reason that he had an unquenchable desire to learn. Early in life he had determined to discover how to understand, manage and resolve his own inner conflicts. As he pursued this search, he sought to make his new approaches to conflict meaningful to others and further sought to render these approaches viable on all levels, whether intra-or inter-personal, intergroup or international.

Here, then, is a record of Gandhiji and his works from 1933 onwards, interrupted by suspension of the weekly papers in 1940 and again from 1942 to 1946. After Gandhiji's Death in 1948, Harijan became representative of the dedicated efforts of many of his ablest disciples to develop the implications of Gandhiji's life and work.

Gandhiji's own observations about the objectives of a newspaper were spelled out in Young India, "I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an

aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and present under severest restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non violence."

With characteristic candour about his personal involvement, commitment, and the uses of journalistic writing, Gandhiji added:

"To be true to my faith I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint. I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and vocabulary. It is a training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses, often my vanity dictates a smart expression of my anger a harsh objective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds. The reader sees the pages of Young India fairly well dressed-up and sometimes with Romain Rolland he is inclined to say, "What a fine old man this must be. Well, let the world understand that the fineness is carefully and prayerfully cultivated..."

Gandhiji came to exert a powerful influence on the editors of other newspapers and frequently exhorted them to express their views fearlessly even though they might not support his views or the policies of the Congress party. On occasion, he wrote to individual editors acknowledging the weight of a point in criticism or explaining his point of view in great detail with an earnestness that clearly showed his anxiety to remove misunderstanding.

The first charge of sedition brought against Gandhiji (in 1922) was based upon four articles he had written in Young India. Among the notable statements he made in his defence at this famous trial was one relating directly to the suppression of the press.

"...It has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen...."

The Judge sentenced Gandhiji to six year's Imprisonment, a sentence which was remitted when Gandhiji fell ill in 1924.

Many of Gandhiji's articles were scribbled in the third class compartments of trains as he travelled the length and breadth of India. Among the foremost purposes which they served were those of inspiring his countrymen with courage and promoting the regeneration of national life. By the mid-twenties, Gandhiji was recognized as a Mahatma-great soul-a title with which he never felt comfortable. He had come to measure India's progress in terms of relieving the plight of the most desperate and had dedicated himself to the tasks of far-reaching reform. Satyagraha the complex technique for pressing the active struggle not only for national independence, but also for removal of social disabilities and economic hardship, had been tried and on occasion found wanting. He never ceased the effort to evolve and refine his method.

**ON DEMOCRACY**

## 01. HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS

A valued correspondent has written to me two letters, one issuing a timely warning about the ill effects of hasty decontrol and the other about the possibility of an outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots. I have dealt with both the letters in a letter which has become unexpectedly argumentative and gives my view of democracy which can only come out of nonviolent mass action. I, therefore, reproduce the letter below without giving at the same time the letters to which it is in answer. There is enough in the answer to enable the reader to know the purport of the two letters. I have purposely refrained from giving the name of my correspondent and the scene of action, not because the letters are confidential; but because nothing is to be gained from disclosing either:

"You still write as if you had a slave mind, though the slavery of us all is abolished. If decontrol has produced the effect you attribute to it, you should raise your voice, even though you may be alone in doing so and your voice may be feeble. As a matter of fact you have many companions and your voice is by no means feeble unless intoxication of power has enfeebled it. Personally, the bogey of the shooting up of prices by reason of decontrol does not frighten me. If we have many Sharks and we do not know how to combat them, we shall deserve to be eaten up by them. Then we shall know how to carry ourselves in the teeth of adversity. Real democracy people learn not from books, not from the government who are in name and in reality their servants. Hard experience is the most efficient teacher in democracy. The days of appeals to me are gone. The cloak of non-violence which we had put on during the British regime is no longer now necessary. Therefore, violence faces us in its terrible nakedness. Have you also succumbed or you too never had non-violence? This letter is not to warn you against writing to me and giving me your view of the picture, but it is intended to tell you why I would swear by decontrol even if mine was a solitary voice.

'Your second letter about Hindu-Muslim tension is more to the point than the first. Here too you should raise your voice openly against any soft handling of the situation or smug satisfaction. I shall do my part but I am painfully conscious of my limitations. Formerly I could afford to be monarch of all I surveyed. Today I have many fellow monarchs, if I may still count myself as such. If I can, I am the least among them. The first days of democracy are discordant notes which jar on the ear and give you many headaches. If democracy is to live in spite of these killing notes, sweet concord has to rise out of this seemingly discordant necessary lesson. How I wish that you would be one of the masters who would contribute to the production of concord out of discord!

"You will not make the mistake of thinking that your duty is finished when you have apprised me of the situation in your part of the country."

*Harijan, 11-1-1948*

## 02. CIVIL LIBERTY

Gurudev has given the poetry of Civil liberty. It bears reproduction in a weekly journal like HARIJAN, although the statement has gone round the world. The reader will find it in another column. It is a paraphrase of "Work out trine own salvation", or "Man is his own enemy and his own friend".

Civil Liberty is not Criminal Liberty. When Law and Order are under popular control the Ministers in charge of the Department cannot hold the portfolio for a day, if they act against the popular will. It is true that the Assemblies are not sufficiently representative of the whole people. Nevertheless the suffrage is wide enough to make it representative of the Nation in matters of Law and Order. In seven Provinces the Congress rules. It seems to be assumed by some persons that, in these Provinces at least, individuals can say and do what they like. But so far as I know the Congress mind, it will not tolerate any such licence. Civil Liberty means the fullest liberty to say and do what one likes within the ordinary law of the land. The word 'ordinary' has been purposely used here. The Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, not to speak of the Special Powers Legislation, contain provisions which the foreign rulers have enacted for their own safety. These provisions can be easily identified, and must be ruled out of operation. The real test, however, is the interpretation by the Working Committee of the power of the Ministers of law and Order. Subject, therefore, to the general instructions laid down by the Working Committee for the guidance of Congress Ministers, the Statutory Powers limited in the manner indicated by me, must be exercised by the Ministers against those who, in the name of Civil liberty, preach lawlessness in the popular sense of the term.

It has been suggested that Congress Ministers who are pledged to nonviolence cannot resort to legal processes involving punishments. Such is not my view of the nonviolence accepted by the Congress. I have, personally, not found a way out of punishments and punitive restrictions in all conceivable cases. No doubt punishments have to be nonviolent, if such an expression is permissible in this

connection. Just as violence has its own technique, known by the military science, which has invented means of destruction unheard of before, nonviolence has its own science and technique. Nonviolence in politics is a new weapon in the process of evolution. Its vast possibilities are, yet unexplored. The exploration can take place only if it is practised on a big scale-and in various fields. Congress Ministers, if they have faith in nonviolence, Will undertake the explorations. But whilst they are doing this, or whether they do so or not, there is no doubt that they cannot ignore incitements to violence and manifestly violent speech, even though they may themselves run the risk of being styled violent. When they are not wanted, the public will only have to signify its disapproval through its representatives in the absence of definite instructions from the Congress. It would proper for the Ministers to report what they consider is a violent behaviour of any member of the public to their own Provincial Congress Committee or the working committee, and seek instructions. If the superior authority does not approve of their recommendations, they may offer to resign. They may not allow things to drill so far s to have to summon the aid of the military. In my opinion, it would mount to Political bankruptcy, when any Minister is obliged to fall back in the military, which does not belong to the people, and which, in any scheme of nonviolence, must be ruled out of count for the observance of internal peace.

One interpretation I put upon the India Act is that it is an unconscious challenge to Congressmen to demonstrate the virtue of nonviolence and the sincerity of their conviction about it. If the Congress can give such a demonstration, most of the safeguards fall into desuetude, and the Congress can achieve its goal without a violent struggle, and also without iii disobedience. If the Congress has not impregnated the people with the nonviolent spirit, it has to become a minority, and remain in opposition, unless it will alter its creed.

*Harijan, 23-10-1937*

### 03. RIGHTS OR DUTIES?

"I want to deal with one great evil that is afflicting society today. The capitalist and the Zamindar talk of their rights, the labour on the other hand, the prince of his divine right to rule, the ryot of his right to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

"If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such a thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the ryots to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go as being injurious to the well-being of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so to the same well-being. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment. It is therefore necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties. I venture to suggest that rights that do not directly flow from duty well performed are not worth having. They will be nations sooner discarded the better. A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them excites nothing but contempt. It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But children who flout their parent who is ever ready to do his duty towards them would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world. What I call the law of satyagraha is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing there from."

Taking the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims for his illustration, Gandhiji, resuming his remarks on rights and duties.

"What is the duty of the Hindu towards his Muslim neighbour? His duty is to befriend him as man, to share his joys and sorrows and help him in distress. He will then have the right to expect similar treatment from his Muslim neighbour and will probably get the expected response. Supposing the Hindus are in a majority in a village with a sprinkling of Muslims in their midst, the duty of the majority towards the few Muslim neighbours is increased manifold, so much so that the few will not feel that their religion makes any difference in the behaviour of the Hindus towards them. The Hindus will then earn the right, not before, that the Muslims will be natural friends with them and in times of danger both the communities will act as one man, but suppose that the few Muslims do not reciprocate the correct behaviour of the many Hindus and show fight in every action, it will be a sign of unmanliness. What is then the duty of the many Hindus? Certainly not to over-power them by the brute strength of the many., that will be usurpation of an unearned right. Their duty will be to check their unmanly behaviour as they would that of their blood brothers. It is unnecessary for me to dilate further upon the illustration. I will close it by saying that the application will be exactly the same if the position is reversed. From what I have said it is easy enough to extend the application with profit to the whole of the present state which has become baffling because people do not apply in practice the doctrine of deriving every right from a prior duty well performed.

"The same rule applies to the Princes and the ryots. The former's duty is to act as true servants of the people. They will rule not by right granted by some outside authority, never by the right of the sword. They will rule by right of service, of greater wisdom. They will then have the right to collect taxes voluntarily paid and expect certain services equally voluntarily rendered, not for themselves but for the sake of the people under their care. If they fail to perform this simple and primary duty, the ryots not only owe no return duty but the duty devolves on them of resisting the princely usurpation. It may be

otherwise said that the ryots earn the right of resisting the usurpation or misrule. But the resistance will become a crime against man in terms of duty if it takes the form of murder, rapine and plunder. Force that performance of duty naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that satyagraha brings into being."

*Harijan 28-6-1947*

**ON COMMUNALISM**

#### 04. HINDU-MUSLIM

Thus writes a Khan Bahadur from Delhi

"This is a letter for the Question Box in Harijan.

In your article in Harijan of April 6, you observe as follows:

'I should be failing in my duty if I did not warn the Mussalmans against the untruth that is being propagated amongst them. This warning is a duty because I have faithfully served them in their hour of need and because Hindu-Muslim unity has been and is my life's mission."

I will request you to consider the Hindu-Muslim problem from our point of view. The stumbling block to any negotiations for a settlement of the communal question has been the refusal of the Congress to recognise the All India Muslim League as the authoritative and sole representative body of the Indian Mussalmans. The Congress claims that it speaks for whole India and that it has on its rolls a considerable number of Mussalmans. The very fact that the Congress has made several attempts to come to terms with Mr. Jinnah shows that it is not fully confident of its representative character as far as the Mussalmans are concerned, But do you not honestly feel that the Congress Mussalmans are the real stumbling block in the way of Hindu-Muslim unity, and that it is for their sake that the Congress is not making a serious effort to solve the problem? Believe me, they are a lazy lot who are enjoying their present position because they are in the Congress.

You know what the Muslim masses did to your President in Calcutta where for years he had been leading Id prayer. You also know that they have no courage to address a Muslim meeting to convert the Mussalmans to their point of view. You blame the British for creating Princes, Moderates and Khan Bahadurs like me. You blame the British for trying to create another Ulster in India. Has not the Congress created equivalent Moderates and Khan Bahadurs in Azads, Asaf Alis and Kidwais. Is not the action of the Congress tantamount to creation of a Muslim Ulster?

You may cite the case of Mr. Asaf Ali succeeding in the municipal elections of Delhi. I may inform you that but for a division in the Provincial league and bad handling of the situation Mr. Asaf Ali would have never won the election. I may inform you that even as it is, when Delhi Congress wanted to contest the municipal elections as a party, Mr. Asaf Ali, who is now a member of the Congress Working Committee, had declined to take a Congress ticket. Therefore, Mr. Asaf Ali's election was not a test case; and if, you pardon my saying so, even now let Mr. Asaf Ali re-seek election on a Congress ticket, and I am confident that any league candidate would defeat him. You will thus realise, that your being baffled by the Lahore resolution of the League is not. Justified when Mussalmans have ceased to trust in your file's mission regarding Hindu-Muslim unity. On the other hand they are convinced that the sole aim of the Congress, for the last ten years at least, has been to divide and rule the Mussalmans. I will beg of you to reconsider your attitude towards the League. Please don't trust the Congressite Mussalmans, for they are not only the 'Mir Jafars amongst us, but the enemies of Hindu-Muslim accord and India's freedom."

Just now I am inundated with letters of protest from Muslim friends. Most writers do not argue. They give themselves satisfaction by abusing Pyarelal, who opens and deals with the daily post, gives me only those letters which he thinks I should see. Of these I take notice of those I think I must. In some cases I answer them privately. Therefore correspondents who never receive acknowledgement either through Harijan or the post should know the reason.

There are some Muslim letters of sympathy too. One of them says that in his house he has to listen to wildest criticism of me. No adjective is too bad to use. Much criticism he knows to be false. What is he to do, he asks. Is he to leave the house, or is he to engage in endless disputation and convert his house into a bear garden? I have advised my correspondent neither to leave the house nor to engage in a discussion. If he can, he may put in a mild word when he knows that a manifest falsehood is being uttered and believed.

The correspondence in my possession and the Urdu press cuttings and even some English cuttings from journals owned by Muslims go to show that I am believed to be the arch enemy of Islam and Indian Muslims. If I was at one time acclaimed as their greatest friend and suffered the praise, I must suffer too to be described as an enemy. Truth is known only to God. I am confident that in nothing that I am doing, saying or thinking I am their enemy. They are blood brothers and will remain so, though they may disown me ever so much.

Now for the Khan Bahadur's letter.

I have never understood the reason behind the demand for the recognition by the Congress of the All India Muslim League as the sole and authoritative Muslim body. Why should such an admission be demanded or expected? How is it compatible with a genuine desire for a settlement?

The Congress attempts to represent all. But it has never demanded recognition as such from anybody. The all India status has to be deserved. But whether it be deserved or not, admission thereof is a superfluity. The Congress has never claimed that it represents the whole of Indian Muslims. It has not claimed to represent any single community wholly. But it does claim to represent every single national interest irrespective of class, caste, colour or creed, even that claim need not be admitted by those who deal with it. It should be sufficient consolation to each party that it is considered by the other important enough to seek friendship with.

The Congress has always frankly admitted that it has not on its register as many Muslims as it would like. But it has been proud to have had the support of many eminent Muslims. Hakim Shaheb Ajmal Khan was the tallest among them. Qaid-e-Azam himself was a great Congressman. It was only after non-cooperation that he, like many other Congressmen belonging to several communities, left it, Their defection was purely political. They disliked direct action.

It is wrong to swear at the nationalist Muslims simply because they are attached to the Congress. If they become members of the League, they will become worthy Muslims!!! My correspondent simply does not know how much Congress Muslims are trying to bring about unity. When unity is re-established, as it must

be, I have no doubt that nationalist Muslims will get their due both from Hindus and Muslims.

It is torture of truth to suggest that they are so many Mir Jafars. They are betraying neither Islam nor India. They are as true Muslims according to their lights as members of the League claim to be, It is equal torture of truth to suggest that the Congress is following the British method of divide and rule. The Congress is a political party with one single aim. It would be a bad day for India if the Congress could be proved to have mean motives. Is it mean to woo Muslim opinion by the fairest means imaginable? Rightly or wrongly the Congress does not believe in watertight compartments on a communal basis. If religion is allowed to be as it is, a personal concern and a matter between God and man, there are many dominating common factors between the two which will compel common life and common action. Religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind them. It is a misfortune that today they are so distorted that they have become a potent cause of strife and mutual slaughter.

It will perhaps now be clear why I can have no concern with Asaf Ali Saheb's case. I would grant that he would be beaten in a contest between him and a Leaguer. let it be further granted that such will be the case in the majority of such contests. It will in no way weaken my position. It will prove the superior organizing ability of the League and its popularity among the Muslims. I have not doubted either. My case is incredibly simple. I must not be called upon to make any admissions about the status of the League before thinking of unity through the League. I must not be disloyal to the Muslim nationalists however insignificant they may be considered to be. I ask the Khan Bahadur, the writer of the letter under discussion, to exert his influence to bring the two communities together.

*Harijan, 4-6-1940*

## 05. HINDU-MUSLIM TANGLE

The partition proposal has altered the phase of the Hindu Muslim problem. I have called it an untruth. There can be no compromise with it. At the same time I have said that, if the eight crores of Muslims desire it, no power on earth can prevent it, notwithstanding opposition violent or nonviolent. It cannot come by honorable agreement.

That is the political aspect of it. But what about the religious and the moral which are greater than the political? For at the bottom of the cry for partition is the belief that Islam is an exclusive brotherhood and anti-Hindu. Whether it is against other religions it is not stated. The newspaper cuttings in which partition is preached describe Hindus as practically untouchables. Nothing good can come out of Hindus or Hinduism. To live on the Hindu rule is a sin. Even joint Hindu Muslim rule is not to be thought of. The cuttings show that Hindus and Muslims are already at war with one another and that they must prepare for the final tussle.

Time was when Hindus thought that Muslims were the natural enemies of Hindus. But as is the case with Hinduism, ultimately it comes to terms with their enemy and makes friends with it. The process had not been completed. As if nemesis had overtaken Hinduism, the Muslim League started the game and taught that there could not be blending of the two cultures. In this connection, I have just read a booklet by Shri Atulanand Chakrabarti which shows that ever since the contact of Islam with Hinduism there has been an attempt on the part of the best mind of both to see the good points of each other, and to emphasize inherent similarities rather than seeming dissimilarities. The author has shown Islamic history in India in a favorable light. If he has stated the truth and nothing but the truth, it is a revealing booklet which all Hindus and Muslims may read with profit. He has secured a very favorable and reasoned preface from Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan and several other Muslim testimonials. If the evidence collected there reflects the true evolution of Islam in India, then the partition propaganda is anti-Islamic.

Religion binds man to God and man to man. Does Islam bind Muslim only to Muslim and antagonize the Hindu? Was the message of the Prophet peace only for and between Muslims and war against Hindus or non-Muslims? Are eight crores of Muslims to be fed with this which I can only describe as poison? Those who are instilling this poison into the Muslim mind are rendering the greatest disservice to Islam. I know that it is not Islam. I have lived with and among Muslims not for one day but closely and almost uninterruptedly for twenty years. Not one Muslim taught me that Islam was an anti-Hindu religion.

*Harijan, 29-4-1940*

## 06. COMMUNAL UNITY

Freedom will not come through parliamentary effort. Therefore communal pacts, whilst they are good if they can be had, are valueless unless they are backed by the union of hearts. Without it there can be no peace in the land. Even Pakistan can bring no peace, if there is no union of hearts. This union can come only by mutual service and co-operative work.

Separate electorates have resulted in the separation of hearts. They presupposed mutual distrust and conflict of interests. They have tended to perpetuate differences and deepen the distrust.

How to get out of the tangle is the question. I want just now to confine myself to the four Muslim majority provinces. In them there is natural Pakistan in the sense that the permanent majority can rule the minority. I hold it to be utterly wrong thus to divide man from man by reason of religion which is liable to change. What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice, or the use of public conveniences? The difference can only be in religious usage and observances with which a secular state has no concern.

Congressmen, if they are not to merge in the Hindus as Hindus, must rigidly abstain from the legislatures and local bodies governed by separate electorates. In these provinces the separate electorates must be taken to have come from the Hindu demand and in the supposed Hindu interest. But a Congress Hindu has no interest apart from his Muslim brother. Therefore he must not enter the electoral bodies, where Hindu and Muslim interests are falsely regarded as separate and even antagonistic. If he enters these bodies, he can do so only to divide the majority members, i.e. to take sides with one Muslim party or another. If I could make all Hindus Congress-minded, I would withdraw every Hindu member from these bodies and put the Muslim members on their honor. I would seek to influence them from outside these bodies by being friends with them and rendering disinterested service. I would be indifferent to their manning all the services. At the most an infinitesimal

percentage can have a share in them. And it is a superstition to suppose that these services can oppress a people who have become conscious of human dignity and human rights and know how to enforce them. Since the vast majority of Congressmen are Hindus in at least three Muslim Majority provinces, they have a rare opportunity of showing their non-violent strength, their disinterestedness, their utter freedom from the communal taint, and their ability to submit to the rule of their Muslim fellow countrymen. They will do this not in a huff but as true nationalists and friends of the Muslims. Remaining outside they will probably better protect the just interest of Hindu as citizens. For a Congress Hindu is not any the less a Hindu because he claims to represent equally, as he must, all the other faiths in himself. For as I have said, so far as the State is concerned its capacity for service stops short of the service of the different faiths, and the services it can render apply to all irrespective to their faiths. Therefore Congressmen have a rare opportunity of showing undefiled nationalism in these provinces. They will incidentally show the other minorities that they have nothing to fear from the majorities if they know the true way. We must get out of the miasma of religious majorities and minorities. Why is a Parsi's interest different from a Hindu's or Muslim's so far as the state is concerned? Did not Dadabhai and Pherozeshah rule the Congress while they lived, not by Congress grace or patronage, but by right of service and merit? Did their rule injure any Hindu or Muslim interest? Were these interests ever in conflict on the Congress platform? And is not the Congress a voluntary State?

*Harijan 20-1-1942*

## 07. A PUZZLE

A friend writes:

"It would be well not to discuss even by way of joke the possibility of a war between our two States. But you have gone so far as to express the opinion that in the event of a war between the two, the Muslims of the Union should fight against those of Pakistan. Does it not then follow that the Hindus and other non-Muslims should do likewise? Now if such a war arises out of the communal question, no argument is likely to make the Muslims of the Union fight those of Pakistan and likewise the Hindus and the Sikhs of Pakistan. If, however, a war takes place between the two for other than the communal cause, you will not contend that the Hindus of Pakistan and the Muslims of the Union should fight Pakistan."

It is undoubtedly true that the possibility between the two States should not be discussed by way of a joke. The adverb 'even' does not fit in. For if the possibility is reality it would be a duty to discuss it. It might be folly not to do so.

It is my firm opinion that the rule applies to the Muslims of the union must in the same circumstance apply to the Hindus and other non-Muslims of Pakistan. I have expressed this view in my after-prayer speeches and also in my talks with friends here.

Of course, behind the opinion lies a train of reasoning. Loyalty cannot be evoked to order. If circumstances do not warrant it, it may be said impossible to achieve. There are a large number of people who do not believe in the possibility of such genuine loyalty and hence laugh out my opinion. Surely, there is nothing to laugh at in conceiving such a possibility. The Muslims of the Union will fight those of the Pakistan when they regard it as a duty, in other words when it is clear to them that they are being fairly treated in the Union and that the non-Muslims are not so treated in Pakistan. Such a state is not beyond the range of possibility.

Similarly, if the non-Muslims of Pakistan clearly feel that they are being fairly treated there and that they can reside there in safely and yet the Hindus of the Union mal-treat the minorities, the minorities of Pakistan will naturally fight the majority in the Union. Then the minorities will not need any argument to induce them to do their duty.

It was our misfortune that the country was divided into two parts. The division was avowedly by reason of religious cleavage. Behind it might be economic and other causes. They could not have brought out the cleavage. The poison that fills the air arose also from the same communal cause. Irreligion masquerades as religion. It sounds nice to say that it could have been better if there had been no communal question. But how could the fact be undone?

It has been repeatedly asked whether in the event of a war between the two, the Muslims of the union will fight against the Muslims of Pakistan and the Hindus of one against those of the other. However, unlikely it may appear at present, there is nothing inherently impossible in the conception. There is any day more risk in distrusting the profession of loyalty than in trusting it and courageously facing the danger of trusting. The question can be more convincingly put in this way: Will the Hindus ever fight the Hindus and the Muslims their coreligionists for the sake of truth and justice? It can be answered by a counter question. Does not history provide such instances?

In solving the puzzle the great stumbling block in the way is that truth is at a discount. Let us hope that in this holocaust some there are who will stand firm in their faith in the victory of truth.

*Harijan, 17-10-1947*

**ON UNTOUCHABILITY**

## 08. RIGHT OF MINORITY

A sanatanist asks:-

"As a sanatanist I have a difficulty about temple entry by Harijans. Supposing among temple-goers of a particular temple there is a majority of 99 to 1 in favor of Harijans entering the temple and the temple is opened. What about the minority of one who has objection to worshipping in a temple visited by Harijans? If reformers have their way, will it not be an undue inference with the right of worship which belongs to the sanatanists from time immemorial?"

There may be a public church of the Roman Catholics as well as a public Church of protestants in an English town. Even if the Protestants be in a majority they would not interfere with the conduct of affairs in the Roman Catholic Church. Why then should the reformers (even though in the majority) interfere with the conduct of affairs in a public temple belonging to the sanatanists.

I should answer the questions by putting another. If the one solitary sanatanist has the right, as he undoubtedly has, what about the majority? Have they no rights? The parallel quoted does not apply. The questioner has imagined the existence side by side of two churches belonging to different denominations. It would be a monstrous impertinence on the part of Protestants to interfere with the rights of Roman Catholics or vice versa. But suppose all the Protestants but one decided to admit to their temple persons whom they had ex-communicated for ages. Surely, they would have every right to lift the ban. Here there would be no question of changing one's religion, as there is in the case imagined by the questioner. In the temple entry movement, reformers do not seek to alter their faith. If they did, in theory at least, not even a unanimous decision of temple-goers of a temple should entitle them to use a temple for purposes never intended by the founders. Here the reformers claim that the faith they profess in common with the sanatanists permits the use of their temples by fellow-Hindus, the Harijans. It is, therefore, a question of interpretation, and in such matters, the opinion of a majority must prevail. If it did not, it would amount to the coercion of a majority, by a minority, and there would be an end

to all progress. Indeed, the doctrine the questioner propounds would mean decay and death to a society that subscribes to it. It should be remembered that the minority is free to build a temple for itself. And so far as I am concerned, I have given my opinion that even a minority of one should have its prejudices so far respected that a special hour may be set apart so as to enable it to offer worship free from the intrusion, whether of reformers or of Harijan.

*Harijan 9-11-1934*

## 09. UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability as at present practised is the greatest blot on Hinduism. It is (with apologies to Sanatanists) against the Shastras. It is against the fundamental principles of humanity, it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, be forever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseeable. These adjectives do not convey the full meaning of the thing itself. It is a crime for certain men, women and their children to touch, or to approach within stated distances, or to be seen by those who are called caste-Hindus. The tragedy is that millions of Hindus believe in this institution as if it was enjoined by the Hindu religion.

Happily, Hindu reformers have recoiled with horror from this practice. They have come to the conclusion that it has no support in the Hindu Shastras taken as a whole. Isolated texts torn from their context and considered by themselves can no doubt be produced in support of this, practice, as of any evil known to mankind, But there is abundant authority in the Shastras to warrant the summary rejection, as being un-Hindu, of anything or any practice that is manifestly against, the fundamental principles of humanity or morality, of *Ahimsa or Satya*.

This movement against untouchability has been daily gathering strength. It was in last September that leading Hindus, claiming to represent the whole of Hindu India, met together and unanimously passed a resolution, condemning untouchability and pledging themselves to abolish it by law if possible during the existing regime, and, failing that, when India had a Parliament of her own.

Among the marks of untouchability to be removed was the prohibition against temple entry by Harijans. In the course of the struggle, it was discovered that the British Courts in India had recognised this evil custom, so much so that certain acts done by untouchables as such came to be offences under the British Indian Penal Code. Thus, the entry by an untouchable into a Hindu temple would be punishable as a crime under the I.P.C.

Before, therefore, the movement of temple entry can make headway. It has become imperative to have this anomaly removed. It is for this purpose that Sjt. Ranga Iyer has given notice of two bills to be introduced in the Central Legislature. After ascertaining the opinion of the Provincial Governments, H. E. the Viceroy has sanctioned the introduction of these Bills. But, being private Bills, they have a poor chance of becoming the law of the land, unless the Government and the members of the Assembly refrain from obstructing its consideration. It may be argued that, being pledged to neutrality in matters of religion, the Government are bound to facilitate the passage of the first Bill at any rate, in as much as it merely seeks to undo the effect produced by the decisions of British Indian Courts, and this it does by withdrawing legal recognition from untouchability.

There are practices in various religions professed by the inhabitants of this land whose breach is not regarded as criminal, though it would be regarded as very serious by the respective religious codes. Thus, beef eating by a Hindu is an offence in the eye of the Hindu religious code, but rightly not punishable as a crime under the Indian Penal Code. Is there, then, any reason why the common law of India should punish a breach of the custom of untouchability? If there are many Hindus learning in the Hindu scriptures who find support in them for the present practice of untouchability, there are quite a number of equally learned Hindus holding the opposite view. Though this opinion of the Pundits has already appeared in the press, it is reproduced elsewhere for ready reference. Let it be noted that the signatories are all orthodox Hindus, as much lovers of their faith as are the learned men of the opposite school. On the 25th of January 1933 was held the session of the All-India Sanatan Dharma Sabha, presided over by Pundit Malaviyaji and attended by over one hundred learned men. It passed a resolution to the effect that Harijans were as much entitled to temple entry as the rest of Hindus.

If the bills are not passed, it is obvious that, the central part of the reform will be hung up almost indefinitely. Neutrality in matters of religion, ought not to mean religious stagnation and hindrance to reform.

With due regard to the Sanatanists, it is difficult to understand the cry of 'religion in danger'. Under neither bill will a single temple be opened against the will of the majority of temple goers in question. The second bill expressly says so. The first bill takes up a neutral attitude. It does not help a Harijan to force his way into a temple. The reformers do not seek to compel the opponents to their will. They desire, by the fairest means possible, to convert the majority or the minority, as the case may be, to their view of untouchability.

It is said that the Harijans themselves do not want temple entry and that they want only betterment of their economic and political condition. The reformer, too, wants the latter, but he believes that this betterment will be much quicker brought about, if religious equality is attained. The reformer denies that the Harijans do not want temple entry. But it may be that they are so disgusted with caste Hindus and Hindu religion itself as to want nothing from them. They may in sullen discontent choose to remain outside the religious pale. Any penance on the part of caste Hindus may be too late.

Nevertheless the caste Hindus who recognise that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism have to atone for the sin of untouchability. Whether, therefore, Harijans desire temple entry or not, caste Hindus have to open their temples to Harijans, precisely on the same terms as the other Hindus. For a caste Hindu with any sense of honour, temple prohibition is a continuous breach of the Pledge taken at the Bombay meeting of September last. Those, who gave their word to the world and to God that they would have the temples opened for the Harijans, have to sacrifice their all, if need be, for redeeming the pledge. It may be that they did not represent the Hindu mind. They have, then, to own defeat and do the proper penance. Temple entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables and assure them that they are not outcastes before God.

*Harijan 11-2-1933*

**ON MORALITY**

## 10. POLITICS v/s MORALS

In response to my suggestion in my article on the Congressman Shri M. N. Roy has sent a long letter not to Dr. Rajendra Prasad but to me. He asks for a public discussion of the points raised by him. Omitting the prefatory paragraphs, which have no interest for the reader, the letter is reproduced elsewhere.

To take the ministerial resignations first, I feel sure that they have added to the prestige of the Congress. The Working Committee would no doubt have done better to have accepted my proposal, only if it could have assimilated nonviolence with all the implications suggested by me. But the members of the Working Committee were too conscious of their duty to accept my proposal mechanically and without heart belief. The Working Committee's resolution was, therefore, the only true course for the Working Committee to adopt. Having done so resignations were the logical result.

It would have been unbecoming to have retained office for the doubtful advantage of guarding civil liberty. If they were ministers of autonomous States, they could never have been ignored as they were about the war. Having been ignored, they would have been given satisfaction, when the attention of the British Government was drawn by the Working Committee to the grievous omission and when they were told how they could repair the mischief and retain India's co-operation in the prosecution of the war. The least that the ministers could do, therefore, was to resign if only to show the hollowness of autonomy. To remain in office after the discovery of their importance would have been to court ignominy. To retain office for the protection of civil liberty would have been to mistake the wood for the tree. And Shri Roy may feel quite sure that the weakened ministers would have been poor guardians of civil liberty. The Governors would have set aside their decisions and caught hold of those whom they would have chosen to imprison. The ministers had taken office principally to advance independence. When they failed, they were bound to forego every other advantage however great in itself. And they can never go back to their offices so long as the demand of the Congress remains unsatisfied.

Civil disobedience is by no means the next inevitable forward step. It depends upon a variety of circumstances some of which I have already mentioned. Inaction is often the most effective action in the strategy of war-more so when the war is nonviolent.

Now for the crucial point. Nonviolence is the central fact of the civil disobedience technique. It was in 1920 that the Congress hooked its politics deliberately to fundamental morals and vital social reform. It came to the conclusion that Swaraj could not be won without nonviolence and certain definite social reform, viz. prohibition and removal of untouchability. It also put the charkha at the centre of its economic, programme indeed it eschewed the then known political programme i.e. the parliamentary. Hence, the introduction of morals into Congress politics was not and is not irrelevant to the Congress fight for freedom. It is its core. There were a few grumblers then. But the vast majority welcomed the programme as the Congress had never done in the whole of its brilliant history. The programme justified itself by giving rise to a mass awakening on a phenomenal scale. By it the Congress gained an importance it had never before enjoyed. Shri Roy would not expect me at this stage to repeat here the argument that led to the enthusiastic acceptance of the Programme. He should turn to the pages of Young India if he would know the pros and cons of the subject. The Congress became a mass democratic organisation from the time of acceptance of the programme, and it framed a democratic organisation, which stands to this day without much material and fundamental alteration.

The Congress has a double function. It is a democratic organisation in peace time. It becomes a nonviolent army in war time. In its second capacity it has no voting power. Its will is expressed by its general whoever he may be. Every unit has to tender him willing obedience in thought, word and deed. Yes, even in thought, since the fight is nonviolent.

Shri Roy and other Congressmen do not need to be told that I am not in the habit of losing co-workers. I go a long way with them in winning their affection and retaining it. But there does come a limit beyond which my compromise

does not and cannot and should not go. No compromise is worth the name which endangers chances of success.

*Harijan 14-11-1939*

**ON CASTE**

## 11. DR. AMBEDKAR & CASTE

The following has just been received from Dr. Ambedkar:-

"At the end of our conversation on Saturday last you asked me to send a message for insertion in the first issue of your new weekly 'Harijan'. I feel I cannot give a message. For I believe it will be a most unwarranted presumption on my part to suppose that I have sufficient worth in the eyes of the Hindus which would make them treat any message from me with respect. I can only speak as man to man. As such it may be desirable that the Hindus should know my views on the momentous issue of Hindu social organization with which you have chosen to occupy yourself. I am, therefore, sending you the accompanying statement for publication in your 'Harijan'."

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### Statement

"The Out-caste is a bye-product of the Caste-system. There will be out-castes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the Out-caste except the destruction of the Caste-system. Nothing can help to save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu Faith of this odious and vicious dogma."

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### B. R. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar is bitter. He has every reason to feel so. He has received a liberal education. He has more than the talents of the average educated Indian. Outside India he is received with honour and affection, but, in India, among Hindus, at every step he is reminded that he is one of the out-castes of Hindu society. It is nothing to his shame, for, he has done no wrong to Hindu Society. His exterior is as clean as that of the cleanest and the proudest Brahmin. Of his interior, the world knows as little as of that of any of us. In spite of all this, he "believes that it will be a most unwarranted presumption on his part to suppose

that he has sufficient worth in the eyes of the Hindus which would make them treat any message from him with respect. This is the caste Hindus' shame, not his, but I would like him to feel that there are today thousands of caste Hindus who would listen to his message with the same respect and consideration that they would give to that of any other leader and that in their estimation there is no person high and no person low. I would like him, too, to know that 'Harijan' is not my weekly. So far as the proprietary rights are concerned, it belongs to the Servants of Untouchables Society and, therefore, I would like him to feel that it is as much his as of any other Hindu. As to the burden of his message, the opinion he holds about the caste system is shared by many educated Hindus. I have not, however, been able to share that opinion. I do not believe the caste system, even as distinguished from Varnashram, to be an 'odious and vicious dogma'. It has its limitations and its defects, but there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability, and, if it is a by-product of the caste system it is only in the same sense that an ugly growth is of a body, or weeds of a crop. It is as wrong to destroy caste because of the out-caste, as it would be to destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it, or of a crop because of the weeds. The outcaste-ness, in the sense we understand it, has, therefore, to be destroyed altogether. It is an excess to be removed, if the whole system is not to perish. Untouchability is the product, therefore, not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attach on untouchability is thus an attach upon this high-and-low-ness. The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true Varnadharma, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other, each as necessary for the whole body of Hinduism as any other. How it can be and what that Varnashram is, it is not necessary to examine here. But, such being my faith, I have always respectfully differed from those distinguished countrymen, Dr. Ambedkar among them, who have held that untouchability will not go without the destruction of Varnashramdharma. They have made no distinction between caste and Varna. But that is another story. At the present moment, it is the

untouchable, the outcaste, with whom all Hindu reformers, whether they believe in Varnashram or not, have agreed to deal. The opposition to untouchability is common to both. Therefore, the present joint fight is restricted to the removal of untouchability, and I would invite Dr. Ambedkar and those who think with him to throw themselves, heart and soul, into the campaign against the monster of untouchability. It is highly likely that at the end of it we shall all find that there is nothing to fight against in Varnashram. If, however, Varnashram even then looks an ugly thing, the whole of Hindu Society will fight it. For this campaign against untouchability is not one of compulsion, but of conversion. At the end of the chapter, I hope that we shall all find ourselves in the same camp. Should it prove otherwise, it will be time enough to consider how and by whom Varnashram is to be fought.

Harijan, 11-2-1933

**ON WOMEN**

## 12. WHAT IS WOMAN'S ROLE?

With certain omissions I quote below the following from a highly educated sister:

"You have shown the world, through Ahimsa and Satyagraha, the dignity of the soul. These two words are the only solution to the problem of how to overcome man's baser nature.

Education through crafts is not only a great idea, but the only right way of teaching, if we want our children to have self-reliance. It is you who have said it, and solved in one sentence the whole vast educational problem. The details could be worked out according to circumstances and experience.

I beg you to solve the problem of us, the women. Rajaji says that there is no women's problem. Perhaps not in the political sense. Perhaps it could be made by legislation not to matter in the professional sense, that is, all professions could be made equally open to men and women. But these things would not alter the fact that we are women, and, as such, of a different quality from men. We need an additional set of principles besides ahimsa and satyagraha to overcome our baser qualities. A woman's spirit like a man's strives to attain better things. But just as there is need for ahimsa and brahmacharya for a man to get rid of his aggressive spirit, lust, brutish instincts of inflicting pain, etc., there is for woman need of certain principles that would enable her to get rid of her baser qualities, which are different from men and commonly said to belong by nature to her. The natural qualities of her sex, the upbringing meted out to her because of her sex, and her environment which is created because of her sex, all are against her. And in her work these things, namely her nature, upbringing and surroundings always get in the way and hinder her and give occasion for the hackneyed phrase, 'She is only a woman, after all.' This is what I mean by sex hanging round one's neck. And I think that, if we only possess the correct solution, the correct method of improving ourselves, we could make our natural qualities, such as sympathy and tenderness, a help instead of a

hindrance. The improvement, just as your solution in the case of men and children, must come from within us.

I said nature, upbringing and environment. I will give an example to make myself clearer.

Women by nature are intended to be soft, tender-hearted, sympathetic, to mother children. These things influence her to a great extent unconsciously. So when it comes to doing things, she becomes too emotional. When moving with men, she commits blunders. She is soft-hearted when she should not be so. She is temperamental, easily gets vain and generally acts in a silly way.

When I came to see you, although I had desired the meeting very much and spent the previous night sleepless thinking over it, when in your presence I was asked to sit down, I went and sat behind the broad back of Shri Desai. I could not hear and I prevented myself from seeing you! What a silly thing to do! Further, I found I could not explain myself, could not articulate. This I attribute to my being saddled with an emotional nature which gets out of control easily. Of course suitable training would have cured that particular fault, but I dare say, I would commit some other equally silly act.

A friend of mine showed me the answers she has written to a questionnaire sent by the National Planning Sub-committee for women's role. The questions, as you no doubt know, are numbered, and are something like this: To what extent, in your part of the country, is woman entitled to hold, acquire, inherit, sell or dispose of property in her own right? What provision has been made, or facilities available, for the appropriate education and training of women for the several kinds of work and employment that women of different capacities may need to engage in? She has not replied to the questions, but has written, "We cannot say with an ounce of truth that women were not getting any education as such in the good old ancient days," and, "in the Vedic period the wife, on her marriage, was at once given an honoured position in the house and she was mistress in her husband's home," etc., and has quoted Manu. I asked her what necessity there was to write about ancient customs when the questionnaire was about present-day ones. She murmured something about thinking that a reply in

the form of an essay would be nice, and brightened up saying Mrs. Some-one-else's reply was worse than hers. I think this mistake of my friend is due to lack of proper training, which was denied to her because she is a woman. Even a clerk would know that when one is asked a question one should not write an essay on a different matter in reply.

I do not think I need go on quoting examples and explaining myself. You, with your vast experience of women of all kinds, would know whether I am right in saying that women lack the vital principle that would set them right.

Your advice to me was to read Harijan. I do so eagerly. But so far I have not come across, well, the advice for the inner spirit. Spinning and fighting for the national freedom are only some aspects of the training. They do not seem to contain the whole solution, For I have seen women who do spin and do try to work out the Congress ideals and still commit blunders which are attributed to the fact of their being women.

I do not want woman to become like man. But just as you have taught men ahimsa for their baser nature, do teach us the thing that would remove our sillier qualities. Tell us, please, how to make the best use of our qualities, how to turn our disadvantages into advantages.

This, the burden of my sex, is with me always. Every time I have someone say, "She is a woman, after all," in a sneering way, my soul winces, if, that is, a soul is capable of wincing. A man to whom I talked of these things laughed at me and said, 'Did you see that child at our friend's house? He was playing at trains, and chug chugged along until he came against a pillar. Instead of going round it he just tried to push it aside with his shoulders, thinking, in his childish mind, that he could remove it. You remind me of him. What you say is a psychological thing. You make me laugh in your attempt to understand and solve it.'

I had flattered myself that my contribution to the woman's cause definitely began with the discovery of Satyagraha. But the writer of the letter is of the opinion that the fair sex requires treatment different from men. If it is so, I do not think any man will find the correct solution. No matter how much he tries, he must fail because nature has made him different from woman. Only the toad

under the harrow knows where it pinches him. Therefore ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. One cannot live without the other's active help.

But somehow or the other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognised her equal status.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that at some point there is bifurcation. Whilst both are fundamentally one, it is also equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the care-taker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct.

In my opinion it is degrading both for man and woman that woman should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is a reversion to barbarity and the beginning of the end. In trying to ride the horse that man rides, she brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling. There is as much bravery in keeping one's home in good order and condition as there is in defending it against attack from without.

As I have watched millions of peasants in their natural surroundings and as I watch them daily in little Segaoon, the natural division of spheres of work has forced itself on my attention. There are no women blacksmiths and carpenters. But men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the

males. The women keep and manage the homes. They supplement the meagre resources of the family, but man remains the main bread-winner.

The division of the spheres of work being recognised, the general qualities and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes.

My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do this successfully, she must resolutely refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in their fields worried or dominated by it. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man, and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to dominate lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. Neither man nor woman has time for such things when he or she is faced with the hard fact of living life in its grim reality. I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can at the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in Satyagraha which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith. My good nurse in

the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years ago, told me the story of a woman who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo painful operation. The only anesthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which nature has destined us.

*Harijan 12-2-1940*

### 13. FOR WOMEN REFORMERS

From a serious discussion I had with a sister I fear that my position on the use of contraceptives has not yet been sufficiently understood. My opposition is not due to their having come to us from the West. I thankfully use some western things when I know that they benefit us as they benefit those in the West. My opposition to contraceptives is based on merits.

I take it that the wisest among the protagonists of contraceptive restrict their use to married women who desire to satisfy their and the husbands' sexual appetite without wanting children. I hold this desire as unnatural in the human species and its satisfaction detrimental to the spiritual progress of the human family. As against this is often cited the following testimony among others of Lord Dawson of Penn:

"Sex love is one of the clamant, dominating forces of the World. Here we have an instinct, so fundamental, so imperious that its influence is a fact which has to be accepted: suppress it you cannot. You may guide it into healthy channels but an outlet it will have, and if that outlet is inadequate or unduly obstructed, irregular channels will be forced. Self-control has a breaking point, and if in any community marriage is difficult or late of attainment, an increase of irregular unions will inevitably result. All are agreed that union of body should be in association with union of mind and soul; all are agreed that the rearing of children is pre-eminent purpose. Has not sexual union over and over again been the physical expression of our love without thought or intention of procreation? Have we all been wrong? Or is it that the Church lacks that vital contact with the realities of life which accounts for the gulf between her and the people? Authority, and I include under authority the churches, will never gain the allegiance of the young unless their attitude is more frank, more courageous, and more in accordance with realities.

Sex love has, apart from parenthood, a purport of its own. It is an essential part of health and happiness in marriage. If sexual union is a gift from God it is worth learning how to use it. Within its own sphere it should be cultivated so as

to bring physical satisfaction to both not merely one. The attainment of mutual and reciprocal joy in their relations constitutes a firm bond between two people and make for durability of their marriage tie. More marriages fail from inadequate and clumsy sex-love than from too much sex love. Passion is a worthy possession; most men who are any good are capable of passion. Sex love without passion is a poor lifeless thing. Sensuality on the other hand is on a level with gluttony, a physical excess. Now that the revision of the Prayer Book is receiving consideration, I should like to suggest, with great respect, that addition be made to the objects of marriage in the Marriage Service in these terms, 'The complete realization of the love of this man and this man, the one for the other.'

I will pass on to consider the all-important question of birth control. Birth control is here to stay. It is an established fact, and for good or evil to be accepted. No denunciations will abolish it. The reasons which lead parents to limit their offspring are sometimes selfish, but more often honourable and cogent. The desire to marry and to rear children well equipped for life's struggle, limited incomes, the cost of living burdensome taxation are forcible motives; and, further, amongst the educated classes there is the desire of women to take part in life and their husbands' careers, which is incompatible with off-recurring pregnancies. Absence of birth control means late marriages, and these carry with them irregular unions and all the baneful consequences. It is idle to decry illicit intercourse and interpose obstacles to marriage at one and the same time. But say many, 'Birth control may be necessary, but the only birth control which is justifiable is voluntary abstention. Such abstention would be either ineffective or, if effective, impracticable and harmful to health and happiness. To limit the size of a family to say, four children, would be to impose on a married couple an amount of abstention which for long periods would almost be equivalent to celibacy, and when one remembers that owing to economic reasons the abstention would have to most strict during the earlier years of marriage life when desires are strongest. I maintain a demand is being made which, for the mass Of people, it is impossible to meet; that the endeavours to meet it would impose a strain hostile to health and happiness

and carry with them grave dangers to morals. The thing is preposterous. You might as well put water by the side of a man suffering from thirst and tell him not to drink it. No birth control by abstention is either ineffective, or, if effective, is pernicious.

It is said to be unnatural and intrinsically immoral. Civilization involves the chaining of natural forces and their conversion to man's will and uses. When anaesthetics were first used at child birth there was an outcry that their use was unnatural and wicked, because God meant woman to suffer. It is no more unnatural to control childbirth by artificial means. The use of child birth control is good, its abuse bad. May I end by an appeal that the Church approach this question, in common with certain others, in the light of modern knowledge and the needs of a new world and unhampered by traditions which have outworn their usefulness?"

Lord Dawson's eminence is not to be denied. But with all due respect to his greatness as a physician, I am tempted to question the value of his evidence, specially when it is pitted against the experience of men and women who have lived a life of continence without suffering any moral or physical harm. Physicians generally come across those who have so defied laws of health that they have contracted some illness. They, therefore, often successfully prescribe what sufferers should do to become well, but they cannot always know what healthy men and women can do in any particular direction. Lord Dawson's evidence, therefore, about the effect of continence on married people has to be taken with the greatest caution. No doubt the tendency among married people is to regard sexual satisfaction for itself as legitimate. But in the modern age in which nothing is taken for granted and everything is rightly scrutinized, it is surely wrong to take it for granted that because we have hitherto indulged in the sexual appetite in married life, the practice is either legitimate or healthy. Many old practices have been discontinued with good results. Why should this particular practice be exempt from examination especially in the light of the experience of those who even as married men and

women are living a life of restraint with mutual benefit both physical and moral?

But I object to contraceptives also on special grounds in India. Young men in India do not know what sexual restraint is. It is not their fault. They are married early. It is the custom. Nobody tells them to exercise restraint in married life. Parents are impatient to see grandchildren. The poor girl-wives are expected by their surroundings to bear children as fast as they can. In such surroundings, the use of contraceptives can only further aggravate the mischief. The poor girls who are expected to submit to their husbands' desires are now to be taught that it is a good thing to desire sexual satisfaction without the desire to have children. And in order to fulfill the double purpose they are to have recourse to contraceptives!!!

I regard this to be most pernicious education for married women. I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint. I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying no even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties. Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realize the loftiness of either her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless weak woman incapable of protecting herself or her honour. To ask India's women to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is to free her from mental slavery, to teach her the sacredness of her body and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption and that they have therefore to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of.

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the

desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type.

*Harijan 2-5-1936*

## 14. BIRTH CONTROL

A co-worker who is a careful reader of my writings was disturbed to read that I was likely to approve of the 'safe period' method of birth control. I endeavoured to make it clear to the friend that the safe period method did not repel me as did the use of contraceptives and that it was open largely only to married couples. But the discussion of the topic led us into much deeper waters than either of us had expected. The fact that my friend was repelled by the safe period method as much as by that of contraceptives showed to me that he believed in the possibility of ordinary persons practising the restraint imposed by the Smriti i.e. that the union between husband and wife was permitted only when the parties really desired to have children. Whilst I knew the rule I had never regarded it in the light that I began to do at the discussion. All these long years I had regarded it as a counsel of perfection not to be carried out literally and that so long as married couples carried on intercourse by mutual consent but without special regard to the desire for progeny, they were carrying out the purpose of marriage without breaking any positive injunction of the Smriti. But the new light in which I viewed the Smriti text was a revelation to me. I understood now as I never had done before the statement that married people, who strictly observed the injunction of the Smriti were as much brahmacharis as those who were never married and lived chaste lives.

The sole object of sexual intercourse according to the new light was the desire for progeny, never gratification of the sexual instinct. Simple gratification of the instinct would be counted according to this view of marriage as lust. This may appear to be a harsh expression to use for our enjoyment which has hitherto been regarded as innocent and legitimate. But I am not dealing with custom. I am dealing with the science of marriage as propounded by Hindu sages. Their presentation may be faulty, it may be altogether wrong. But for one like me who believes in several Smriti texts as inspired and based on experience, there is no escape from a full acceptance of their meaning. I know no other way of finding the truth of things and testing certain old texts in

accordance with their full meaning no matter how hard the test may appear and how harsh its deductions may sound.

In the light of what I have said above, birth control by contraceptives and the like is a profound error. I write thus with a full sense of my responsibility. I have great regard for Mrs. Margaret Sanger and her followers. She impressed me much by her great zeal for her cause. I know that she has great sympathy for the women who suffer because they have to bear the burden of carrying and rearing unwanted children. I know also that this method of birth control has the support of many Protestant divines, scientists, learned men and doctors, many of whom I have the honour of knowing personally and for whom I entertain high regard. But I should be false to my God who is Truth and nothing but truth, if I concealed my belief from the reader or these great advocates of method. Indeed if I hid my belief, I should never discover my error if present belief is one. Moreover, its declaration is due to those many men and women who accept my guidance and advice in many moral problems including this one concerning birth control.

That birth requires to be regulated and controlled is common cause between the advocates of contraceptives and the like. The difficulty of control through self-restraint is not to be denied. Yet there is no other way of attaining the end if mankind is to fulfill its destiny. It is my innermost conviction that if the method under discussion gains universal acceptance, mankind will suffer moral deterioration. This I say in spite of evidence to the contrary that is often produced by the advocates of method.

I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

Birth control through self-control is no doubt difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even superiority over the use of contraceptives.

Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the implication of the injunction of the Shastras as to the strictly confined use of the sexual act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny obviously of the highest type possible for a married couple. This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny, which is the result of such union. Desire for such union therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.

*Harijan 14-3-1936*

**ON HIS OWN LIFE**

## 15. AM I A MESSENGER OF GOD?

A Muslim friend writes a long letter which pruned down read as follows:

"The chief difficulty that stands in your way of right thinking is that your heart has so hardened by looking at and interpreting things in the light of your self-assumed principles, that you cannot bring to bear an open mind on anything, how so ever valuable it may be.

If God has not appointed you as His messenger, what you say or teach cannot be claimed to be a word of God. No one would contest the truthfulness of truth and nonviolence as teachings of the prophets and principles of very high spiritual value, but their true understanding and application require a soul that is in direct communion with God. Any person who has only polished his soul by suppressing or acting against the desires and cravings of the flesh and the self is not a prophet.

The fact that you stand as a teacher of the world and claim to have diagnosed the disease from which the world is suffering, and proclaim that the truth of your choice and practice and the nonviolence of your conviction and application are the only cures for the afflicted world, betrays your utter disregard and misconception of the truth. You admit you make mistakes. Your nonviolence is actually a concealed violence as it is not based on actual spiritual life and is not the earnest of true inspiration from God.

As a true believer, and in pursuance of that teaching of Islam which enjoins on every Muslim to convey the truth to every human being, I would request you to clear your mind of all complexes, to place yourself in the position of an ordinary human being who wants to learn and not to teach and to become a real seeker after truth.

If you wish to find out the truth, I would request you to study the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohamed (Peace of God be upon him) written by Shebli Nowani and M. Sulaiman Nadwi with an open mind.

As for unity among the different communities inhabiting India, it can never come in terms of a single nation. Broad-minded toleration of each other's religion and practices and an agreement based on the recognition of the Muslims as a nation with their own complete code of life and culture to guide them and an equality of status in political life, shall bring harmony and peace to India."

I have omitted no argument used by the writer.

I have not hardened my heart. I have never claimed to be messenger of God except in the sense in which all human beings are.

I am a mortal as liable to err as any other. Nor have I claimed to be a teacher. But I cannot prevent admirers from calling me a teacher or a Mahatma, as I cannot prevent traducers from calling me all sorts of names and ascribing to me vices to which I am a stranger. I lay both praise and blame at the feet of the Almighty and go my way. For the information of my correspondent, who is a schoolmaster in a high school, I may say that I have reverently studied the works he mentions and also many other works on Islam, I have more than once read the Quran. My religion enables me, obliges me, to imbibe all that is good in all the great religions of the earth. This does not mean that I must accept the interpretation that my correspondent may put upon the message of the Prophet of Islam or any other Prophet. I must use the limited intelligence that God has given me to interpret the teachings bequeathed to mankind by the Prophets of the world. I am glad to find that my correspondent agrees that truth and nonviolence are taught by the holy Quran. Surely it is for him, as for every one of us, to apply these principles to daily life according to the light given to us by God.

The last paragraph in the letter lays down a dangerous doctrine. Why is India not one nation? Was it not one during, say, the Mughal period? Is India composed of two nations? If it is, why only two? Are not Christians a third, Parsis a fourth, and so on? Are the Muslims of China a nation separate from the other Chinese? Are the Muslims of England a different nation from the other English? How are the Muslims of the Punjab different from the Hindus and the

Sikhs? Are they not all Punjabis, drinking the same water, breathing the same air and deriving sustenance from the same soil? What is there to prevent them from following their respective religious practices? Are Muslims all the world over a separate nation? Or are the Muslims of India only to be a separate nation distinct from the others? Is India to be vivisected into two parts, one Muslim and the other non-Muslim? And what is to happen to the handful of Muslims living in the numerous villages where the population is predominantly Hindu, and conversely to the Hindus where, as in the Frontier Province or Sind, they are a handful? The way suggested by the correspondent is the way of strife. Live and let live or mutual forbearance and toleration is the law of life. That is the lesson I have learnt from the Quran, the Bible, the Zend Avesta and the Gita.

*Harijan 21-10-1939*

## 16. MY LIFE

The following from its Allahabad Correspondent appears in The Bombay Chronicle: "Starting revelations have come to light regarding what has been going round the House of Commons about Gandhiji. It is reported that Mr. Edward Thompson, the British historian who visited Allahabad recently, threw some light on the curious mentality prevailing in England. Mr. Thompson, who met some political leaders here, is reported to have told them three things going round the House of Commons regarding Gandhiji:

1. Gandhiji was for unconditional co-operation with the British Government.
2. Gandhiji could still influence the Congress.
3. There were various stories about Gandhiji's sensual life it being the impression that Gandhiji had ceased to be saint.

Impressions about Gandhiji's 'sensual life', Thompson, were based on some Marathi papers. He spoke about them, I understand to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who repudiated them. He spoke about them to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. P.N. Sapru also, who strongly repudiated them.

It appears Mr. Thompson, before leaving England, had seen several members of the House of Commons. Mr. Thompson, before leaving Allahabad, sent a letter to Mr. Greenwood, M. P., on the suggestion of Pandit Nehru pointing out that the stories regarding Gandhiji were absolutely baseless."

Mr. Thompson was good enough to visit Segaoon. He confirmed the report as substantially correct.

The 'unconditional co-operation' is dealt with in another note.

The country will presently know the influence I have over the Congress.

The third charge needs clearing. Two days ago I received a letter signed by four or five Gujaratis sending me mission seems to be to paint me as black as it to be painted. According to its headline it is a paper devoted to 'the organisation of Hindus'. The charges against me are mostly taken from my confessions and

distorted from their setting. Among many other charges, the charge of sensuality is most marked. My brahmacharya is said to be a cloak to hide my sensuality. Poor Dr. Sushila Nayar has been dragged before the public gaze for the crime of giving me massage and medicated baths, the two things for which she is the best qualified among those who surround me. The curious may be informed that there is no privacy about these operations which take over 1 ½ hours and during which I often go off to sleep but during which I also transact business with Mahadev, Pyarelal or other co-workers.

The charges, to my knowledge, began with my active campaign against untouchability. This was when it was included in the congress programme and I began to address crowds on the subject and insisted on having Harijans at meetings and in the Ashram. It was then that some Sanatanists, who used to help me and befriend me, broke with me and began a campaign of vilification. Later, a very high-placed Englishman joined the Chorus. He picked out my freedom with women and showed up my 'saintliness' as sinfulness. In this chorus there were also one or two well-known Indians. During the Round Table Conference American Journals indulged in cruel caricatures of me. Mirabai who used to look after me was the target of their attack. As far as I could understand Mr. Thompson, who knows the gentlemen who have been behind these charges, my letters to Premaben Kantak, who is a member of the Sabarmati Ashram, have also been used to prove my depravity. She is a graduate and worker of proved merit. She used to ask questions relating to brahmacharya and other topics. I sent her full replies. She thought they might be of general use and she published them with my permission. I hold them to be absolutely innocent and pure.

Hitherto I have ignored these charges. But Mr. Thompson's talks about them and the importunity of the Gujarati correspondents, who say the indictment sent by them is but a sample of what is being said about me, impel me to repudiate them. I have no secrets of my own in this life. I have owned my weaknesses. If I were sensually inclined, I would have the courage to make the confession. It was when I developed detestation of sensual connection even with my own wife

and had sufficiently tested myself that I took the vow of Brahmacharya in 1906, and that for the sake of better dedication to the service of the country. From that day began my open life. I do not remember having ever slept or remained with my own wife or other women with closed doors except for the occasions referred to in my writings in Young India and Navajivan. Those were black nights with me. But as I have said repeatedly God has saved me in spite of myself. I claim no credit for any virtue that I may possess. He is for me the Giver of all good and has saved me for His service.

From that day when I began brahmacharya, our freedom began. My wife became a free woman, free from my authority as her lord and master, and I became free from my slavery to my own appetite which she had to satisfy. No other woman had any attraction for me in the same sense that my wife had. I was too loyal to her as husband and too loyal to the vow I had taken before my mother to be slave to any other woman. But the manner in which my brahmacharya came to me irresistibly drew me to woman as the mother of man. She became too sacred for sexual love. And so every woman at once became sister or daughter to me. I had enough women about me at Phoenix. Several of them were my own relations whom enticed to South Africa. Others were co-workers wives or relatives. Among these were the Wests and other Englishmen. The Wests included West, his sister, his wife, and his mother-in-law who had become the Granny of the little settlement. As has been my wont, I could not keep the new good thing to myself. So I presented Brahmacharya for the acceptance of all the settlers. All approved of it. And some took it up and remained true to the ideal. My brahmacharya knew nothing of the orthodox laws governing its observance. I framed my own rules as occasion necessitated. But I have never believed that all contact with woman was to be shunned for the due observance of brahmacharya. That restraint which demands abstention from all contact, no matter how innocent, with the opposite sex is a forced growth, having little or no vital value. Therefore, natural contacts for service were never restrained. And I found myself enjoying the confidences of many sisters, European and Indian, in South Africa. And when I invited the Indian sisters in South Africa to join the civil resistance movement. I found myself one

of them. I discovered that I was specially fitted to serve womankind. To cut the (for me enthralling) story short, my return to India found me in no time one with India's women. The easy access I had to their hearts was an agreeable revelation to me. Muslim sister never kept purdah before me here even as they did not in South Africa. I sleep in the Ashram surrounded by women for they feel safe with me in every respect. It should be remembered that there is no privacy in the Segaon Ashram.

It I were sexually attracted towards women, I have courage enough, even at this time of life, to become a polygamist. I do not believe in free love-secret or open. Free open love I have looked upon as dog's love. Secret love is besides cowardly.

Santanist Hindus may abhor my nonviolence. I know many of them think that Hindus will become cowards if they remain under my influence. I know of no man having become a coward under my influence. They may decry my nonviolence as much as they like. But they will serve themselves or Hinduism by indulging in palpable lies.

*Harijan 30-10-1939*

**ON RELIGION**

## 17. A MODEL TEMPLE

It was impossible that side by side with the movement for temple entry by Harijans there should not be a demand for temple reform. The modern Hindu temple is a hot-bed of superstition, as are more or less other 'Houses of God'. I published the other day a letter from an American Friend, gently pleading with me not to have anything to do with the temple entry movement. A friend who is a devout follower of Islam has carried on a long correspondence with me, trying to do with me in his own way what the American friend did in his own. There is undoubtedly a great deal of substance in what they have said. But I have not been able to subscribe to their corollary that the remedy for the abuse lies in the destruction of temples.

But by far the largest number of persons believes in the reform, not destruction of temples. I mentioned only the other day an ambitious scheme set on foot for a model temple in Rajkot. Several correspondents have taken me to task for advocating temple entry for Harijans without emphasizing the necessity of temple reform. There is no doubt that temple reform is necessary. But here, again, there is need for caution. Some of them think that it is possible to replace all the existing temples with new ones, I do not share that view. All temples will never be alike. They will always vary, as they have done in the past, with the varying human needs. What a reformer should be concerned with is a radical change more in the inward spirit than in the outward form. If the first is changed, the second will take care of itself. If the first remains unchanged, the second, no matter how radically changed, will be like a whited sepulchre. A mausoleum, however beautiful, is a tomb and not a mosque, and a bare plot of consecrated ground may be a real Temple of God.

Therefore the first desideratum is the priest. My ideal priest must be a man of God. He must be a true servant of the people. He should have the qualifications of a guide, friend and philosopher to those among whom he is officiating. He must be a whole-timer with the least possible needs and personal ties. He should be versed in the *Shastras*. His whole concern will be to look after the

welfare of his people. I have not drawn a fanciful picture. It is almost true to life. It is based on the recollections of my childhood. The priest I am recalling was looked up to by the prince and the people. They flocked round him for advice and guidance in the time of their need.

If the sceptic says such a priest is hard to find nowadays, he would be partly right. But I would ask the reformer to wait for building the temple of his ideal till he finds his priest.

Meanwhile let him cultivate in himself the virtues he will have in the priest of his imagination. Let him expect these from the priests of existing temples. In other words, by his gentle and correct conduct, let him infect his immediate surroundings with the need of the times and let him have faith that his thought, surcharged with his own correct conduct, will act more powerfully than the mightiest dynamo. Let him not be impatient to see the result in a day. A thought may take years of conduct to evolve the requisite power. What are years or generations in the life of a great reformer?

Now, perhaps, the reader will follow my view of a model temple. I can present him with no architect's plan and specification. Time is not ripe for it. But that does not baffle me and it need not baffle the reformer. He can choose the site for his future temple. It must be as extensive as he can get it. It need not be in the heart of a village or a city. It should be easily accessible to the Harijans and the other poor and yet it must not be in insanitary surroundings. If possible, it should be higher than its surroundings. In any case, I would aim at making the plinth of the actual temple as high as possible. And on this site I should select my plot for daily worship. Round this will come into being a school, a dispensary, a library, secular and religious. The school may serve also as a meeting or debating hall. I should have a *dharmshala* or guest house connected with the temple, each one of these will be a separate institution and yet subordinate to the temple and may be built simultaneously or one after another as circumstances and funds may permit. The buildings may or, may not be substantial. If labour is voluntary, as it well may be, with mud and straw a beginning may be made at once. But the temple is not yet built. The foundation

was laid when the site was procured, the plot for the temple was selected and the first prayer was offered. For the *Bhagavat* says, 'wherever people meet and utter His name from their hearts, there God dwells, there is His temple.' The building, the deity, the consecration, the province of the priest. When he is found, he will set about his task, but the temple began its existence from the time of the first prayer. And if it was the prayer of true men and women, its continuous progress was assured.

So much for the temple of the future. The reader who cares to study the Rajkot scheme will find that the outward form of my model temple materially corresponds to that in the scheme. Indeed, there is nothing new in my idea or the Rajkot scheme. The village temples of yore had almost all the adjuncts suggested by me.

But we must also deal with the existing temples. They can become real House of God today, if the worshippers will insist on the priests conforming to the ideal presented by me.

*Harijan 29-4-1933*

**ON SWADESHI**

## 18. IF I WERE THE MINISTER

The talks with the Ministers concerned at Poona on village-crafts and basic education have given rise to a lot of correspondence and private discussion. For the guidance of the Provincial Governments and others interested in the question of Khadi which has naturally occasioned the bulk of the correspondence and discussion, I set forth below my thoughts on the subject.

I refer the reader to my note. My views, then expressed, remain unaltered. One thing has created a misunderstanding. Some friends have read compulsion in that note. I am sorry for the obscurity. In it I had answered the question as to what representative governments could do if they wished. I had, I hope pardonably, assumed that such government's notices too could not be interpreted as compulsion. For every act of a bona fide representative government would assume consent of the voters represented. The voters would mean the whole populace, whether registered as voters or not. With that background, I wrote that the government should notify to the villagers that mill cloth would not be supplied to the villagers after a certain fixed date, so as to enable them to wear Khadi prepared by themselves.

Whatever the meaning of my article, I want to state that any scheme adopted about Khadi, without the willing co-operation of those concerned, must mean death to Khadi as a means for attaining Swaraj. Then the taunt that Khadi was a return to the darkness and slavery of the Middle Ages would be true. But I have held the contrary view. Whilst Khadi under compulsion was a badge of slavery, Khadi intelligently and voluntarily prepared, primarily for one's own use, was easily the badge of our freedom. Freedom is nothing if it is not all-round self-help. I, for one, would have nothing to do with Khadi, if it were not a free man's privilege as well as duty.

A friendly critic asks whether Khadi thus prepared could also and at the same time be for sale. Yes, if sale is its secondary use; not if manufacture for sale is its only or even primary use. That we began with sale of Khadi shows temporary necessity as well as our limited vision. Experience is a great teacher. It has

taught us many things. Not the least is its primary use. But it is by no means the last. But I must leave this fascinating field of speculation and proceed definitely to answer the question put in the heading.

My first business as the minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity would be to find out from among the Permanent Service honest and incorruptable men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A., creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village-crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate, there should be no compulsion on the villagers, that they must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessaries. The scheme would thus have to be comprehensive. I would instruct my first man, therefore, to see the Hindustani Tamili Sangh and see what it has to say.

Let me assume that the scheme, thus produced, contains a clause saying that the villagers themselves declare that they would not want mill cloth, say, after one year from a fixed date, that they require cotton, wool and necessary implements and instruction, not as a gift but to be paid for on the easiest terms. The scheme provides too, that it will not apply at once to the whole of any province but only to a part to begin with. The scheme further tells one that the A. I. S. A. will guide and assist the working of the scheme.

Being convinced of its soundness, I would give it legal form in consultation with the law department and issue a notification, fully describing the genesis of the scheme. The villagers as well as the mill-owners and others would have been party to it. The notification will show clearly that it is the people's measure, though bearing the Government stamp. The Government money will be used for the benefit of the poorest villagers, making the largest return possible to the people concerned. It will, therefore, be probably the most profitable investment in which expert assistance will be voluntary and overhead charges the least item. The notification will give in detail, the whole cost to the country and the return to the people.

The only question for me as minister is whether the A. I. S. A. has the conviction and capacity to shoulder the burden of creating and guiding a Khadi scheme to success. If it has, I would put my little barque to sea with all confidence.

*Harijan, 26-8-1946*

## 19. MISSION OF KHADI

The mission of khadi is not merely to supply the towns people with fashionable khadi that will vie with the mill manufactures and thus like other industries supply a few artisans with employment, but is to become a supplementary industry to agriculture. This mission still remains unfulfilled.

In order that it may fulfill this mission, it has to be self-sustained and its use must spread in the villages. Just as the villagers cook their own roti or rice so must they make their own khadi for personal use. The surplus if any they may sell. This mission cannot be delivered unless the Khadi Service changes its complexion and the Spinners' Association its policy.

Every member of the Khadi Service should know the processes through which cotton passes before it becomes khadi.

When emphasis is put on self-sufficient khadi, commercial production will be restricted to the real wants of townspeople. It will then pass into the hands of private businessmen instead of being centralized in the hands of the Association.

In trying to commercialize khadi, the Association has been hitherto dominated by the ruling prices. Thus the spinning wage has been the worst of all the wages for any form of labour. They have also varied with provinces. Therefore the prices of khadi too have varied with the provinces. It is all very well for mere profiteering bodies to countenance and even stimulate cut-throat competition, but associations whose sole purpose is to serve the pauper millions cannot afford to join such competition. There is no reason why a spinner in Bihar should get less than her sister in Gujarat. No doubt prices vary in different provinces because the standard of living varies. But the Association cannot afford to take things as they are. It has to change them, if they are unjust. There is no reason why the price of one hour's labour in spinning should be less than one in weaving. There is more skill involved in spinning than in simple weaving. Simple weaving is a purely mechanical process. Simplest spinning requires the cunning of the hand. Yet the spinner gets one pie per hour against

the weaver's minimum of six; the carder too does better, almost as well as the weaver. There are historical reasons for this state of things. But they are not just merely because they are historical. Time has come for the Association to equalize if not also to stabilize the prices of all labour regulated by it. This, in many cases, will mean inviting the weaver to lower his scale of wages where he gets more than one anna per hour. Time may never come when all the weavers will voluntarily consent to the equalization process. But if the doctrine of equality of wages for all productive labour is sound, the Association must strive to approach the ideal as near as may be. Unless the whole jump is taken at once, the beginning must be made with raising the wages of spinners to a decent level for a decent hour's work. Vinoba is experimenting with spinning at the rate of nearly nine hours per day at the same time that he is taking his classes. His output per hour should be regarded as the standard output per hour entitling the spinner to the standard wage. I hope to publish shortly the results of Vinoba's labours.

My scheme presupposes living contact with the spinners' life. A body that would give an unexpected rise in wages will watch the course of the nickle pieces that may be distributed. It will be useless to raise wages gratuitously if they are to be wasted in drink or extravagant marriage or other feasts. The mission of khadi is almost like that of untouchability. The so-called higher classes have for ages utterly neglected the lower classes with the result that the latter do not know the art of living. They

think that they are mere 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. The so-called upper classes have not escaped the punishment of their misdeeds for they too do not know the art of living and would perish today if they had no help from the 'lower classes'. The mission of khadi is to correct this double evil by inviting the 'upper classes' to penance towards the 'lower classes'.

Let the village industries workers too see to it that the villagers occupied in the various industries organized by them get the minimum wage that may be fixed by the Association.

- Hariian, 6-6-1935

**ON SOCIALISM**

## 20. WHO IS A SOCIALIST?

Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in socialism all the members of society are equal-none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the world over there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that is a Hindu, that a Muslim, third a Christian, fourth a Parsi, fifth a Sikh, sixth a Jew. Even among these there are subdivisions. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state we may not look at things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our lives we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as a game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.

This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not

nonviolence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and vice versa. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful; nonviolent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible.

*Harijan 6-7-1947*

## 21. EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

In last week's article on the Constructive Programme I mentioned equal distribution of wealth as one of the 13 items.

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on nonviolence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realise the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a nonviolent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individual can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasis the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through nonviolence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Nonviolently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the nonviolent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, purity enters into his earnings and there is ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in nonviolence. Somehow or the other wrong belief has taken possession of us that ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should therefore be limited to that sphere. In fact, this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such

examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains. Because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But AVATARS and PROPHETS have, by means of their 'tapasya' (penance), given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle. I have lighted on nonviolent non-cooperation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of ahimsa entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and learn how to free themselves by means of nonviolence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

*Harijan 19-8-1940*

## 22. DUTY OF BREAD LABOUR

"Brahma created His people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said, 'By this do you flourish. Let it be the fulfiller of all your desires.'...He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats stolen bread,"- thus says the Gita. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow,' says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food would be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluities.

May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. "Render unto Ceaser that which is Cesar's" perhaps applies here well.

Mere mental, that is intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for

existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.

Return to the village means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic, "millions of India's children are today living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation." This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is state of slavery, willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly, compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing bread labour.

*Harijan 29-6-1935*

**ON CAPITALISM**

### 23. CAPITALISM AND STRIKES

How should capital behave when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that suppression named or nicknamed 'American'. It consists in suppression of labour through organized goondaism (hooliganism). Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and incurable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due- not what capital considers as due but what labour itself would so consider and enlightened public opinion acclaim as just.

One preliminary question will justly arise: why should there be a strike at all in any well-regulated concern? Strikes ought to be impossible when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality. And since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employed even in the best-regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties so that they will always readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators?

But we have to consider things not as they should be but as they are. As time progresses, the labour world is getting more insistent in its demands which are daily increasing, and it does not hesitate to resort to violence in its impatient enforcement of those demands. New methods of forcing them are being employed. Workers do not hesitate to injure the property of the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women who would not join the strike and forcibly keep out blacklegs. In these circumstances, how are the employers to behave?

In my opinion, employers and employed are equal partners even if employees are not considered superior. But what we see today is the reverse. The reason is that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage which concentration of capital brings with it and they know how to make use of it. One individual rupee has very little potency but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from and far in

excess of the mere sum total of the individual rupees. A million drops individually are negligible. But in combination they make the ocean carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds. Whilst capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition in spite of unions and their federations. Therefore, it lacks the power that true combination gives.

Moreover, it lacks intelligence, so much so that individuals fight against individuals, unions against unions. Lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by selfish and unscrupulous men even to the point of creating and promoting mischief. They know no better, being ignorant of the secret non-violence. The net result is that the workers suffer. If labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the power generated by combination would any day exceed the power of dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists.

Hence my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concern which they fancy they have created. They should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out the intelligence dormant in them and gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them.

This noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile, what should those do who have to face the destruction wrought by strikers in their concerns? It would unhesitatingly advice such employers that they should once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much the strikers as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right, and to show their goodwill they would offer the employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. Indeed their right action will disarm opposition and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by the capitalists of their resources and honest dealing in regard to the employees whom they would have convert into honourable partners.

*Harijan 23-3-1936*

**ON NON-VIOLENCE**

## 24. NON-VIOLENCE v/s VIOLENCE

I must resume the argument about the implications of the Rajkot where I left it the week before.

In theory, if there is sufficient nonviolence developed in any single person, he should be able to discover the means of combating violence, no matter how wide-spread or severe, within his jurisdiction. I have, repeatedly admitted my imperfections. I am no example of perfect ahimsa. I am evolving. Such ahimsa as has been developed in me has been found enough to cope with situations that have hitherto arisen. But today I feel helpless in the face of the surrounding violence. There was a penetrating article in the Statesman on my Rajkot statement. The editor therein contended that the English had never taken our movement to be true Satyagraha, but being practical people they had allowed the myth to continue though they had known it to be a violent revolt. It was none the less so because the rebels had no arms. I have quoted the substance from memory. When I read the article, I felt the force of the argument. Though I had intended the movement to be purely nonviolent resistance, as I look back upon the happenings of those days, there was undoubtedly violence among the resisters. I must own that had I been perfectly tuned to the music of ahimsa, I would have sensed the slightest departure from it and my sensitiveness would have rebelled against any discord in it.

It seems to me that the united action of the Hindus and the Muslims blinded me to the violence that was lurking in the breasts of many. The English who are trained diplomats and administrators are accustomed to line of least resistance, and when they found that it was more profitable to conciliate a big organization than to crush it by extensive frightfulness, they yielded to the extent that they thought was necessary. It is, however, my conviction that our resistance was predominantly, nonviolent in action and will be accepted as such by the future historian. As a seeker of truth and nonviolence, however, I must not be satisfied with mere action if it is not from the heart. I must

declare from the house-tops that the nonviolence of those days fell far short of the violence as I have so often defined.

Nonviolent action without the co-operation of the heart and the head cannot produce the intended result. The failure of our imperfect ahimsa is visible to the naked eye. Look at the feud that is going on between Hindus and Muslims. Each is arming for the fight with the other. The violence that we had harboured in our breasts during the non-cooperation is now recoiling upon ourselves. The violent energy that was, generated among the masses, but was kept under cheek in the pursuit of common objective, has now been let-loose and is being used among and against ourselves.

The same phenomenon is discernible, though in a less crude manner, in the dissension among Congressmen themselves and the use of forcible methods that the Congress ministers are obliged to adopt in running the administrations under their charge.

This narrative clearly shows that the atmosphere is surcharged with violence. I hope it also shows that nonviolent mass movement is an impossibility unless the atmosphere is radically changed. To blind one's eyes to the events happening around us is to court disaster. It has been suggested to me that I should declare mass civil disobedience and all internal strife will cease, Hindus and Muslims will compose their differences, Congressmen will forget mutual jealousies and fights for power. My reading of the situation is wholly different. If any mass movement is undertaken at the present moment in the name of nonviolence, it will resolve itself into violence largely unorganized and organized in some cases. It will bring discredit on the Congress, spell disaster for the Congress struggle for independence and bring ruin to many a home. This may be a wholly untrue picture born of my weakness. If so, unless I shed that weakness, I cannot lead a movement which requires great strength and resolution.

But if I cannot find an effective purely nonviolent method, outbreak of violence seems to be a certainty. The people demand self-expression. They are not satisfied with the constructive programme prescribed by me and accepted almost unanimously by the Congress. As I have said before, the imperfect

response to the constructive programme is itself proof positive of the skin-deep nature of the nonviolence of Congressmen.

But, if there is an outbreak of violence, it would not be without cause. We are yet far from the independence of our dream. The irresponsibility of the Centre, which eats up 80 per cent of the revenue, grinds down the people and thwarts their aspirations, is daily proving more and more intolerable.

There is a growing consciousness of the terrible autocracy of the majority of the States. I admit my responsibility for the suspension of civil resistance in several States. This has resulted in demoralization both among the people and the Princes. The people have lost nerve and feel that all is lost. The demoralization among the Princes consist in their thinking that now they have nothing to fear from their people, nothing substantial to grant. Both are wrong. The result does not dismay me. In fact I had foretold the possibility of these results when I was discussing with Jaipur workers the advisability of suspending the movement, even though it was well circumscribed with rules and restrictions. The demoralization among the people shows that there was not non-violence in thought and word, and therefore, when the intoxication and excitement of jail-going and the accompanying demonstrations ceased, they thought that the struggle was over. The Princes came to the hasty conclusion that they could safely consolidate their autocracy by adopting summary measures against the resisters and placating the docile element by granting eye-wash reforms.

Both the people and the Princes might have reacted in the right manner - the people by recognizing the correctness of my advice and calmly generating strength and energy by quiet and determined constructive effort, and the Princes by seizing the opportunity, afforded by suspension, of doing justice for the sake of justice and granting reforms that would satisfy the reasonable but advanced section among their people. This could only happen, if they recognized the time-spirit. It is neither too late for the people nor the Princes.

In this connection I may not omit the Paramount Power. There are signs of the Paramount Power repenting of the recent declarations about the freedom to

the Princes to grant such reforms to their people as they chose. There are audible whispers that the Princes may not take those declarations literally. It is an open secret that the Princes dare not do anything that they guess is likely to displease the Paramount Power. They may not even meet persons whom the Paramount Power may not like them to meet. When there is this tremendous influence exercised over the Princes, it is but natural to hold the Paramount Power responsible for the unadulterated autocracy that reigns supreme in many States.

So, if violence breaks out in this unfortunate land, the responsibility will have to be shared by the Paramount Power, the Princes, and above all by Congressmen. The first two have never claimed to be nonviolent. Their power is frankly derived from and based on the use of violence. But the Congress has since 1920 adopted nonviolence as its settled policy and has undoubtedly striven to act up to it. But as Congressmen never had nonviolence in their hearts, they must reap the fruit of the defect, however unintentional it was. At the crucial moment the defect has come to the surface and the defective method does not seem to meet the situation. Nonviolence is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion. We have failed to convert the Princes, we have failed to convert the English administrators. It is no use saying that it is impossible to persuade persons willingly to part with their power. I have claimed that Satyagraha is a new experiment. It will be time to pronounce it a failure when Congressmen have given it a genuine trial. Even a policy, if it is honestly pursued, has to be pursued with all one's heart. We have not done so. Hence Congressmen have to convert themselves before the Paramount Power and the Princes can be expected to act justly.

But if the Congressmen can or will go no further than they have done in the direction of nonviolence, and if the Paramount Power and the Princes do not voluntarily and selfishly do the right thing, the country must be prepared for violence, unless the new technique yields a new mode of nonviolent action which will become an effective substitute for violence as a way of securing

redress of wrongs. The fact that violence must fail will not prevent its outbreak. Mere constitutional agitation will not do.

*Harijan 4-7-1938*

## 25. ATOM BOMB AND AHIMSA

It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in ahimsa (nonviolence) as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn it away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of disgust is worn out.

Often does good come out of evil. But that is God's, not man's plan. Man knows that only evil can come out of evil, as good out of good.

That atomic energy though harnessed by American scientists and army men for destructive purposes may be utilized by other scientists for humanitarian purposes is undoubtedly within the realm of possibility. But that is not what was meant by my American friends. They were not so simple as to put a question which connoted an obvious truth. An incendiary uses fire for his destructive and nefarious purpose, housewife makes daily use of it in preparing flourishing food for mankind.

So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see. Forces of nature act in a mysterious manner. We can but solve the mystery by deducing the unknown result from the known results of similar events. A slave-holder cannot hold a slave without putting himself or his deputy in the cage holding the slave. Let no one run away with the idea that I wish to put in a defence of Japanese misdeeds in pursuance of Japan's was more unworthy ambition. The difference was only one of degree. I assume that Japan's greed was more

unworthy. But the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthy of destroying without mercy men, women and children of Japan in a particular area.

The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. I am aware that I am repeating what I have many times stated before and practised to the best of my ability and capacity. What I first stated was itself nothing new. It was as old as the hills. Only I recited no copybook maxim but definitely announced what I believed in every fibre of my being. Sixty years of practice in various walks of life has only enriched the belief which experience of friends has fortified. It is however the central truth by which one can stand alone without flinching. I believe in what Max Muller said years ago, namely that truth needed to be repeated as long as there were men who disbelieved it.

*Harijan 1-7-1946*

## 26. RELIGION V. NO RELIGION

A correspondent writes:

"In the Harijanbandhu of the 5<sup>th</sup> May you have written that your nonviolence contemplates destruction of animals dangerous to mankind, such as leopards, wolves, snakes, scorpions etc.

"You do not believe in giving food to dogs etc. Several other people besides the Gujaratis look upon the feeding of dogs as a meritorious act. Such a belief may not be justifiable in times of food shortage like the present. Yet we must remember that these animals can be very useful to man. One can feed them and take work out of them.

"You had put 27 questions to Shri Raichandbhai from Durban. One of these questions was: What should a seeker do when a snake attacks him? His answer was: He should not kill the snake and, if it bites, he should let to do so. How is it that you speak differently now?"

I have written a lot on this subject in the past. At that time the topic was the killing of rabid dogs. There was much discussion on the subject but all that seems to have been forgotten.

My nonviolence is not merely kindness to all living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of sub-human life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been overemphasized. And, while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion. For instance, there are many who derive complete satisfaction in feeding ants. It would appear that the theory has become a wooden, lifeless dogma. Hypocrisy and distortion are passing current under the name of religion.

Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never for the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and nonviolent is sheer self-deception.

A so-called votary of nonviolence will not stay in a village which is visited by a leopard every day. He will run away and, when someone has killed the leopard, will return to take charge of his hearth and home. This is not nonviolence. This is a coward's violence. The man who has killed the leopard has at least given proof of some bravery. The man who takes advantage of the killing is a coward. He can never expect to know true nonviolence.

In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for everyone. Although essentially the principle is the same, yet, everyone applies it in his or her own way. What is one man's food can be another's poison. Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet, for another person, who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply in order to copy me will be a sin.

If I wish to be an agriculturist and stay in the jungle, I will have to use the minimum unavoidable violence in order to protect my fields. I will have to kill monkeys, birds and insects which eat up my crops. If I do not wish to do so myself, I will have to engage someone to do it for me. There is not much difference between the two. To allow crops to be eaten up by animals in the name of ahimsa while there is a famine in the land is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or a sin under a different set of conditions.

Man is not to drown himself in the well of Shastras but he is to dive in their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step he has to use his discrimination as to what is ahimsa and what is himsa. In this there is no room for shame or cowardice. The poet has said that the road leading up to God is for the brave, never for the cowardly.

Finally, Raichandbhai's advice to me was that if I had courage, if I wanted to see God face to face, I should let myself be bitten by a snake instead of killing it. I have never killed a snake before or after receiving that letter. That is no matter of credit for me. My ideal is to be able to play with snakes and scorpions fearlessly. But it is merely a wish so far. Whether and when it will be realized I do not know. Everywhere I have let my people kill both. I could have prevented

them if I had wished. But how could I? I did not have the courage to take them up with my own hands and teach my companions a lesson in fearlessness. I am ashamed that I could not do so. But my shame could not benefit them or me.

If Ramanama favours me I might still attain that courage some day. In the meantime, I consider it my duty to act as I have stated above. Religion is a thing to be lived. It is not mere sophistry.

*Harijan 29-5-1946*

**ON STUDENTS**

## 27. STUDENTS AND STRIKES

A college student or Bangalore writes:

"I have read your article in HARIJAN and request you to let me know your opinion on students taking part in strikes like Andamans Day, Abattoir Day, etc.,"

Whilst have pleaded for the removal of restrictions on the speech and movements of students, I am not able to support political strikes or demonstrations. Students should have the greatest freedom of expression and of opinion. They may openly sympathize with any political party they like. But in any opinion they may not have freedom of action whilst they are studying. A student cannot be an active politician and pursue his studies at the same time. It is difficult to draw hard and fast lines at the time of big national upheavals. Then they do not strike or, if the word 'strike' can be used in such circumstances, it is a wholesale strike; it is a suspension of studies. Thus what may appear to be an exception is not one in reality.

As a matter of fact the question such as the correspondent has raised should not arise in the Congress Provinces. For there can be no curb which the best mind of the students will not willingly accept. The majority of them are, must be, Congress-minded. They may not do anything that would embarrass the Ministries. If they struck, they would do so because the Ministers wanted them to. But cannot conceive of Congress Ministers wanting them to strike except when the Congress is no longer in office, and when the Congress declares, maybe, a nonviolent active war against the Government of the day. And even then, I should think that to invite students in the first instance to suspend their studies for strikes would be tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy. If the people in general are with the Congress for any demonstration in the nature of strikes, students will be left alone except as a last resort. During the last war the students were not the first to be called out but they were the last so far as recollect, and then only college students.

But another correspondent writes in connection with it:

"If we allow paid State officials, teachers and others to participate in politics, it would become a hell. No Government could be carried on, if their policies are subjected to debates among Government or other State officials who have to carry them out. Your desire that national hopes, desires and ideas of patriotism should have free play is of course proper. But I fear your article is likely to be misunderstood unless you make your position quite clear."

I had thought that my position was quite clear. Where there is a national Government there is rarely any friction between it and its officials or the students. My note guards itself against all indiscipline. What the schoolmaster resents, and rightly, is espionage and suppression of free thought which has been the rule of the day hitherto. Congress Ministers themselves are of the people and from the people. They have no secrets. They are expected to be in personal touch with every public activity including the student mind. They have at their disposal the whole of the Congress machinery which, as the interpreter of the popular will, is surely more than the law, the police and the military. Those who have not that machinery to back them are spent bullets. For those Ministers who have the Congress at their back, the law, the police and the military may be said to be a useless appendage. And the Congress is nothing if it is not an embodiment of discipline. Therefore with the Congress in power there should be voluntary, not forced, discipline everywhere.

*Harijan 2-10-1937*

## 28. HIGHER EDUCATION

The Rt. Hon. Shri Srinivasa Sastri has criticized as he had a perfect right to do, the view I timidly and very briefly expressed some time ago on Higher Education. I entertain a very high regard for him as man, patriot and scholar. It is therefore always painful to me when I find myself disagreeing with him. And yet duty compels me to re-express my views on Higher Education more 'fully than before, so that the reader may make out for himself the difference between his views and mine.'

I admit my limitations; I have no university education worth the name. My high school career was never above average. I was thankful if I could pass my examinations. Distinction in the school was beyond my aspiration. Nevertheless I do hold very strong views on education in general including what is called Higher Education. And I owe it to the country that my views should be clearly known and taken for what they may be worth. I must shed the timidity that has led almost to self-suppression. I must not fear ridicule, and even loss of popularity or prestige. If I hide my belief, I shall never correct errors of judgement. I am always eager to discover them and more than eager to correct them.

Let me now state my conclusion held for a number of years and enforced wherever I had opportunity of enforcing them:

- (1) I am not opposed to education even of the highest type attainable in the world.
- (2) The State must pay for it wherever it has definite use for it.
- (3) I am opposed to all higher education being paid for from the general revenue.
- (4) It is my firm conviction that the vast amount of the so-called education in arts, given in our colleges, is sheer waste and has resulted in unemployment among the educated classes. What is more, it has destroyed the health, both

mental and physical of the boys and girls who have the misfortune to go through the grind in our colleges.

(5) The medium of a foreign language through education has been imported in India has caused in and moral injury to the nation. We are too near our own times to judge the enormity of the damage done. And we who have received have both to be victims and judges- an almost impossible feat.

I must now give my reason for the conclusion set forth can best do, perhaps, by giving a chapter from my own experience.

Up to the age of 12 all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother tongue. I knew then something of Arithmetic, History and Geography. Then I entered a high school. For the mother tongue was still the medium. But the schoolmaster's business was to drive English into the pupil's head. Therefore, our time was given to learning English and mastering and pronunciation. It was a painful discovery to have to learn a language that was not pronounced as it was written. It was a strange experience to have to learn the spelling by heart. But that is by the way, and irrelevant to my argument. However, for the first three years, it was comparatively plain sailing.

The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English-Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry, Astronomy, History, and Geography. The tyranny of English was so great that even Sanskrit or Persian had to be learnt through English, not through the mother tongue. If any boy spoke in the class in Gujarati which he understood, was punished. It did not matter to the teacher if a boy spoke bad English which he could neither pronounce correctly nor understand fully. Why should the teacher worry? His own English was by no means without blemish. It could not be otherwise. English was a language to him as to his pupils. The result was chaos. We the boys had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all. My head used to reel as the teacher was struggling to make his exposition on Geometry understood by us. I could make neither head nor tail of Geometry till we reached the 13th theorem of the first book of Euclid. And let me confess to the reader that in spite of all my love for the mother tongue, I do not to this

day know the Gujarati equivalents of the technical terms of Geometry, Algebra and the like. I know now that what I took four years to learn of Arithmetic, Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati, the subjects would have been easier and clearer. My Gujarati vocabulary would have been richer. I would have made use of such knowledge in my own home. This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools. My father knew nothing of what I was doing. I could not, even if I had wished it, interest my father in what I was learning. For though he had ample intelligence, he knew not a word of English. I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. What happened to me was not an uncommon experience. It was common to the majority.

The first three years in the High School made little addition to my stock of general knowledge. They were a preparation for fitting the boys for teaching them everything through English. High Schools were schools for cultural conquest by the English. The knowledge gained by the three hundred boys of my High School became a circumscribed possession. It was not for transmission to the masses.

A word about literature. We had to learn several books of English prose and English poetry. No doubt all this was nice. But that knowledge has been of no use to me in serving or bringing me in touch with the masses. I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I would have missed a rare treasure. If I had, instead, passed those precious seven years in mastering Gujarati and had learnt mathematics, Sciences, and Sanskrit and other subjects through Gujarati, I could easily have shared the knowledge so gained with my neighbours. I would have enriched Gujarati, and who can say that I would not have, with my habit of application and my inordinate love for the country and the mother tongue, made a richer and greater contribution to the service of the masses?

I must not be understood to decry English or its noble literature. The columns of HARIJAN are sufficient evidence of my love of English. But the nobility of its literature cannot avail the Indian nation any more than the temperate climate or the scenery of England can avail her. India has to flourish in her own climate, and scenery, and her own literature, even though all the three may be inferior to the English climate, scenery and literature. We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we borrow another, we impoverish our own. We can never grow on foreign victuals. I want the nation to have the treasures contained in that language, and for that matter the other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars. I do not need to learn Bengali in order to know the beauties of Rabindranath's matchless productions. I get them through good translations. Gujarati boys and girls do not need to learn Russian to appreciate Tolstoy's short stories. They learn them through good translations. It is the boast of Englishmen that the best of the world's literary output is in the hands of that nation in simple English inside of a week of its publication. Why need I learn English to get at the best of what Shakespeare and Milton thought and wrote? It would be good economy to set apart a class of students whose business would be to learn the best of what is to be learnt in the different languages of the world and give the translation in the vernaculars. Our masters chose the wrong way for us, and habit has made the wrong appear as right.

I find daily proof of the increasing and continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-indianizing education. Those graduates who are my valued associates themselves flounder when they have to give expression to their innermost thoughts. They are strangers in their own homes. Their vocabulary in the mother tongue is so limited that they cannot always finish their speech without having recourse to English words and even sentences. Nor can they exist without English books. They often write to one another in English. I cite the case of my companions to show how deep the evil has gone. For we have made a conscious effort to mend ourselves.

It has been argued that the wastage that occurs in our colleges need not worry us if, out of the collegians, one Jagadish Bose can be produced by them. I

should freely subscribe to the argument, if the wastage was unavoidable. I hope I have shown that it was and is even now avoidable. Moreover the creation of a Bose does not help the argument. For Bose was not a product of the present education. He rose in spite of the terrible handicaps under which he had to labour. And his knowledge became almost intransmissible to the masses. We seem to have come to think that no one can hope to be like a Bose unless he knows English. I cannot conceive a grosser superstition than this. No Japanese feels so helpless as we seem to do.

Nothing but a heroic remedy can deal with the deep-seated evil which I have endeavoured to describe. The Congress Ministers can, if they will, mitigate it, if they cannot remove it.

Universities must be made self-supporting. The State should simply educate those whose services it would need. For all other branches of learning it should encourage private effort. The medium of instruction should be altered at once and at any cost, the provincial languages being given their rightful place. I would prefer temporary chance in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating.

In order to enhance the status and the market value of the provincial languages, I would have the language of the law courts to be the language of the province where the court is situated. The proceedings of the Provincial Legislatures must be in the language, or even the language of the province where a province has more than one language within its borders. I suggest to the legislators that they could, by enough application, inside of a month, understand the languages of their provinces. There is nothing to prevent a Tamilian from easily learning the simple grammar and a few hundred words of Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese, all allied to Tamil. At the centre Hindustani must rule supreme.

In my opinion this is not a question to be decided by academicians. They cannot decide through what language the boys and girls of a place are to be educated. That question is already decided for them in every free country. Nor can they decide the subjects to be taught. That depends upon the wants of the country

to which they belong. Theirs is the privilege of enforcing the nation's will in the best manner possible. When the country becomes really free, the question of medium will be settled only one way. The academicians will frame the syllabus and prepare text-books accordingly. And the products of the education of a free India will answer the requirements of the country as today they answer those of the foreign ruler. So long as we, the educated classes play with this question, I very much fear we shall not produce the free and healthy India of our dream. We have to grow by strenuous effort out of our bondage, whether it is Educational, Economical, Social or Political. The effort itself is three-fourths of the battle.

Thus I claim that I am not an enemy of Higher Education. But I am an enemy of Higher Education as it is given in this country. Under my scheme there will be more and better libraries, more and better laboratories, more and better research institutes. Under it we should have an army of chemists, engineers and other experts who will be real servants of the nation, and answer the varied and growing requirements of a people who are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights and wants. And all these experts will speak not a foreign language, but the language of the people. The knowledge gained by them will be the common property of the people. There will be truly original work instead of mere imitation. And the cost will be evenly and justly distributed.

*Harijan 9-7-1938*

## 29. WHAT, AFTER FINISHING STUDIES?

Q. A student has seriously posed this question: "What am I to do after finishing my studies?"

A. We are today a subject race and our educational system has been devised to serve the interests of our rulers. But even as the most selfish person is obliged to hold out some lure to those whom he is out to exploit, a number of temptations for studying in their institutions have been brought into being by the rulers. Moreover, all members of Government are not alike. There are some liberal minded among them who will consider the problem of education on merits. Therefore, there is no doubt some good even in the present system. But the prevailing education is willy-nilly put to wrong use, i.e., it is looked upon as a means of earning money and position.

The ancient aphorism, 'Education is that which liberate,' is as true today as it was before. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify only spiritual liberation after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude even in the present life. Servitude is of two kinds: slavery to domination from outside and to one's own artificial needs. The knowledge acquired in the pursuit of this ideal alone constitutes true study.

Realizing that a form of education devised by foreign rulers could only be calculated to subserve their interests, the Congress accepted in 1920, among other things, the principle of the boycott of all Governmental educational institutions. But that era seems to be over. The demand for entrance to Government institutions and those imparting education on similar lines is increasing faster than the number of such schools and colleges. The ranks of examinees are ever swelling. In spite of this hypnotic spell, however, I hold that true education is what I have defined.

A student who is superficially attracted by the educational ideal set forth by me and leaves his studies is liable to repent of his action later. I have,

therefore, suggested a safer course. While continuing his studies in the institution which he has joined he should ever keep before him the ideal of service set forth by me and use his studies with a view to serve that ideal, never for making money. Moreover, he should try to make up the lack in the present education by application of his leisure hours to the ideal. He will, therefore avail himself to the utmost of whatever opportunity offers for taking part in the constructive programme.

*Harijan 1-3-1946*

**ON HIS SON**

### 30. TO MY NUMEROUS MUSLIM FRIENDS

The newspapers report that about a fortnight ago my eldest son Harilal, now nearing fifty years, accepted Islam and that on Friday 29th May in the midst of a large congregation in the Juma Masjid at Bombay he was permitted to announce his acceptance amid great acclamation and that after his speech was finished, he was besieged by his admirers who vied with one another to shake hands with him. If acceptance was from the heart and free from any worldly considerations, I should have no quarrel. For I believe Islam to be as true a religion as my own.

But I have the gravest doubt about this acceptance being from the heart or free from selfish considerations. Everyone who knows my son Harilal, knows that he has been for years addicted to the drink evil and has been in the habit of visiting houses of ill-fame. For some years he has been living in the charity of friends who have helped him unstintingly. He is indebted to some Pathans from whom he had borrowed on heavy interest. Up to only recently he was in dread of his life from his Pathan creditors in Bombay. Now he is the hero of the hour in that city. He had a most devoted wife who always forgave his many sins including his unfaithfulness. He has three grown-up children, two daughters and one son, whom he ceased to support long ago.

Not many weeks ago he wrote to the press complaining against Hindus- not Hinduism- and threatening to go over to Christianity or Islam. The language of the letter showed quite clearly that he would go over to the highest bidder. That letter had the desired effect. Through the good offices of a Hindu councilor he got a job in Nagpur municipality. And he came out with another letter to the Press about recalling the first and declaring emphatic adherence to his ancestral faith.

But, as events have proved, his pecuniary ambition was not satisfied and in order to satisfy that ambition, he has embraced Islam. There are other facts which are known to me and which strengthen my inference.

When I was in Nagpur in April last, he had come to see me and his mother and he told me how he was amused by the attentions that were being paid to him by the missionaries of rival faiths. God can work wonders. He has been known to have changed the stoniest hearts and turned sinners into saints, as it were, in a moment. Nothing will please better than to find that during the Nagpur meeting and the Friday announcement he had repented of the past and had suddenly become a changed man having shed the drink habit and sexual lust.

But the Press reports give no such evidence. He still delight in sensation and in good living. If he had changed, he would have written to me to gladden my heart. All my children have had the greatest freedom of thought and action. They have been taught to regard all religions with the same respect that they paid to their own. Harilal knew that if he had told me that he had found the key to a right life and peace in Islam, I would have put no obstacle in his path. But no one of us, including his son now twenty-four years old and who is with me, knew anything about the event till we saw the announcement in the Press.

My views on Islam are well-known to the Mussalmans who are reported to have enthused over my son's profession. A brotherhood of Islam has telegraphed to me thus, "Expect like your son you truth-seeker to embrace Islam truest religion of world."

I must confess that all this has hurt me. I sense no religious spirit behind this demonstration. I feel that those who are responsible for Harilal's acceptance of Islam did not take the most ordinary precautions they ought to have in a case of this kind.

Harilal's apostacy is no loss to Hinduism and his admission to Islam a source of weakness to it if, as I apprehend, he remains the same wreck that he was before.

Surely conversion is a matter between man and his Maker who alone knows His creatures' hearts. And conversion without a clean heart is, in my opinion, a denial of God and religion. Conversion without cleanness of heart can only be a matter for sorrow, not joy, to a godly person.

*Harijan 6-6-1936*

**ON SOCIAL SERVICE**

### 31. QUALIFICATIONS OF A PEACE BRIGADE

Some time ago I suggested the formation of a Peace Brigade whose members would risk their lives in dealing with riots, especially communal. The idea was that this Brigade should substitute the police and even the military. This reads ambitious. The achievement may prove impossible. Yet, if the Congress is to succeed in its nonviolent struggle, it must develop the power to deal peacefully with such situations. Communal riots are engineered by politically minded men. Many of those who take part in them are under the influence of the latter.

Let us, therefore, see what qualifications a member of the contemplated Peace Brigade should possess.

(1) He or she must have a living faith in nonviolence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A nonviolent man can do nothing to save by the power and grace of God. Without it he won't have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation.

(2) This messenger of peace must have equal regard for all the principal religions of the earth. Thus, if he is a Hindu, he will respect the other faiths current in India.

(3) Generally speaking, this work of peace can only be done by local men in their own localities.

(4) The work can be done singly or in groups.

(5) This messenger of peace will cultivate through personal service contacts with the people in his locality or chose circle, so that when he appears to deal with ugly situations, he does not descend upon the members of a riotous assembly as an utter stranger liable to be looked upon as a suspect or an unwelcome visitor.

(6) Needless to say, a peace bringer must have a character beyond reproach and must be known for his strict impartiality.

(7) Generally there are previous warnings of coming storms. If these are known, the peace brigade will not wait till the conflagration breaks out but will try to handle the situation in anticipation.

(8) Whilst, if the movement spreads, it might be well if there are some whole-time workers, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be. The idea is to have as many good and true men and women as possible. These can be had only if volunteers are drawn from those who are engaged in various walks of life but have leisure enough to cultivate friendly relations with the people living in their circle and otherwise possess the qualifications required of a member of the Peace Brigade.

(9) There should be a distinctive dress worn by the members of the contemplated brigade so that in course of time they will be recognized without the slightest difficulty.

These are but general suggestions. Each centre can work out its own constitution on the basis here suggested.

Lest false hopes may be raised, I must warn workers against entertaining the hope that I can play any active part in the formation of Peace Brigades. I have not the health, energy or time for it. I find it hard enough to cope with the tasks I dare not shirk. I can only guide and make suggestions through correspondence or these columns. Therefore those who appreciate the idea and feel they have the ability, take the initiative themselves. I know that the proposed Brigade has great possibilities and that the idea behind it is quite capable of being worked out in practice.

*Harijan 7-3-1946*

**ON POLITICS**

## 32. TWO PARTIES

Private and public appeals are being made to me to call all parties together and arrive at a common agreement, and then, they say, we shall get what we want from Great Britain. These good friends forget one central fact. The Congress, which professes to speak for India and wants Unadulterated Independence, cannot strike a common measure of agreement with those who do not. To act otherwise would be to betray its trust. In the nature of things, therefore, there can be no "all parties conference" unless all have a common purpose.

The British government would not ask for a common agreement, if they recognised any one party to be strong enough to take delivery. The Congress, it must be admitted, has not that strength today. It has come to its present position in the face of opposition. If it does not weaken and has enough patience, it will develop sufficient strength to take delivery. It is an illusion created by ourselves that we must come to an agreement with all parties before we can make any progress.

There is only one democratically elected political organization, i.e. the Congress. All the others are self-appointed, or elected on a sectional basis. The Muslim League is an organization which, like the Congress, is popularly elected. But it is frankly communal and wants to divide India into two parts, one Hindu and the other Muslim. I read an appeal by a Muslim Leaguer suggesting that the British Government should come to terms with the Muslims and depend upon Muslim aid. That would be one way of settling the question but also of perpetuating British rule. The Hindu Mahasabha will no doubt want favoured treatment for Hindus including Hindu States.

Thus, for the present purpose there are only two parties - the Congress and those who side with the Congress, and the parties who do not. Between the two there is no meeting ground without the one or the other surrendering its purpose. The other parties must be presumed to be as constant in their purpose as the Congress claims to be in it. Therefore there is a stalemate. But the stalemate is only apparent. An agreement independently of evolving a common

demand the Congress must seek and has always sought. It is the process of conversion. Its nonviolence forbids the Congress from standing aloof and riding the high horse as the opponents say. On the contrary it has to woo all parties, disarm suspicion and create trust in its *bona fides*. This it can only do when it has cleaned its own stables. The process may take time. That time must be given. It will be no waste. But if the Congress loses hope and faith and comes to the conclusion that it must surrender its original position for the purpose of getting a common measure of agreement, it will cease to be the power it is. Today it is the sheet-anchor of India's hope and faith. It will be well with it, if it refuses to move away from its moorings. Whether it is in a minority or a majority.

*Harijan 11-6-1940*

### 33. MEMBERS OF THE R.S.S.

#### Only Sacrifice Is Not Enough

Addressing about 500 members of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangha at the Bhangi Colony, Gandhiji said that he had visited the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh Camp years ago at Wardha, when the founder Shri Hedgewar was alive. The late Shri Jamnalal Bajaj had taken him to, the camp and he (Gandhiji) had been very impressed by their discipline, complete absence of untouchability and rigorous simplicity. Since then this Sangh had grown. Gandhiji was convinced that any organization which was inspired by the ideal of service and self-sacrifice was bound to grow in strength. But in order to be truly useful, self-sacrifice had to be combined with purity of motive and true knowledge. Sacrifice without these two had been known to prove ruinous to society.

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#### Sanatani Hindu

The prayer that was recited at the beginning was in praise of Mother India, Hindu culture and Hindu religion. He claimed to be a Sanatani Hindu. He took the root meaning of the word Sanatana. No one knew accurately the origin of the word Hindu. The name was given to us and we had characteristically adopted it. Hinduism had absorbed the best of all the faiths of the world and in that sense it was not an exclusive religion. Hence, it could have no quarrel with Islam or its followers, as unfortunately was the case today. When the poison of untouchability entered Hinduism, the decline began. One thing was certain, and he had been proclaiming it from house tops, that if untouchability lived, Hinduism must die. Similarly, if the Hindus felt that in India there was no place for anyone else except the Hindus and if non-Hindus, especially Muslims, wished to live here, they had to live as the slaves of the Hindus, or they would kill Hinduism. Similarly if Pakistan believed that in Pakistan only the Muslims had a rightful place and the non-Muslims had to live there on sufferance and as their slaves, it would be the death-knell of Islam in India.

### **Good for Evil**

It was an unfortunate fact that India had been divided into two parts. If one part went mad and did ugly deeds, was the other part to follow suit? There was no gain in returning evil for evil. Religion taught us to return good for evil.

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### **The Sangh's Claim**

He had seen their Guruji a few days ago. He had mentioned to him the various complaints about the Sangh that he had received in Calcutta and Delhi. The Guruji had assured him that though he could not vouchsafe for the correct behaviour of every member of the Sangh, the Policy Of the Sangh was purely service of Hindus and Hinduism and that too not at the cost of anyone else. The Sangh did not believe in aggression. It did not believe in ahimsa. It taught the art of self-defence. It never taught retaliation.

The ship of India was passing through troubled waters. The leaders in charge of the Government were the best that India possessed. Some people were dissatisfied with them. He would ask them to produce better men if they could and he would advise the old guard to hand over the reins to their betters. After all, Sardar was an old man and Pandit Jawaharlal, though not old in years, looked old and haggard under the burden he was carrying. They were doing their utmost to serve the people, but they could only act according to their light. If the vast bulk of the Hindus wanted to, go in a particular direction. even though it might be wrong, no one could prevent them from doing so. But even a single individual had the right to raise his voice against it and give them the warning. That is what Gandhiji was doing. He was told that he was the friend of the Muslims and the enemy of the Hindus and the Sikhs. It was true that he was a friend of the Muslims, as he was of the Parsis and others. In this respect he was the same today as he had been since the age of twelve. But those who called him the enemy of the Hindus and the Sikhs did not know him. He could be enemy of none, much less of the Hindus and the Sikhs.

### **Result OF Wrong Doing?**

If Pakistan persisted in wrong doing, there was bound to be war between India and Pakistan. If he had his way, he would have no military; no police even. But all this was tall talk. He was not the Government. Why did not Pakistan plead with the Hindus and the Sikhs and asked them not to leave their homes and ensure their safety in every way? Why could not they in the Indian Union ensure the safety of every Muslim?

Both the parties appeared to have gone crazy. The result could be nothing but destruction and misery.

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### **Deeds And Words**

The Sangh was a well-organized, well-disciplined body. Its strength could be used in the interests of India or against it. He did not know whether there was any truth in the allegations made against the Sangh. It was for the Sangh to show by their uniform behaviour that the allegations were baseless.

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### **Who Can Punish?**

At the conclusion of the speech, Gandhiji invited questions. One person asked if Hinduism permitted killing of an evil-doer. Gandhiji replied that it did and it did not. One evil-doer could not punish another. To punish was the function of the Government, not that of the public.

*Harijan 28-9-1947*